

# Anguilla



The Official National Anguilla Club Magazine!

**Volume 46**  
**Issue 2**

## An Interview With Steve Pitts

The National Anguilla Club - The Eel Specialists - Established 1962

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# Editorial

Nick Rose

Well here we are with the winter bulletin a little late due to life getting in the way but it's a bumper issue which we hope is worth the wait. I would like to say thanks to all the lads for their contribution, with a special thanks to Mr O Sullivan for his non-stop barrage of articles and of course the lovely Andrea and Loz his wife and daughter for typing them. It must be hard living with a madman come poet. It's a long time since someone sent in so much stuff for the mag and I have enjoyed reading them so I hope you do, it's great that the new members are getting involved. Rod Hillyer has sent in another thought provoking article in and yet another new member Mark Parker has also contributed and new members have sent in there profiles.

I don't have much else to say really; the club is in its winter period now just a few of us out eeling so not much in the way of catches that I have heard of to report.

We have had yet another resignation from the club, Kevin Huish. A long time member of nearly 20 years. In fact he joined a month or so after me and Steve Richo came along just a bit after. Between us we kept the club going and I hope a better club to be in. So a big thanks to Kev from me personally and I hope all you who have known him contact and say thanks.

As for me I am getting old and decrepit and feel that I need to pass on one of my roles on the committee to one of the younger lads. I took on the membership secretary's job at the EGM and then the following AGM mainly because of a lack of volunteers but I think that with all that has gone on in my personal life and my own health, I need to pass it on to one of you lucky lot out there. I will add that this is not one of those "OK I will stay on if no one else comes forward". I really am out of it.

As for the products officer and the bulletin officer I can cope with them, although I did lose a cheque from the Jockey this month but I think I dropped it and the dam thing bounced all the way back home.

From what I can make out from the mole there is not any gossip or gunge being sent in? It seems I am the only one trying to keep this regular slot going. I have been told how much it is enjoyed so please lads if you don't send it in you don't get the laughs.

Anyway that's all from me so enjoy this and let's look forward to next summer.

Nick.

#### **Foot note from the layabout team;**

I worried about this issue, material was a little slow in coming in, then just like buses it all came together over a very short period of time! Which goes to show how much my fears were unfounded. Of course we always need more material, and you don't need to wait until just before the mags due out to send it in, get writing and send it to Nick, Nick holds all the material until the mag is ready to be put together then sends it all to me to nail into what your reading now (I just hope your happy with it!).

#### **Anyway the point of my add on.**

Can you let us know what you'd like to see in the mag, I can't do anything about article topics. What the membership sends in will go into the mag, it's as simple as that.

But what about a letters page? There's got to be something in this edition of Anguilla that you don't agree with or you have suggestions about?

What I do need as well as the main articles, are photo's in particular, good quality photo's for the cover, they must be portraits though as apposed to landscapes, and they don't need to be trophy shots eels being returned etc. would be great!

**The cut off for material for Anguilla 47.1 will be 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009 for a late June early July delivery.**

# The Presidents Page

Steve Richardson

Crikey me.....Christmas 2008 already. It'll soon be AGM time.

It's been a very unusual year for me and I have only managed to seriously fish for eels on the last club fish-in at Somerley Lakes in Hampshire. It was a very enjoyable event, as you can read elsewhere in this edition of 'Anguilla'.

I would like to offer my thanks to Nick and Dave for managing to get this all sorted out, printed up and posted off to us all during this festive period. I've had the pleasure of being involved with the magazine production in the dim and distant past and believe me, it's hard graft and at the end of it you don't get a magazine like the rest of the membership due to having read the articles beforehand, via proof reading and layout. The thrill for the production team comes in the form of 'relief' that it is 'done and dusted' and sent out on time. Please give some thought to the Bulletin Team when you read this magazine, better still, send your comments or an article to them for the next edition, so that they can really appreciate the fact that you 'appreciate' their efforts.

This year has seen some fabulous eels caught and the two that really stand out head and shoulders above the rest are Steve Pitts awesome eel of 7lb 9oz and Steve Gardner's fabulous fish-in caught eel of 6lb 4oz....truly outstanding captures, my respect to them both for their rewards of endurance.

The NAC is looking in good shape as I write this with Mark Salt and Dave Smith pushing the club along at a rate of knots.....I remember a time when it was Kevin Huish, Nick Rose and myself doing the pushing along....seems like distant days now though. It matters not who does the pushing, so long as someone does....and it's a fact that there is always someone there in differing times to take the NAC by the scruff of the neck and push it forward. Long may that continue.

Talking of Kevin Huish, I cannot let this President's Page go without mention of my good friend Kevin. Some of you may already know this but Kevin has decided to step down from his committee position and also from the NAC. He had decided that the time had come for him to move on, with the best intentions of the NAC at the forefront of his mind. I'm sad that he has taken this decision but respect it as dearly as I respect him and the value his friendship. Kevin has been at the heart of this club now for more years than I care to remember. Nick, he and myself came together within a month of each other way back in the distant mists of time....who could have predicted just how involved the three of us would have become. Between us we have almost held every committee position going....infact, if I'm correct and right about Nick holding the Treasurer's position for a few days at least in the 'Peterborough run away Treasurer years', then it will be every position covered....but old git that I am, I'm probably incorrect in that assumption. Anyway, Kevin cannot be forgotten to the NAC because he holds the title of Vice President and is an existing Life Member and so his legacy will prevail. Thanks for everything that you have done for the NAC Kevin....you'll be missed for sure.

Moving on.....I was lucky enough to win the donated signed copy of Terry Lampard's new book 'First Cast' at the Winter Social meeting, something else that you can read about elsewhere in this magazine, and I have to say that it is well worth considering as a purchase. The eel accounts are particularly interesting and sit well within the pages of this very readable publication. My thanks to Terry for his generosity in donating the book to the club....my thanks to Caleb for pulling my winning ticket out of the bag.

Lastly, I have purchased a couple of Barry McConnell's 'Rollover' indicators in a lovely red colouration and intend to use them this winter and spring on my occasional eeling sessions. The successes of Mr. Pitts and Mr. Gardner, along with Terry's book and my own enjoyable two evenings in Hampshire have fired my desire to fish madly in pursuit of Anguilla Anguilla in the months ahead and beyond.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing you all at the AGM in March 2009.

## Behind The Rods

### Graham Wilkes

As I sit behind the rods  
I think about those cunning sods  
That only feed when all is right  
I wonder if it will be tonight.

The day has gone and the night is here  
I'm all alone upon the mere  
All is quiet, all is still  
Anticipation is all I feel.

I'm waiting for the alarm to sound  
To raise me from the now wet ground  
Then at last the rods away  
The baits been taken by my prey.

The bail arm is put in place  
As I strike I feel the pace  
The eel is on, the fights underway  
She's trying to get back to the snags  
Of which she's been in all day.

The rods bent double, and I can feel the line grating  
For seven weeks I've been waiting for this take  
I can't afford to make a mistake.

Eventually she's over the net, then slides in as though a pet  
I lift the net up and shine a light to see  
The size that gave me the fight  
Another 6 would be nice but it's more like a four  
Never the less I shall try to catch more.

The Jockey

## Members Profile - David O'Sullivan

### N.A.C. MEMBERS NAME

David O'Sullivan A.K.A. "Slippery Sully"

### STATUS

Upper middle class – Nah! Married with 2 kids and 1 stepdaughter

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST START EEL FISHING

When I was knee high to an elver but I was a teenager when I landed my first

### REASONS FOR JOINING THE N.A.C.

Sent off for eel fishing DVD and Barry McConnell urged me to join as an ex B.E.A.C. member

### FIRST EEL EVER CAUGHT

4lb from a lake in Devon by a caravan park

### PERSONAL BEST EEL TO DATE

4lb 2oz from the Grand Union this year

### BEST REMEMBERED EEL SESSION

As a teenager, visiting alone on a hot summer's night dreaming of my first eel, landed a 4lb er and it took me until 2003 to equal that. My first time with an eel was far more memorable and much less disappointing that my first time with a girl.

### WHICH MONTHS DO YOU FISH FOR EELS

April – September

### FAVOURITE VENUE

Grand Union. My mate's back garden backs right on to Warwick Castle and the Avon (Bootlace Heaven) and Jim's secret location – one phone call a year and I drop everything to be there.

### ANY PARTICULAR BAIT PREFERENCES AND REASONS FOR THIS

Worm, worm, worm and roach head – it works well for me

### FAVOURITE ITEM OF TACKLE

My piece of silver foil which jumps up when I've got one on – still fishing in the dark ages! The rest of my tackle is hand me downs from my brother in law and mates

### OTHER SPECIES THAT YOU FISH FOR

Eel – but carp get in the way

### OF ALL THE SPECIES THAT YOU HAVE CAUGHT, WHICH ONE IS YOUR FAVOURITE AND WHY

Anguilla Anguilla. A truly mysterious and remarkable fish, seeing an eel swimming in the river in Co Cork with my dad I knew even then as a kid my way would never be quite the same again.

### ARE YOU INVOLVED IN ANY OTHER ANGLING ORGANISATIONS

No. Ex B.E.A.C.

### ANY OTHER INTERESTS OUTSIDE ANGLING

Bass playing, reading and writing poetry, Villa Fan.

### DIS-LIKES IN ANGLING

Other anglers who assume I'm catching eels for the pot and can't understand eels. Anyone else who ambles over for a chat while I'm fishing – not that I'm anti-social but what bit of turning my back on them do they not get?!

### HOW COULD THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BE IMPROVED

Well I've joined now, so that's a start!

### AMBITIONS IN ANGLING TERMS

To enjoy my fishing and not take it to obsession and beyond – oh yes, and a really big eel would be nice as well!

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ANGLING HEROES OR HAS ANYONE INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER TO DATE

John Sidley (hero) eel anglers like you all who write and share the highs and lows and make me want to go eel fishing. That's your influence on me. Also Mick Bowles articles and sense of humour made me enthusiastic about this madness.

### DO YOU THINK THAT THE EXISTING RECORDS OF 11LB 2OZ WILL BE BROKEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF SO, WHAT TYPE OF VENUE DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE AND WILL IT BE TO AN EEL ANGLER OR AN ANGLER FISHING FOR ANOTHER SPECIES

I would love to hear of the record going to an eel angler and God willing it will. The least expected time and least likely location cometh the monster! So why not a canal or river rather than a carp water? It would be so good for eel fishing and the freshwater eel if a kindred spirit broke the record. God bless us all.

# The Secretaries Report

Mark Salt

Is it really only a year since I began doing this? It seems like a lot longer, but not, I hasten to add, because I have not enjoyed it. I have, tremendously, and I've managed to get a lot of eel fishing in as well this year, so I think that a combination of the secretary role, lots of fishing, and a bit of work (unfortunately) have made it seem like a full year. There have been some excellent highlights, with Barry McConnell catching a 5, Roy Piggott managing an eel of 5.01, Wayne Staddon taking a new PB of 5.11, Steve Gardner creating a real stir on the Pottery Pond fish in with a 6.4, and finally Steve Pitts researching a new water and turning up a magnificent eel of 7.09 on his first session there. A very well done to all of our members who caught eels, irrespective of size. There may well have been more notable eels of over 5lbs, but catch returns were thin on the ground this year, and if you don't tell us what you catch, then we don't know. I'll make a plea now for catch returns for next year. Please, please, send them in, irrespective of eel size.

This last year was very much a case of rebuilding the structure of the group after the upheavals of 2007, and we spent a little time at the winter social discussing how we might move forward in 2009. Jason Morgan highlighted the fact that we are not as active in the research and behavioural areas as we have been in the past, and Dave Smith had already pointed out that we had not been very active politically or environmentally during the year. Both these points are spot on, and so for 2009 it would be good to see us fill the environmental officer role, and enlist the help of our committed eel anglers to see if we can further our knowledge of the eel from a behavioural perspective.

If there is anyone out there who would like to have a go at the environmental officer role then we would be interested to hear from you. We will provide loads of support to anyone willing to give it a try. You do not have to be an academic or a scientist, but you will need to spend some time gathering information from the media through the year so that we know what's going on, and have the opportunity to make a difference. You will not necessarily need to stand up in front of groups of people and talk (unless you want to). I am quite happy to do that if necessary, and we will give a lot of support if there are articles, letters or presentations to be written. I would stress that we want a volunteer for this. Don't let it put you off coming to the AGM – we will not be press ganging members into the job. If necessary, I will carry on doubling up as EO for this next year, but I'd rather we had a dedicated member for this.

So, ideas for next year. At the social, I mentioned the possibility of using an underwater camera to see how eels inspect and take (or not) our baits. I was a bit nervous, as I thought some members might think it a bit daft. They didn't, so I will see what can be done. We need a clear water where eels can be caught in daylight to make this work. The cost of an infra red job would be horrendous, but the daylight cameras are not too expensive. It would be great to have some DVD footage along the lines of the Korda films. We also discussed the possibility of an IT programme that would correlate catch returns data and allow us to learn from our collective fishing experiences. We might be able to get a university student, either graduate or undergraduate, to do this as part of a thesis. Finally, Steve Pitts suggested that we might have a "group" within the group who fish for eels regularly to devote one rod to a specific type of rig so that we can compare results over the season. I have also volunteered to start putting the NAC book together, using material from the many magazines produced over the years. Nick Rose thinks he can start to get copies of these to me soon, and I will start work on it. It would be good

if any members who are interested in getting involved in any of the above could get in touch. We can only do these things if we work together.

We have been invited to attend the Institute of Fisheries Management Conference on eels over 2 days commencing 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009. We were also asked to make a presentation giving the anglers perspective on eel conservation and eel angling. We have replied that we are delighted to do both. We plan to deliver the "NAC Roadshow" presentation adapted for a specialist audience. If any members would like to attend either to participate or just listen and observe, please let me know. Whilst we cannot take a large group of members, I am sure that a few of us will be OK. We have presented the roadshow to the Cheshire region of the PAC at one of their monthly meetings, and the NAC membership at the winter social, and we also have a booking for the Reading region of the PAC in February, and an Abbey Cross AS meeting in Hertfordshire in March. If any of you belong to clubs or groups that would like to find out more about the NAC and the eel, we'd be pleased to take the show to them. It's a PowerPoint presentation, it's free and it raises the profile of the eel, the group and eel conservation!

Last but not least, thanks to all of you for your support and patience this year. Please tell us what you want from the club in the future, and what you feel that we could do better. It's your group!

## Internet Officers Update

Dave Smith

Seven months ago, almost to the day at the time of writing, the NAC finally re-launched it's website. After plugging the website all over the internet and getting some mentions in the Angling weeklies and thanks to James Holgate and (former member) Steve Ormrod, we managed a couple of mentions in Pike and Predators and the magazine of the Pike Anglers Club "Pikelines" we had some significant traffic through the website, that's now levelled out as to be expected.

I'm not going to go into too much detail about the Webstats because quite frankly while they have there uses they're beyond boring. Since April there have been over 50,000 unique visitors to the website, from over 40 countries... I record the unique visitors and not hits because this gives a truer reflection of how many people are hitting the website, rather than the amount of repeat visits from the same person, if we looked at "hits" we would be looking at a figure of well in excess of a quarter of a million. Not bad for a club of around 60 members!

I've about come to the end of the line with setting up the basics for the website. All that I can really do now is add the odd article and news clip, pic for the gallery etc, etc... I've got one project lined up for next year, which is to launch PayPal for joining fees, but that has to be passed at the AGM next March before work can commence. And there has been a suggestion that we incorporate a database to record eel captures. I'd like to hear what the membership thinks about both of these, neither are without their problems.

One thing I do need... More photos for the gallery, more rig diagrams more well everything, from the feedback we've had there are a lot of people looking for information on rigs etc so the more info we can put up on rigs, tackle techniques etc. the better. One thing I'd like to do is set up a "Top Tips" section, but I need you guys to let me know what your top tips are. Just a paragraph or two will do, who's going to start the ball rolling?

A couple of things to close...

If you look closely there is a section of the website for the regions. It's empty at the moment, but I'm more than happy to create a page or two for each region. It's an open invite to all the regional officers, you supply the information and I'll put it online. Update it when you want, it could prove to be an excellent tool in signing up those budding Eel anglers in your area! The offer's there who's going to be the first to take it up?

And last but most definitely not least...

**I am very proud to have received the Nigel Jeyes Memorial Trophy, it's been a difficult year on so many different levels, but an exceptionally rewarding one. And for a novice Eel angler to be rewarded with this trophy by the membership is more than just the icing on the cake, I am honoured, thank you.**

## Specialist Anglers Alliance

Dave Smith

I have just returned from the last SAA meeting, not much to report as the meeting was taken up mainly with financial information, Which will be transferred to the Angling Trust come 5th January.

If we go on the basis that we will have more than 50 members next year but fewer than 200 The cost of the NAC joining will be £100. which is very similar to our combined SAA/ACA group subs at present, We'll discuss this further at the AGM, but as of the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009 our memberships of the ACA and SAA will automatically transfer to the Angling Trust. Then in April/May we will have to take the decision to join the Angling trust as a group. There is no doubt in my mind that this is the right thing to do, I would also urge the membership to join as individuals and show your support for unity as soon as membership opens.

Mike Heylin (current secretary for the SAA) will sit on the board of directors for AT with responsibilities for Specialist Angling, The meetings outlined below will be our window to lobby Angling Trust via Mike. The meetings will be at the same place and under a similar format as the current SAA meetings.

The dates will be;  
February 9th  
May 10th  
September 6th  
November 15th

If my current work rota remains unchanged I will be able to attend the February, September and November meetings and will book holiday or swap a day to enable me to attend the May meeting, and I'm sure that I wont be the only NAC representative to attend. We have been well represented at the last three meetings and I'd like to continue to support Mike and the team where possible, even if it just a presence at the meetings. Our presence is noted and is appreciated by Mike and the SAA team.

Also it is possible that the "Specialists" may expand to encompass the Mullet and Bass groups, as these groups are focusing on species that inhabit estuarine waters, which are also of vital importance to us as Eel anglers we

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might what to take the opportunity to forge some relationships particularly from a political perspective.

This past year has been a consolidation process for the NAC and apart from our attendance at the SAA meeting and the Yorks summit, we have done very little politically, While I'm that there will be some name changes on the committee next year. I believe that we should look to become more active on a political and research (following on from Mark and Jason's comments at the winter social) level. To this end I think it's imperative that the environment officers role is filled at the AGM, and we should be active in finding someone to take this forward. I don't know the membership well enough to comment if we have somebody currently within our ranks? Is there anybody that would like to take on this role? They will be well supported by the rest of the committee.

One thing that is blatantly obvious, is that my knowledge is sadly lacking! I will work hard at trying to increase my knowledge over the coming months but I'd be grateful of any help in this department. So if anybody has any notes from previous meetings, web-recourses or can point me in the right direction book wise, that would be great. If I'm going to be attending the future AT/SAA meetings I'd like to be able to talk with some knowledge rather than being an enthusiastic muppet!

To close there where 11 people at the last supper..  
5 Specialist Anglers Alliance  
4 Pike Anglers' Club (including 3 who sit/sat on the SAA committee)  
1 National Anguilla Club (twas I of course)  
1 Chub Study Group.



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# Members Profile - Rod Hillyer

## NAC MEMBERS NAME

Rod Hillyer, was known as "The Eeling Commando" whilst a member of The British Eel Anglers Club, for reasons known to the BEAC boys in the 80's/90's.

## STATUS

Married.

## WHEN DID YOU FIRST START EEL FISHING

1967...13 years old...on and off ever since.

## REASONS FOR JOINING THE NAC

To offer my support to the last of the eel angling clubs.

## FIRST EVER EEL CAUGHT

About 8oz on maggot from the River Bure at Wroxham in Norfolk, whilst on my summer school holidays with the parents in 1988.

## PERSONAL BEST EEL TO DATE

5lb 13oz.

## BEST REMEMBERED EEL SESSION

When I caught my PB 5:13 because I hooked it in daylight and saw it tail - walk completely clear of the water, twice!!

Also, must mention the BEAC fish - in I attended at Welwood in Sept 1989...arrived after dark with my dad (I was only 15 years old at the time) who then rowed me and my gear up the 260 acre reservoir in the pitch black, whilst looking out for the lads' headlamps. Eventually found them. Then realised I had left my Mitchell 300 reels at home in another rucksack, much to my dad's amusement...not!! We then endured the coldest night I have ever encountered, huddled under an old 45" broly on old - school sun loungers.

Next morning I said my "goodbyes" to Mick Bowles and the other guys, who threatened to use me as a junior raffle prize for the fish - in (Nicky Duffy knows what I mean...). I didn't have the courage to tell Mick I had spent the whole night without any reels, for fear of a major scandal report by BEACs very own Mr. N. Asty (equivalent to NAC's The Mole)!!

## WHICH MONTHS DO YOU FISH FOR EELS

May to October.

## FAVOURITE VENUE

A local 20 acre Hampshire gravel pit, set on the edge of the New Forest.

## ANY PARTICULAR BAIT PREFERENCES AND REASONS FOR THIS

Two big lobworms with both tails snipped off...amazing scent release, or half a small, freshly caught 2" - 2.5" roach/rudd fry, head section...costs nothing if you snatch them yourself and again, maximum scent release.

## FAVOURITE ITEM OF TACKLE

My trusty, slimed - up 48" North Western landing net.

## OTHER SPECIES THAT YOU FISH FOR

Just pike in the winter months, plus a bit of barbel/chubing on the rivers or carp/tenching on the lakes in summer, in between my eel sessions.

## OF ALL THE SPECIES THAT YOU HAVE CAUGHT, WHICH ONE IS YOUR FAVOURITE AND WHY

Eels...their mysterious life style and behaviour, the huge anticipation of fishing a new water with no track record of any eels being there, the screaming takes (when you get them!!) and the relaxing thought that very often you are the only angler on the whole water fishing for them.

Very close 2<sup>nd</sup>...Pike...love 'em to bits because of their aggressive, no - nonsense attitude.

## ARE YOU INVOLVED IN ANY OTHER ANGLING ORGANISATIONS

Ringwood and District AA, Christchurch AC, Pike Anglers' Club of GB and Anglers' Conservation Association.

## ANY OTHER INTERESTS OUTSIDE ANGLING

Natural history...especially bird watching and aquatic/marine life.

## DISLIKES IN ANGLING

Litter...Nolsy anglers, especially those who insist on smashing bivvy pegs and bank sticks into the ground with a mallet for hours on end...A particular club balliff in the Hampshire vicinity and "jobs worth" balliffs in general...The commercial side of today's angling with the constant and often needless marketing and development of new equipment...Grossly overstocked, commercial carp lakes.

## HOW COULD THE NAC BE IMPROVED

Increase in output from its members, whether it's writing an article for the magazine or turning up at a fish - in.

## AMBITIONS, IN ANGLING TERMS

To catch a 6lb+ eel, a really big pike from my local Hampshire Avon/Dorset Stour and just continue to enjoy being out and about on the bank side.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY ANGLING HEROES OR HAS ANYONE INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER TO DATE

Eel fishing...John Sidley, Paul Gustafson and Mick Bowles.

Pike fishing...Neville Fickling, Barrie Rickards, John Watson (old NAC member!!), John Sidley and Eddie Turner.

General...my good old dad, bless him...best piking buddy there is.

## DO YOU THINK THAT THE EXISTING RECORD OF 11LB 2OZ WILL BE BROKEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF SO, WHAT TYPE OF VENUE DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE AND WILL IT BE TO AN EEL ANGLER OR AN ANGLER FISHING FOR ANOTHER SPECIES

Yes, it will be broken (if you count the publicity ban Colne Valley fish, it already has !!). The Colne and Lea Valley waters seem to be spot on for chucking up real whackers on a regular basis. Our very own Mark Salt has first hand experience of this!!

I genuinely think this area will do another mammoth eel, very soon.

The Suffolk/Norfolk pits and ponds also have a track record for monsters. Let's not forget an old BEAC member, Gary Mason, had a massive 10lb 7oz eel in 1991 from a very small Suffolk water, on a rudd tail. This is still the biggest, intentionally caught eel to date. It was well reported in both the AM and AT, with pictures, as well as an issue of BEACs Eel News magazine. I think he went back and had a 6+ on his next session, a few days later!!

I have also seen pictures in the angling press of two different 10lb+ eels from carp syndicate waters in the Suffolk/Norfolk area.

There is such a huge number of carp anglers out there using masses of boilies and pellets that the odds will always be in favour of a carp angler nailing the next record. Then again, look what Gary Mason landed out the blue on his first night trip to a new water!! You just don't know what's around the corner...

Incidentally, Kingfisher Lake (the present record eel water) is 5 minutes from my front door and is now a very expensive closed carp syndicate. However, I know a couple of guys who fish it and so I still get to hear what gets caught there. I can tell you nothing anywhere near the size of Steve Terry's 11:02 has been caught there since. It has also become infested with loads of crayfish.

The other club lakes next door to Kingfisher have done 4s, 5s and 6s but nothing bigger, so far...

# The Boat House

David O'Sullivan

As you said you were desperate for articles, I thought this might be my only chance of ever getting anything published.....

We are sitting in the pub: myself, Andrea- my wife, Helen and Lofty, Mark, Dave and Debbie. We have a holiday cottage brochure. The purpose of the evening is to pick a location for a long weekend away. Some of the group like the idea of staying in a lighthouse, and some an elegant country house in the middle of nowhere. But me- I'm on a mission; I have an ulterior motive- a secret agenda. I have to sell this location.

"Has anyone seen this one?" I ask, knowing Helen already liked the look of it. Slippery Sully is now in full flow.

"It's a Grade II listed detached property, occupying a stunning lakeside position in the grounds of Westwood Park, on the edge of Droitwich Spa." (Don't mention the eels! Don't mention John Sidley! You're doing fine- they like it so don't blow it!)

"Guests are welcome to swim from the jetty or bring their own rowing boat. There is also a wooden hide for bird watching. You have a 60 acre lake to yourself in unique, stunning surroundings."

Then Lofly spots that it says you are welcome to fish the lake as well. I reply (looking as guilty as a puppy sitting next to a pile of poo) "Oh! I didn't see that bit."  
My cunning, subtle plan is in tatters and the game is up. And yet, we all decide to book it. I then say, "I'll get the drinks in!" which leaves everyone in stunned silence.

After many years of dreaming of fishing Westwood Park, this was my chance to walk in the footsteps of giants who have gone before and add my tribute to all the great eel fishermen who know just how good this particular water was and what monsters it may still hold.

Mid April 2008, and we're racing up the M42 on a Friday afternoon- like a small boy waiting for Christmas morning I had to be the first one there- and bagsy the best bedroom to boot. While my wife valiantly brought in the cases from the car, I was already up the jetty with my fishing gear setting up. I was full of cold, it was wet, windy and hardly good eeling conditions but that wasn't going to stop me, and by the time we left on Monday I had the worst man flu in history.



The rest of the group arrived soon after, and we ventured in to cosmopolitan Droitwich nearby for a curry and a beer. Saturday morning I'm up at the crack of early, fishing with man-flu and a hangover, and Lofly trying hard to catch small silver fish. Several cups of tea and a hearty breakfast later, I managed to land an 8lb pike on roach head. The weather improved slightly in the afternoon, and we walked along the dam wall to the other end of the lake. Standing on the dam wall, I became very emotional and a little verse came to me.

What secrets, what nights he has known,  
What hope, what light he has shown.  
And on those lakes of Heaven,  
He's done one better than eleven.

John Sidley was here. I even showed his book to my friends, on that very same dam wall.

Saturday night, we had a Film theme night. Previous themes have been cowboys, horror, and Star Wars- this time it was Medieval, and everyone dressed as ladies or Knights of the Round Table. I went as a giant cockerel. (As I had proposed to my wife whilst dressed in a 6 ft badger suit, it seemed like the right thing to do and no-one was unduly surprised)



Whilst reading the guest book, I saw tales of eels spotted by other guests, in the reeds just outside our bedroom window. Sadly this was the closest I came to an eel on this trip, and although I got many bites on Sunday night, in gale force conditions, I blanked.



( my rods can just be seen next to the red lifebelt outside the window- my priorities are right- wife in the bedroom and I'm outside fishing)

On Monday morning, we packed and left for home with no regrets at all. I'd fulfilled a dream I never thought I would get to do- I'd fished Westwood Park! What a start to the season- it could only get better from here. I had my enthusiasm back at last. 2007 had been a hard season. I'd put in more rod hours, having more time now my kids are growing up, but it never kicked off and



in my frustration my wife even had to stop me from throwing a rod in the canal at 1.00am one time- I kid you not!

In 2008 I caught my normal quota of bootlaces, but also better eels of 2lb 11oz, 3lb and 4lb 2oz- and more importantly I enjoyed every second. We tried to book the Boathouse again, but sadly it's no longer available as the owners have moved back in. But I've got my eye on a cottage by a gravel pit for April next year- if I can slip this one under the radar as well.

Slippery Sully



# An Encounter With Age.

Barry McConnell

An Encounter With Age.

The eel is a very slow growing species. It grows so slowly that the long accepted yardstick for eel growth rate is an increase in weight of just 1lb every ten years. At this rate an eel weighing more than the current record of 11lb 2oz would be a very, very old creature. Eels of this age and size undoubtedly exist in our waters and they could be lurking in the depths of an old pool that is steeped in history where they can slowly grow, and remain undetected for several decades.

Three years ago I discovered a small canal feeder reservoir that was built at the same time as the canal in 1752. Willow trees were planted on the bank and, as they aged they grew so big and frail that the trunks split and the top branches fell off. The fallen branches sprouted roots and continued to grow in a mass of re-growth, right on the waters edge, where wave action has undercut the bank beneath the entanglement. The margins are quite deep close in with some lily pads breaking the surface. The first time I saw the place, as I sniffed the air, I could almost sense big old eels lurking. Many patches of feed bubbles were fizzing the surface of the open

water as feeding fish rooted amongst extensive bloodworm beds. There are so many small fish in this water that just one scoop in the deep margins with a landing net provides enough bait for the night. There are no pike in this water and few perch. Little is known about the eels because no one ever fishes for them. One of the attractions to eel angling is that you never target a known fish and are searching for a truly wild fish that has never been caught before. The prospect of fishing this old water where the eels have never been pressured by anglers had me very excited.

The first time I fished there I hooked an eel first cast and went on to catch eels of 4lb 9oz, 5lb 4oz and 6lb 8oz during the first two nights.



4, 5, and 6lb eels – August 2006

The following season sport had slowed down and I only caught five eels. The two biggest each weighed exactly 6lb 12oz but this was not a repeat capture, they were different individuals of exactly the same weight that must have been there for nearly seventy years without ever getting discovered



Different eels; same weight – 6.12 – May & June 2007

I had expected the catch rate to fall like this and, as the eels responded to the angling pressure, it became time to start searching for quiet areas that rarely get fished, where eels can retreat to and remain undisturbed.

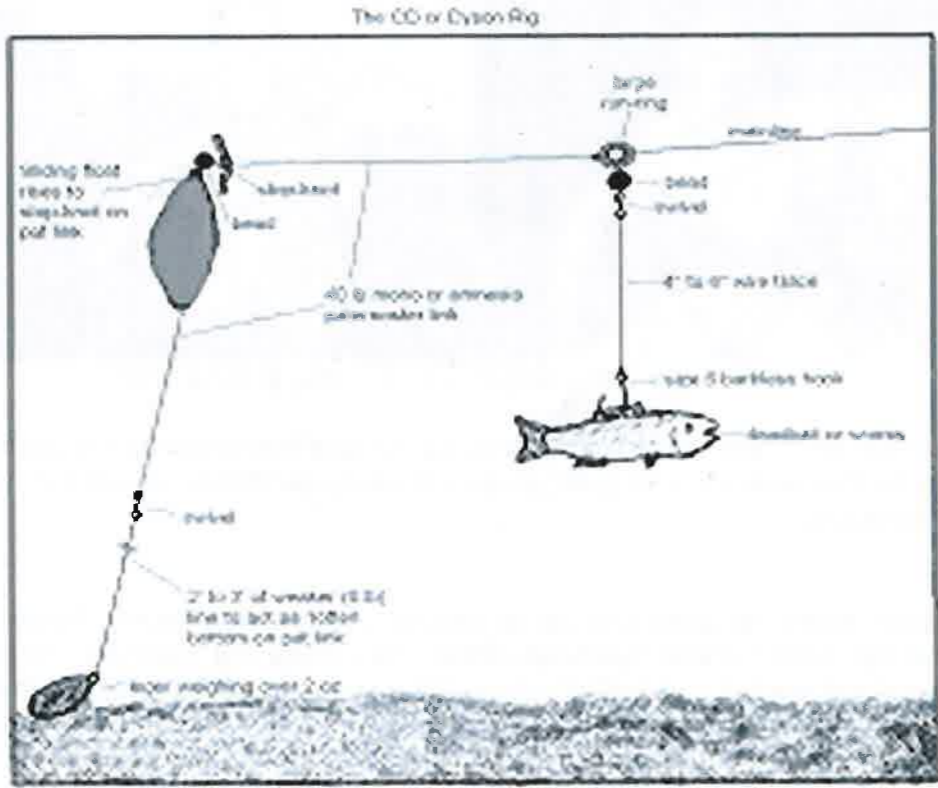
I visited the water again last week and set up next to a yellow sign saying 'danger of death no fishing beyond this point,' where overhead power lines cross the reservoir. To deter anglers from fishing here, the angling club hasn't removed the snags from this area and the odd branch can be seen poking out between lily pads. From where I set up, with an awkward backhanded cast, the bait could be fired out beneath the pylons and into the area that has rarely been fished.

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'Danger of death no fishing beyond this point,

I am allowed two rods here. On each rod the bait was presented two to three feet off-bottom by means of a Dyson rig. The Dyson rig, which is also known as the CD rig, is a sunken float rig that was created by Colin Dyson as an improvement to a pike angling rig called the VB rig which was devised by Vic Bellars in the eighties. The Dyson rig is widely used by today's eel anglers to present the bait off-bottom.



At 43 1/2" x 95/8", these dimensions were similar to those of the 6.14 of the previous year, but the presence of a very old injury to the tail of this fish indicated that it was not a repeat capture. Comparison of the photographs later that day confirmed this. The fish was returned, and swam away full of beans, and I packed up the still frozen bivvy (note the frost on the ground in the photograph) and went home, intending to fish the following night. I did, it was even colder, and I blanked. The next day saw us two inches deep in snow! I have fished the water once since then with no success, and have now turned my attention to pike for the winter.

As usual, I am struggling to come to any real conclusions as to why the quality of runs has deteriorated here. Other, more experienced eel anglers tell me that it's not unusual, and that I should be fishing off bottom or shock rigs. Even though I have tried these methods this year, it was half hearted, and I have decided to fish one rod consistently through the next year with an adapted Dyson rig, and experiment more with other rigs. I am convinced that the eels are approaching my baits cautiously, picking them up tentatively and reversing away, dropping the bait immediately resistance is felt. With hindsight, I realised that I should have used a completely different bait as well as worms, and the big black slugs that have made the last two summers so unpleasant (I woke up one night, whilst using an oval broily, with one crawling through what's left of my hair!) are the obvious answer. Perhaps something completely different might make a difference. It would seem that fish baits and peeler crab are no longer productive, which is odd considering my success with these on the pit in 2007.

I have decided to continue to fish this water for part of the next season: the appearance of a "new" 6, that has managed to avoid me for almost two seasons has convinced me that a bigger fish could be on the cards. I'm looking forward to the spring!



or indicator will register small fish activity so you can tell that there is still some bait on and when there is no more activity you know it is time to put fresh bait on.

The first run was on the dead roach. A carp of 6 or 7 lb was soon brought to the net with my 3lb test curve rod and 15lb line. I put on another roach and recast only to catch another carp straight away, so, for the next cast, I selected a larger bait to reduce the incidence of carp. In this water the carp feed heavily on the freely available masses of small fish. The carp angler in the next peg could hardly believe that I was catching carp while using roach for bait. I explain to him in boilie-angling terms that a deadbait is 100% unprocessed fishmeal.

Just after midnight I was alerted by the alarm giving one bleep. The take was slight and delicate as an eel slowly and gently mouthed at the bait. Then, suddenly, line was ripping through the rod rings as a very fast run caused the alarm to sound a one toner. After becoming lulled by the quietness of a still night such a sudden alert can cause panic and you have to keep your head as a rush of adrenalin can boost events to a surreal level.

A firm strike set the hook and I felt the unmistakable wriggle of a massive eel writhing on the end. The eel took control and headed for the bottom, wrenching the rod round with a nerve wracking force. I raised the rod and it bucked and flexed through its full test curve as I bent into the eel to try and gain the upper hand. I managed to get it up on to the surface about ten yards away where it was back paddling the water with a snake like motion. I encouraged it to stay on the surface and, with a slow but steady pressure, brought it in over the top of any threatening snags. There was a tussle at the net when the eel started spinning wildly and thrashing at the water. I was actually shaking with excitement as I parted the folds of the net to see a rare old specimen eel weighing 5.05 with the hook firmly embedded in the corner of its mouth.



5.05 August 2008

As it was getting light the worm rod was away and I landed another big old eel of 4.07. A weight gain of 1lb every 10 years would age these two eels at mid forty to mid fifty. I have often marvelled over the fact that the big eels I target are older than me but here I realise that I am fast catching them up and I have just had an encounter with my own age group.

## Members Profile - Mick King

### N.A.C. MEMBERS NAME

Mick King

### STATUS

Married

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST START EEL FISHING

1963

### REASONS FOR JOINING THE N.A.C.

I have been gradually increasing my eel trips over catfish for the last few years and decided to apply for membership

### FIRST EEL EVER CAUGHT

Norfolk Broads River Bure

### PERSONAL BEST EEL TO DATE

3lbs 10ozs

### BEST REMEMBERED EEL SESSION

Private lake Shropshire 12 runs, 12 fish all returned alive while my mate slept through it all and couldn't believe his eyes in the morning when I pulled in my sack.

### WHICH MONTHS DO YOU FISH FOR EELS

Between May and August

### FAVOURITE VENUE

Any canal but my favourite Grand Union. At moment trying farm ponds.

### ANY PARTICULAR BAIT PREFERENCES AND REASONS FOR THIS

Dead bait. Gudgeon or pheasant chicks. Have caught on worms but have always caught bigger fish on deads. Confidence thing really. Due to fishing mainly fishing canals nowadays, dead fish or chick usually out fishes worm.

### FAVOURITE ITEM OF TACKLE

Waterproof 100% tent (occasionally scales)

### OTHER SPECIES THAT YOU FISH FOR

Catfish, pike, roach, chub, perch, tench, grass carp roughly in that order.

### OF ALL THE SPECIES THAT YOU HAVE CAUGHT, WHICH ONE IS YOUR FAVOURITE AND WHY

Catfish, sheer power of fight and along with eels I find them mysterious and beautiful. I am not anti-social but enjoy absolute silence which is needed for

both of these species. Social events on the bank do not catch cats and eels.

### ARE YOU INVOLVED IN ANY OTHER ANGLING ORGANISATIONS

Not now. Ex N.A.S.A.

### ANY OTHER INTERESTS OUTSIDE ANGLING

All country sports, bit of a twitcher on the quiet. Have seen some amazing birds and mammals whilst fishing. Walking the highlands of Scotland with my missus and dogs.

### DIS-LIKES IN ANGLING

Rules and regulations made by twats that don't fish. Usually caused by idiots who break the rules then everyone else suffers.

### HOW COULD THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BE IMPROVED

No comment.

### AMBITIONS IN ANGLING TERMS

Improve personal bests of cats, eel and pike. Oh and at least one three pounds roach.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ANGLING HEROES OR HAS ANYONE INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER TO DATE

Keith Arthur. Views should be listened to by all anglers. If we don't all join together as one unit there won't be any angling left for future generations. Bob Baldock (CCG), Mick Brown, John Sidley, Peter Stone, Bernard Venables. I appreciate being accepted as a member of this particular club as I admired John Sidley as an angler and wish I could have lived in the Midlands during his lifetime. I have learnt all I know from his writing but would have loved to meet the man.

### DO YOU THINK THAT THE EXISTING RECORDS OF 11LB 2OZ WILL BE BROKEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF SO, WHAT TYPE OF VENUE DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE AND WILL IT BE TO AN EEL ANGLER OR AN ANGLER FISHING FOR ANOTHER SPECIES

No, I would think that the record will be very long lasting, if ever broken. If so will be caught in the same circumstances as before.

# Bits And Pieces From The Old Sod

## Arthur Sutton

In the Anguilla magazine a mention was made of the fact that members who had been in the eel angling scene for some time could possibly relate some of their experiences so as to supply an article for our magazine.

Well, I have been angling for eels for over sixty years now, and I think that I can rustle up a few things to tell you. Some of them may have been told in the old and original magazine, the Bulletin and I hope to be excused for that.

I start with an experience I had when fishing for baits, mainly gudgeon, ready for a night eel fishing. It was the latter part of the war and we were been treated to a barrage of Doodlebugs or V1 flying bombs. The wide bank behind me was extremely steep, with a great big hole made by a bomb a few days earlier. A lady pushing a pram was approaching the hole although she would have had to come close to me in order to get past the hole. Then we heard it, the somewhat terrifying sound made by a doodlebug. We were both standing still, looking skyward to try to see where the beastie was. As we spotted it its rocket engine stopped and it was fairly obvious that it was coming down close to where we were. There were only seconds before it would hit the ground so I pushed the lady into the fairly deep hole and we both lay faced down on the ground.

The bomb hit the ground quite close to us but, surprisingly, did not explode. However, the lady's pram had started down the steep slope and had reached the edge of a roughly ploughed area. I gave chase and the pram came to a halt within yards of where the new bomb had landed. I reached for it as smoke started to issue from the bomb but instead of heading back to the canal and the steep slope I went in the opposite direction as it was easier. I did not think that the lady might be upset, thinking that I had run off with her baby. However, when I stopped I signalled to her to come over to where I was, but keeping well away from the bomb. As she came towards me I could hear her sobbing. She first looked at the baby then, finding it perfectly ok she turned to me and hugged me tight, still crying. It was some time before she could speak and when she could we put more distance between ourselves and the flying bomb. I stayed with her and the baby until I was sure she was herself once more. She was so happy to think that I had risked my life in order to save the little one and insisted that I take some money, which I politely refused. So, after a while we shook hands and parted. Back at the canal I packed up my tackle for I could not carry on. Stuffing bits and pieces in the pocket of my ex army combat jacket I found four £1 notes. She had put them in my pocket when she hugged me.

So, my tackle dealer was pleased when I handed him the 4 £1 notes in exchange for hooks, a plummet, some gut substitute (there was no nylon in those days) and a range of floats, several of which I still have and which I will never use. The bomb did explode later that day.

In my early years I was fishing the Lea Navigation Canal when a man wearing a straw hat sat down beside me on the bank. He seemed a kindly man and when he offered a few hints I gladly altered my tackle to follow his suggestion. What followed was some of the best fishing I ever had. The man who I came to know as the man with the straw hat was none other than Edward Ensom. He had published a book on fishing the tributaries of the River Lea with a dry fly for the roach and dace. He wrote under the name of Faddist and was very well known in Hertfordshire and well respected. We had many a fine day fishing together and he taught me

how to cast a fly. I went on to catch many fine dace from the River Lea and Beane. Edward took me to a stretch of the Lea Navigation which held very good perch which we fished for with live minnows or stone loach. He showed me his method of catching these little baits and he put his faith in the stone loach for taking the larger perch. The minnows were fished at mid water, whereas the loach were fished right at the bottom. Between the two of us we took many fine perch and the larger fish scaled almost 4lbs. Of course we fished other waters and a favourite venue was the River Stort, itself a tributary of the River Lea. On a given day we could see several roach to two pounds or more. The best fish that I remember was taken by Edward a fine roach of three and a half pounds. All of these fish were taken on bread crust and he had his own secret way of preparing the crust. He never did divulge his method to me. When one recalls that our bottom tackle was of gut substitute, really thick and not very supple with some of our hooks tied to horse hair, it seems a small wonder that we caught anything at all. We certainly would be unable to do it nowadays. Another fine and reliable venue was the Lea at ~Rye House. The swims adjacent to the famous watercress beds were certainly the best and were fought over by anglers fishing the Lea benevolent match run by the London Anglers' Association. Sadly, by 1970 onwards the fishing was so poor that the Lea Benevolent Match was moved to the Thames. The fishing has I am glad to say, recovered, and with the improvement in water quality Rye House has again become a fine fishery. I should have mentioned that the stretch from which we took that fine perch was St Margaret's, upstream of Rye House and that little piece of info takes me nicely to my next piece and my introduction to large eels.

It was a fine day rather warm and with storms threatening. I had a good supply of stone loach plus a few Bull heads, and I was after the big perch. The swim I had chosen was under a large hornbeam tree where I could get some relief from the sun and I reckon that the shade of the tree on the water might give be a better result, as the fishing was rather slow otherwise. A terrific storm broke out and, leaving my baited tackle in the water I put some distance between myself and the tree. I lay flat on the ground and covered myself with my waterproof cycling gear. It was at least one hour before the storm moved away and the rain eased. I hurried back to my swim under the tree and found that my rod was bent down with the top well down in the water. Before continuing I will describe my rod. It was eleven feet in length, three piece with the butt and middle of whole cane. The top joint was of greenheart which had to be straightened after each trip. I loved that rod and it probably accounted for more fish than any other rod I have used. It was fitted with a star back centre pin reel. The first fixed spool or thread line reel had yet to become available. I tightened up and immediately thought I was snagged on the bottom until it started to move. I held on but had to yield line as the fish moved to my right. Then it stopped for a few seconds before coming past me and continuing to my left hand side. Then it stopped. I waited for it to move again but eventually had to walk towards it. With all the energy I could muster I heaved and heaved with little finesse and it very slowly came away from the bottom. I thought this must be one of the big pike we occasionally connected with, but never landed, when fishing for the perch. Then I saw it! An eel the like of which I never believed to exist. I held it there, writhing and thrashing about on the surface and I cannot say how long that lasted but the eel held its own, never coming any nearer to me. The whole cane sections of my rod creaked and groaned in protest and suddenly it was all over, with the inevitable result the eel slowly sank out of sight and a stream of bubbles indicated where it was going. I was so dismayed that I packed what little tackle I had and went home. After a few gudgeon fishing trips to my local canal at Tottenham I got to thinking about that eel and of how I could start fishing for eels. I realised that it could not be done using that same rod, but I had no money and very few shirt buttons. All the same I went along to my tackle dealer to learn how much I would have to save to get a rod capable of dealing with eels. My tackle dealer was a kindly old man who had worked with my father in the building trade in the past. He listened to my tale of woe and chuckled for he himself had lost many a big eel. Said he, here's what I can do for you. I have a stout rod intended for pike fishing. I can let you have that for three pence a week, and you may take it now. I was overjoyed and hurried home to plan my first eel fishing

trip, with St Margaret's in mind. I was to be very disappointed, for all I caught was some of the large perch and a couple of smallish pike. After several day trips with the same result I turned again to roach fishing. I had a couple more trips with my friend Edward when he was taken ill and died after a few days. It was a great loss. I attended his funeral and was able to place a few pieces of tackle in the grave. I will always remember him the man with the straw hat. Right, I know you are busting to learn more of my eel fishing, but first I will tell you of the Lady of the Lake.

As a young man I never did believe in ghosts, but the following made me change my mind. I was, at the time, a member of Kingsmoor Anglers and one of their waters was called Bury Hill Lake. Not the famous water of that name but so called because it was adjacent to a small lane of that name. I did fish there a quite a lot and because it was a difficult water few fished it. I mostly fished there in mid week and did have some good sport. There were no eels, or at least I never contacted any. On this occasion I was fishing for tench, of which the lake held some good specimens. My swim was one which I often fished and was at the narrow end of the lake and only 60 yards from the busy Staines Road. There was no road noise as the surrounding land was very thickly wooded. Behind me and to my left was a huge stone grotto through which a little stream trickled and fed the lake. The night was very still and unusually quiet from a fishing point of view. Normally the action would start as soon as it got properly dark. There was a moon but it shone behind a very high vale of wispy cloud. I sat there hoping that I might see the vixen with her cubs when suddenly my heart started to pump very fast. There, in the half light was a lady in white. Unbelievably she stepped off the bank and into or, rather, on to the water. She came nearer and I could see her quite clearly now. Heavily veiled and with all the trimmings of a bride to be. As she came close I got to my feet not knowing whether to stay and greet her or run like hell. I may have taken a step forward (or perhaps backwards) when suddenly she was gone. I sat in my chair all night thinking I may see her again. (Not for what you think, you over sexed lot) although, I don't know though, but heck I was too scared at the time. No further sightings and the day dawned clear with a promise of sunshine later. I went over to the pub on the opposite side of the road where it was agreed that club members could park their cars. As I was getting some more food and bits from the boot, the pub landlord came over and asked had I done any good and was I staying all night. When I said that I was staying he invited me in for a cuppa and a bacon sandwich. As we got chatting, I mentioned what I had seen during the night. I looked for the look of surprise or even disbelief in his face. There was neither. He just said excuse me for a moment and went up the wooden staircase. He came down holding a great wad of newspaper cuttings in his hand. These he said will show you that you are not alone in seeing the lady of the lake. We read through the cuttings and with very little variation they all told of how the lady had been seen since the year 1880. They were all accounts by persons who had no prior knowledge of what had happened. Apparently the lady was a bride on horseback just outside the lake. On her way to church at the top of Bury Hill, she was dressed as one can imagine a bride would be in those days. Suddenly from the trees dashed an animal, believed to be a fox right in the path of the horse. The frightened horse reared up and threw the lady. When others reached her she was dead, or dying, from a broken neck. She has been seen, dressed as she was on that awful day, at roughly every 10 years and on the anniversary of her death. There you have it, my truthful and accurate account of my seeing the lady of the lake. Two of the club members had seen exactly what I saw, and vowed never to fish there again.

Now I relate something which happened while I was actually eel fishing. I do know that this will appeal to you, being the over sexed lot that you are. I was fishing at St Margaret's (what again) and had taken three good eels. I had to keep a careful ear open for footsteps on the gravel path as it was strictly no night fishing and the area was prone to being patrolled by members of the L.A.A. I was on a winner there because I used to attend every monthly meeting and so found out when a raid would take place. But I was taken completely by surprise when a young lady appeared only feet away from me. She was dressed in ----- nothing at all! She asked if I

could spare a cigarette, I found my packet and gave her one (a cigarette you sexy lot). She thanked me and went off up the footpath to the bridge from which they were diving. I had hardly recovered from that when her friend appeared. "Sorry to trouble you but have you got a light?" While fumbling for my lighter I asked if she too would like a cigarette and I prepared my lighter to give her a light. The lighter was one of those where you can adjust the flame and of course I turned it to full. The flame lit up the night sky and clearly showed everything. And I do mean everything. She thanked me and trotted off giggling. I never saw them again although that was not the reason why I kept going back there. Just for the sake of you lot yeas they were big girls. I don't know who I fancied more, the lady of the lake or the two girls at St Margaret's. Well I do, but I'm not telling you.

I do not do a lot of winter fishing, but I went to Kingsmead for a spot of roach fishing. On the few occasions when I have fished there in winter I have taken some really good roach, but I can never find them in summer. However, it was one week before Christmas 1971 I wanted to end the year with a fish or two. It was really cold. If I had been a brass monkey I would have been in trouble. The wind was very strong and I thought to myself those people sailing in the weather must be as barmy as I am. I was fishing just round the end of the peninsular at the entrance to the boat channel. The bank was very steep but at least I could get a bit of shelter there. A single yacht came round the point and as it hit the wind over it went. I watched with amusement at first as the young lady tried to right it. It was but a few feet from the bank. The lady called out to me to say that the mast was stuck in the bottom and could I please help her out of the water. I tried in vain to grasp her hand but could not reach her because of the high bank. Yet I had to do something. I had with me one of those extendable carp net poles, favoured so much by carp anglers. I set the pole up and was able to reach the lady and with a lot of luck I managed to get her up the bank. She was frozen and shivering like mad. So I got her to sit in my bivvy with a blanket around her while I made some strong coffee. I had already boiled my kettle just before the incident so the coffee was soon made. We chattered while the coffee was consumed and I offered her half a bar of chocolate which she accepted readily. Now the Yacht Club building was round the far side of the lake and as it was almost as far to my car I suggested that she take a steady jog without stopping back to the Yacht Club building. I said that I would go with her to make sure that she was OK. This we did and when we got there she was looking a lot better. She thanked me and invited me into the club but I declined, as I had already had tackle stolen by youngsters at Kingsmead and hurried back to my swim. Back at the bivvy I made another coffee and sat there for I don't know how long. Suddenly I heard footsteps on the gravel and I looked out to see a well built and well dressed gent in plus fours. He asked if I was the person who had helped his daughter from the water. I confirmed that I was as I got to my feet. He took my hand and put his arm round my shoulder. Apparently, he was the commodore of the club and the young lady was his daughter and secretary. I would like you to accept this gift from us all at the yacht club he said, and handed me a shallow parcel neatly wrapped in Christmas paper. Thanking me again and wishing me happy Christmas he went on his way. On getting home I found the parcel to contain 20 of the biggest cigars I have seen and 4 packets of good quality cigarettes. On the rear of the parcel was his title and the club telephone number. I rang the number and his secretary answered. I asked if I could speak to the commodore and thanked him very much for the gift. He replied that it was all they could do a short notice and asked me if I would do him the honour of attending the club Christmas dinner and dance. He would not take no for an answer and so I went along. It was a splendid affair and after a really excellent dinner he addressed the club members present (nearly one hundred of them). After giving the members some late news he went on to introduce me and described in detail how I had saved his daughter and possibly saved her life. They made me an associate member and promised to help me at anytime. So one good turn deserves another so they say. I will relate more little incidents next time.

Meanwhile tight lines.

# Members Profile - Mark Parker

## NAC Members Name

Mark Parker

## Status

Co-habiting Have 3 years old daughter  
Amber

## When Did You Start Eel Fishing

4 years ago

## Reasons For Joining The NAC

More knowledge about eel fishing

## First Eel Ever Caught

2lb 6oz from River Nene.

## Personal Best Eel

3lb 2oz.

## Best Remembered Eel Session

Fishing on the Woolpack Fishery. Had no eels but did get 4 pike all 15lb+ on tiny chunks of roach fished on a Dyson rig

## Which Months Do You Fish For Eels

Spring-Autumn (May-Sept)

## Favourite Venue

Any gravel pit or venue with eels in

## Any Particular Bait Preferences And Reasons For This

Lobworms as even predatory eels will take them so gives me confidence. Also small dead roach or dace

## Favourite Item Of Tackle

Roll-over indicators

## Other Species That You Fish For

Everything but carp – life's too short!

## Of All The Species That You Have Caught Which Is Your Favourite And Why

Fish for so many species that I don't have a favourite. My favourite is what I am fishing for at the time

## Are You Involved In Any Other Angling Organisations

Catfish Conservation Group, the Tenchfishers

## Any Other Interests Outside Angling

Motor biking, rough shooting, walking.

## Dislikes In Angling

Members of carp syndicates who think they are a wing of the angling mafia. People who are secretive particularly with novices and kids. People who slag off others on forums while hiding behind alias

## How Could The National Anguilla Club Be Improved

Only just joined so wouldn't like to comment

## Ambitions In Angling Terms

3lb roach, 2lb+ Rudd, 30lb pike, 10lb+ Tench, 6lb+ eel

## Do You Have Any Angling Hero's Or Has Anyone Influenced Your Career To Date

Ivan Marks, Bob Nudd, John Sidley, Martin Bowler, Chris Yates, Mick Brown

## Do You Think That The Existing Record Of 11lb 2oz Will Be Broken In The Near Future If So, What Type Of Venue Do You Think It Will Be And Will It Be To An Eel Angler Or An Angler Fishing For Other Species

It has been broken but due to a publicity ban on the water he wasn't able to claim it. As an angling journalist it really winds me up. The British record should be about the fish and not the angler. Records are for the record books not to boost anglers egos

# How to Catch a Record Eel

David O'Sullivan

How to catch a record eel-  
It's easy if you try.  
You dream the impossible dream  
And then it's time to die.

Well that sums it up for me, I really should stop here but alas, I must waffle on and waffle on I must. On the NAC member's profile, Question 20 asked:  
**Do you think the existing record of 11lb 2oz will be broken in the near future? If so, what type of venue do you think it will be and will it be to an eel angler, or to another angler fishing for another species?**

I answered:

I would love to hear of the record going to an eel angler, and God willing it will. The least expected time and the least likely location- cometh the monster! So why not a canal or river, rather than a carp water? It would be good for eel angling and the fresh water eel if a kindred spirit broke the record. God bless us all.

There are many theories as to why an eel angler hasn't broken the record, but for me we are just a small band of anglers at the outposts of the fishing world. We are a drop in the ocean, a grain of sand on an endless beach compared to the total annual rod hours put in by anglers who fish for other species. The odds, statistics and the rule book are against us. And yet, I keep the faith. Unsought, unplanned and unexpected - a moment in time when Steve Terry back in June 1978 smashed Alan Dart's record out of sight. The target species was of course Carp. So many big eels have been caught accidentally by carp and pike anglers over the years that it's about time we put all this to bed.

Reading John Sidley's book he describes losing an eel at Earlswood lakes that he

estimated between 15-20 lb. He said it made his 7lb 1oz eel he caught earlier in the night look like a mere bootlace. He got the monster up on the bank but it managed to climb out of the net and slipped back in to the water. It would have been great if John had landed the first double figure eel in Great Britain, but sadly it was not to be. I've always said if I ever caught then lost an eel that big I would be like Captain Darling from the last episode of Blackadder Goes Forth and simply note it in my diary as "BUGGER" and move on.....or would I?!



Earlswood revisited- Me and my boy, Liam

So let's quickly look at the record. It's one of the longest standing records in freshwater angling. At the age of 12 when I first heard about the new record I remember being totally blown away and knowing how significant it was even then. It was like Bob Beamans' long jump record in the 1968 Mexico Olympics- extraordinary, amazing and almost unbelievable but there it was for all to see. I heard some eel anglers even gave up once they heard how big the new record fish was-what was the point now? But Beamans' record fell and so will this.

So it's up to us all, but how does one start? Another one of my poems emphasises what it means to me...

**11:02**

11:02 will mean nothing to the majority of you  
Yet it's frustrating and delighting to the chosen few  
In reality never the 'twain shall meet  
Yet in fantasy the world is at your feet.

We are shrewdly observed by our adversary  
Yet, we are only allowed a glimpse of its mystery  
For alone at the final frontier we wait  
Because scepticism has a record to obliterate

The Golden Season is now a dark obsession  
And the implications are frightening with such passion  
For the ultimate sacrifice has its cost  
When dates, times and locations are lost

What hope then? In truth there is none.  
It died when the dream had begun.  
So far from the complex, thickening plot  
11:02 still haunts my lonely spot.

Make any sense? I hope not! I can't speak for any one else but I have dreamed about catching a record eel. I've had many different weights in my head, I've had my articles written and my speeches made, I've described the battle with the giant to myself many times- what a whimsical world, but I'd have it no other way.



Oh... Happy Nights!

But in reality ....

**Do I fish the right waters?**

Probably not!

**Do I put enough rod hours in?**

[www.NationalAnguillaClub.co.uk](http://www.NationalAnguillaClub.co.uk)

Definitely not!

**Do I put myself out enough?**

Not a great traveller me and certainly a fine weather fisherman - one would say a tad lazy.

**Do I really think if I was lucky enough to hook a record breaker that I could land it?**

Not a chance, I'd be like a boxer holding onto his opponent for dear life. I would be trying to stop him hitting me, just like Rigsby when he fought Philip in Rising Damp! Panic would set in and the eel and I would part company with it disappearing faster than the free booze at my works Christmas do! So, I'll just have to leave it to the professionals out there. But then again, I find eeling quite spiritual, it's my calling and my destiny-I won't go into too much depth but ..... I believe!

Anyway, back to the real world there was news of a carp angler landing a 13lb eel back in 2005. Sadly it never saw the light of day; the potential significance of that catch was neither understood nor appreciated.

**The Great Pretender**

On a bank side so quiet and secluded  
I remain unseen and unheard  
But the night has been concluded  
And my destiny hasn't said a word

It's the end of the Anguilla kings reign  
And the end of a whimsical dream  
For my net has remained dry again  
And the monster is nowhere to be seen

The frailest of hopes die in the morning  
As obsession takes me by the hand  
For a fruitless session leaves me yawning  
Yet still I pretend to be the best in the land.

So what am I on about & who cares! Well that's one of Arthur C. Clark's great mysteries I think. I wish you all a fantastic season. Everybody has different ambitions, goals & dreams and that is the beauty of it all. Everybody has something to bring to the party & celebration that we call eel fishing-big or small! Each of us plays our part, & I may only bring a bottle of cheap Bulgarian table wine & a packet of Twiglets, but you still make me feel very welcome. Thank you for that. Do I dream alone? Well no! Hope one of you blows the record away this coming season, & if not I hope you all break your personal bests. But most importantly enjoy the best sport of all- women's naked jelly wrestling! Oops, sorry, I mean eel fishing! Long live Anguilla, (I'm actually going to finish now)

Believe

Slippery Sully



Thanks to Andrea & Loz for typing this up

[www.NationalAnguillaClub.co.uk](http://www.NationalAnguillaClub.co.uk)

# Fishing With Steve Pitts

Mark Salt

Those of you that have been members for many years will know Steve, and those of you that have not met him in the past will undoubtedly have heard about his magnificent 7.09 eel caught in June of this year. When I heard about this capture I 'phoned Steve (we had not spoken before) and we talked for over an hour, not just about his superb 7, but also about eel fishing in general. We agreed that we would spend a night fishing together in August, but events conspired to prevent this, and it was November before we finally got out together. My original plan was to record the conversation and transcribe it in to an article, and had we fished together earlier in the year that would have been OK. However, November weather being what it is, we braved the gale to sit together for a few hours before I started fishing, as my swim was a fair way away from Steve's, and then talked again in the morning. I made some notes straight away, and this is the result.

First, a bit of history. Steve started fishing at the age of 8, and as he grew older fished for Bream, Carp and Tench. He caught his first eel 30 years ago, on a piece of worm intended for roach, and that was it. Since then he has specialised in eels all year round, and fishes around 100 nights a year, continuing through the winter in all conditions. He also manages to run a successful business, which limits his fishing time somewhat. He has caught many eels of over 4 and 5lbs, and caught his first 7 in 1985 from the Grand Union Canal. His second 7, at 7.09, and a PB, came in June of this year, 22 years later. He was a member for 20 years, and Chairman for 10 years, of the Eel Study Group until it disbanded, and then joined the NAC.

The capture of this fish is intriguing, as it was the result of a great deal of research in localities some distance from where Steve is based. Most of the pits and lakes around him have been commercially fished for eels in the past, with the usual impact on stocking density and size. He realised some time ago that he was unlikely to catch a PB from his own area, and began to travel further afield, not to fish but to visit areas with more potential for big eels. During our conversations, it transpired that he had looked at many of the pits in my own Lee Valley a few years ago, and had even walked around the pit adjacent to the one that we were fishing now. The Lee Valley, however, was not his choice for his campaign for a bigger eel. We agreed that researching and selecting the right water, if really big eels are your goal, is the most critical part of the puzzle. Steve's research finally led him to joining a club that controlled his target water. The 7.09 was caught on his first night of a two night session here, together with an eel of 1.09 on the second night. The fish fell to worms fished over maggots hard on the bottom in the margin. The initial take took just 3 inches of line and stopped. Steve picked up the rod and gently tightened up and felt a judder on the line and struck, connecting with the fish. He has had one more eel of 3.1 from this venue since then. I had planned to cover the capture of this fish in more detail, but our conversation then went off at a tangent. I have experimented half heartedly with off bottom rigs over the last 18 months, and was most interested in the design of Steve's rigs. He, like a lot of experienced eel anglers, believes that off bottom rigs are the solution to dropped and abortive runs. His theory is that the eel finds it more difficult to inspect and explore a bait that is not hard on the bottom, and, when the bait is presented off the bottom, the fish takes the bait and then sinks to the bottom. Indication usually consists of a short take, then a pause followed by another short take, a strike usually resulting in a lip hooked eel. Another advantage of his off bottom rigs, which are essentially modified Dyson rigs, is that the line is kept away from the eel's lateral line on the take, as the bait is hanging down from the suspended terminal rig, and the eel moves away from the mainline as it sinks to the bottom following the

initial take. Steve believes that it is this contact with the mainline and terminal tackle that is responsible for the majority of dropped runs when fishing bottom baits.



Steve With a 5.09

We talked for some time about the likelihood of eels feeding in water temperatures below 50f, as all the scientific evidence points to food items being ignored below this temperature. Steve has caught many eels in winter months, but has yet to catch one of over 4lbs, although he has had a lot of high 3s, but keeps at it because "you never know". He has caught eels in every month of winter, his definition of winter being from November through to March. He feels that winter fishing in daytime might be more productive, as this is when pike anglers tend to pick up the odd eel, but has limited time to fish days due to pressure of work. We also touched on the perceived advantages of fishing deeper water in the winter, typically 40 feet plus. There is no doubt that deeper water takes longer to cool, and will not become as cold as the surface layer in the winter, but it will still fall well below 50f, which appears to be the critical level for eels to feed. I relayed my own experiences of winter fishing for other species, as I have found that shallower water is more productive during mild spells because it warms up more quickly. On one occasion I caught eels in 3 feet of water in March on deadbaits intended for pike. This was on an unusual warm day, where I think that eels "hibernating" in the shallow silty bay that I was fishing stirred as the water temperature rose quickly in the sun. We reached a consensus that deep water was for the really cold snaps, and shallower water for the mild periods often experienced in winter. I am still confused over references to the thermoclines in relation to eel fishing. My understanding has always been that this occurs at depths below 20 metres, which is deeper than most of us are ever able to fish.

Livebaits came up, and Steve recounted an occasion many years ago when he kept an eel in a tank. He came in just as the 'phone rang one night, and in the rush to reach the 'phone did not turn on the light, the tank with the eel in being lit by its own light. As he answered the 'phone, the eel took one of the small fish in the tank with lightning speed from a cobra like position. Ironically, it was John Sidley on the 'phone, and he too had seen eels take livebaits with astonishing ferocity.



We both agreed that we do not think that eels are tackle shy, with the exception of the lateral line contact with terminal tackle already mentioned. I recounted my experiences over the last two seasons on the water we were fishing. After the first season runs became more tentative, and the ratio of missed and dropped runs increased dramatically. Steve is of the view that if a few eels in a water become nervous of baits after capture, this nervousness is communicated to the eels that have not been caught before, and they then also become nervous. He likens this to the mass response often experienced when eels decide to feed – they often all “switch on” at the same time, indicating that there may be a form of communication taking place. How many of us believe that shoal fish returned to the water after capture can “warn” the remainder of the shoal? It may be that this is a result of a communication of this nervousness. It all makes some sense to me.

Steve uses Fox 3.25lb test curve pike rods for eels, favouring the soft action, as most of his eel fishing is at relatively short range. He currently uses mono as a mainline, but was very interested in the powergum “shock absorber” I use in line with my braid as a means of preventing hook pulls. I have used braid exclusively now for many years, even for trotting for roach and grayling, and have eliminated hook pulls with the shock absorber rig. It’s very similar to a pole elastic set up. He fishes off the baitrunner, with a long, clip on chain indicator to maintain the resistance until his line tightens to the reel, believing that it is a change in resistance that causes eels to eject baits.

We covered a lot more ground than this during the session, and we are fishing together again this weekend, on one of Steve’s waters. Hopefully, it will not be frozen! If you find this article interesting, let me know and I will write a follow up article covering our second session.

Oh, I almost forgot the fishing that night. No runs, unfortunately, even though it was still relatively mild for November, but the conversation made up for the lack of fish.



A fish of many lifetimes. Steve with his immense 7.09

# The Eel Slammer!

Mark Parker

I only really started eel fishing on and off in the last couple of years. I have always been a predator angler at heart but never actively pursued eels until relatively recently.

For many years, my main passion was pike, which gave way to catfish, zander and now eels as well. However, to be fair, I would describe myself as more of an all round specialist than just a pure predator angler.

I do not really have a favourite species, it is usually the one that I am fishing for at the time which tends to be my favourite. To be wholly specific, I like to fish for anything big - apart from carp, as I think life is too short; also, it depends which fish are – so to say - in season.

During the summer months, this will currently be catfish, tench, eels, barbel and the odd bream session. While the colder days are taken up actively targeting big roach, pike, zander and chub on small rivers.

My path towards eel fishing has been born primarily out of my zander angling. It was always said that zander were so fussy when it came to baits that you could only catch them using a dead coarse fish, preferably a roach, which had been killed only seconds before being mounted on the trace and which was caught by a man named Eric, at 12.10pm from a tributary of the River Severn. Okay, this is a slight exaggeration, but most zander anglers will always tell you how much of a nightmare they can be to catch.

Then the British Record is beaten by over 2lb, with a fish weighing 21lb+, by a barbel angler using a 21mm pellet on the hook. This goes to prove an old saying of mine, “you bring me a talking fish and I’ll tell you all there is to know about fishing!”

It is this secretiveness, similar to zander, which I feel eels have. We all have various theories about rigs, location, the best times to fish for them and the best weather conditions etc, but at the end of the day, we really seem to know very little about them in my opinion. Well, I certainly do not profess to know that much anyway. It is this total lack of any real knowledge for my quarry, apart from reading of others exploits in Anguilla and of course John Sidley’s book, which has given birth to me experimenting with rigs, baits and their presentation. As a full time angling journalist, (I am currently the Features Editor on Improve Your Coarse Fishing Magazine), I get to see a lot of new tackle, some of which is yet to be realised and talk to and meet some of the UK’s finest anglers. Their wealth of knowledge, combined with my own limited spread, has started to lead me down a few new paths.

One such path came from a recent conversation with the boys from Sea Angler magazine, who sit opposite me in the office. The Editor is Mel Russ, a highly regarded conger angler, with fish to over 100lb to his name.

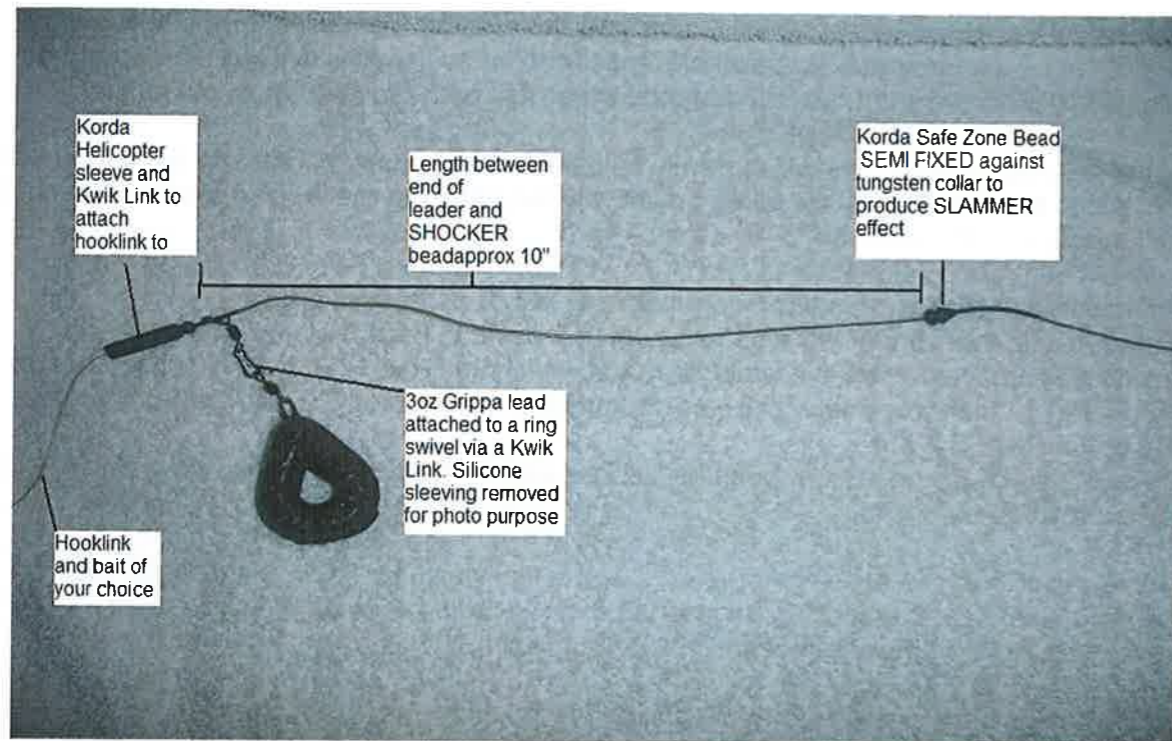
He was telling me about when they fish for congers in wrecks; they place the baits up tide, so the smell washes into the wreck. This encourages the congers to leave the wreck to take the bait. However, once they have taken it, they swim quickly backwards returning to the safety of the hole they have just come from.

This got me to thinking.

After experiencing a few dropped runs, and who amongst us can truthfully say they have never missed an eel run in their lives, I thought the freshwater, or silver eels as sea anglers call them are not so different to congers.

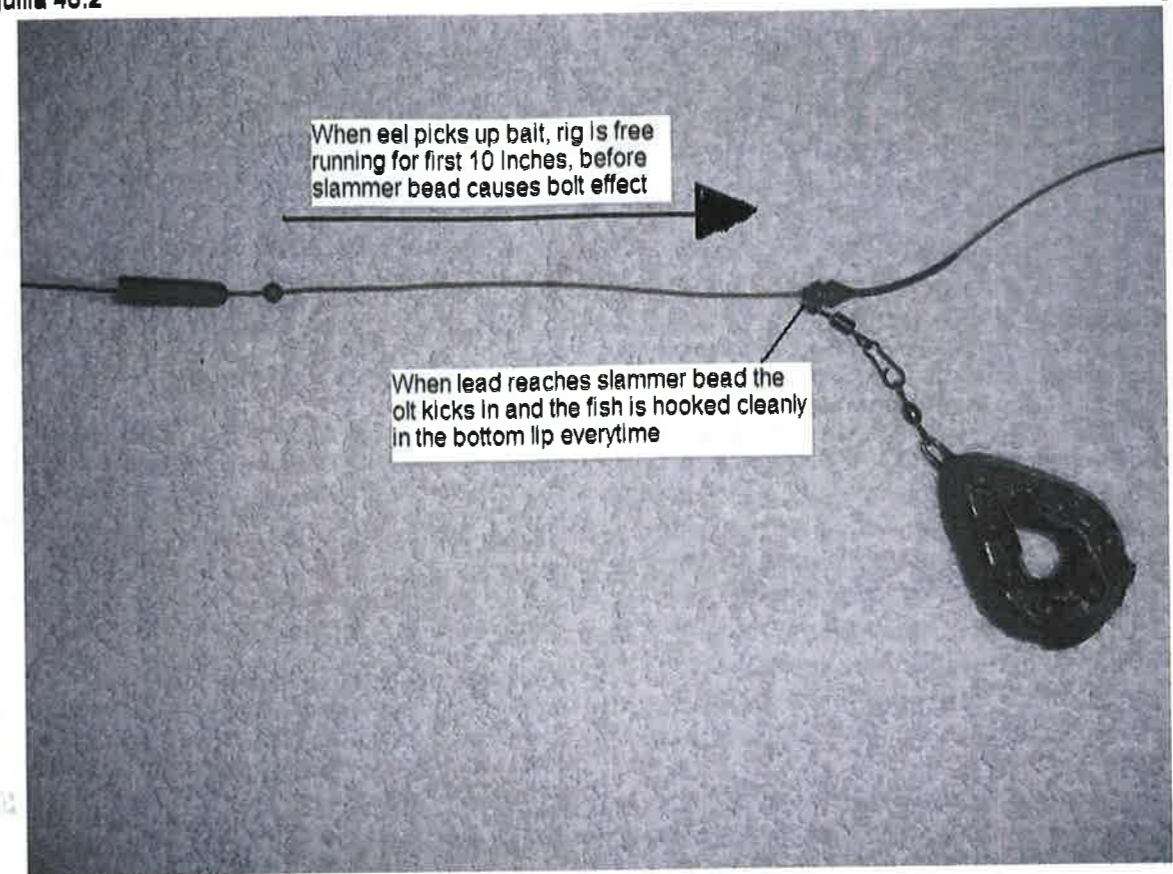
If freshwater eels pick up baits before withdrawing to eat them, this is when most runs are dropped as they feel resistance or are pricked by the hook. The trouble with resistance free rigs is that there is no bolt effect so unless you sit over the rods constantly; it is very difficult to cleanly hit every run.

To combat this I have started using a little rig from the specimen carp anglers armoury. Even though I do not fish for them, his does not mean that I will not steal the odd idea. As any journalist worth their salt will tell you, it is easier to steal ideas than to think of your own.



The carp lads call the rig that I am currently experimenting with a 'Slammer' rig and it combines a free-running rig with a bolt effect. As can be seen from the pictures, the rig itself basically starts as a running rig, before the ring swivel holding the lead 'slams' into a semi-fixed Safe Zone Helicopter bead 10 inches along the leader.

This allows the eel a few moments to pick up the bait and move off with the bait in the usual resistance free manner. However, after travelling 10 inches the lead slams into the semi-fixed bead creating the bolt effect.



The usual outcome of this is a cleanly, bottom-lip-hooked eel, without the need to strike.

I have not yet decided if the rig works better with an open ball arm and Rollover Indicator or with a very lightly set Balrunner. Only time will tell on this.

I must say that I have not had a great deal of time to fully field test the rig yet as it only came to me towards the end of the season, but early indications seem to show that the application of the rig works just fine.

I am also looking at a few bait presentation alternatives, using Fox Tackle's new product Armamesh.

I think this could be used to present all manner of soft or small baits excellent for catching eels and other species, but I will leave this until my next article. Hope to meet some of the membership soon and if anyone has any better modifications to this rig or indeed just want to slag it off, please drop me a line at [mark.parker@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mark.parker@bauermedia.co.uk)

Also, if you try it, let me know how it works out for you.

**Important dates for your diary**

16<sup>th</sup> February 2009 – Reading PAC – Mark will be presenting the NAC Roadshow  
 03<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 – Walton on Thames PAC – Mark will be presenting the NAC Roadshow  
 28/29<sup>th</sup> April 2009 – IMF Conference – Mark and another (subject to approval)  
 Date TBA (March/April 2009) – Abbey Cross AS - Mark will be presenting the NAC Roadshow  
 Contact Mark Salt at [secretary@nationalanguillaclub.co.uk](mailto:secretary@nationalanguillaclub.co.uk) for more information

# Members Profile - Tug Wilson

**Name**  
Tug Wilson

**Status**  
Single

## When did you start eel fishing

During the early 80's I fished for nothing but eels in the summer but in 1987 I moved to the Home Counties and found waters full of carp and became distracted by these. I still had a few sessions after eels every year though and have had a dabble on just about every water I have ever fished.

## Reasons for joining the NAC

I have really got back into my eel fishing in the last few years. Also I like the fact that the club is politically active.

## First ever eel caught

Probably a boot from the River Witham.

## Personal best eel to date

Not big enough, yet!

## Best remembered eel session

Two spring to mind: my first 3 pounder and my first visit to Weirwood. My first 3 came on a session with a school mate of mine. I had spent the day in his swim catching baits and drinking his tea. When I left him I could sense that something was going to happen that night and as I left his swim I said so, adding, "I don't know what it is, one of us is probably going to be attacked or something." Why I didn't get a good feeling I don't know, but luckily for me it turned out to a new PB at the time of 3lb 11oz. Weirwood was just exciting. It was just after Mick Bowles had caught his 8 pounder and we were all wondering what else was in there. I can still feel the excitement as we drove down from Grimsby...

## Which months do you eel fish

I usually start about March time and finish sometime in October. To be honest it all depends on the weather, as I no longer enjoy cold, damp nights on the bank.

## Favourite venue

Don't really have one at present but any old, unfished, remote and attractive water would whet my appetite.

## Any particular bait preferences and reasons for this

Half gudgeon – I always feel confident with one of these out in the water (not that I can remember the last time I caught one whilst out eeling).

## Favourite item of tackle

I see tackle as tools for the job in hand and no longer get sentimental about such things. Nearly all my gear is bought second hand, mainly from tackle-tart-carpers who have to be seen with the latest gear.

## Other species that you fish for

I have fished for most species at some time but the last couple of years Tench (spring) and Pike (winter) have become firm favourites. A big Fenland Zander is high

on my list for this winter though, having had a dabble for them in the last couple of years.

## Of All The Species You Have Caught, Which One Is Your Favourite And Why

Eels – the unknown, the fact that they are truly wild, and because my next one could be a double (or bigger!).

## Are you involved in any other angling organisations

I am the Secretary to Macmillan Stony and Friends charity and have recently been co-opted to the committee of the English Carp Heritage Organisation (ECHO) to help set up their regional structure. I am also a member of the Tenchfishers and the PAC. I am also qualified and accredited to train Angling Coaches through Angling for All who train, amongst others, the Professional Angling Association (PAA) coaches.

## Any other interests outside of angling

I was going to say football but I'll just say Grimsby Town instead. I promote Macmillan Cancer Support as an official volunteer representative by giving presentations, collecting cheques etc, but this is turning into a winter only interest due to fishing 3 or more nights a week throughout the summer.

## Dislikes in angling

Rules – good anglers don't need rules, bad ones just break them. Inconsiderate/disrespectful anglers. Instant glory seekers and people who are only interested in their (and your) PB.

## How could the National Anguilla Club be improved

Too soon to comment.

## Ambitions, in angling terms

To carry on enjoying it.

## Do you have any angling heroes or has anyone influenced your career to date

John Sidley – he always had time for me when I was just another annoying kid.  
Darrell Stewart (AKA Vern if anyone has read Mikey Gray's book) – awesome angler and one of the nicest guys you could ever meet, who knows how to smell the heps flowers along the way.  
Ruth Lockwood – what she has done for the whole sport of angling is amazing and much of which most people will never know.

## Do you think that the existing record of 11lb 2oz will be broken in the near future. If so, what type of venue do you think it will be and will it be to an eel angler or an angler fishing for another species

Yes, it could be broken any day now but then again, it has stood for such a long time! I think it will come from somewhere that has yet to fished and for this reason it could be caught by an eel angler as, percentage wise, I think we are more likely to fish such a venue. I think there is a good chance it will come out in the late winter/early autumn time, so a piker may be the lucky angler. I would love it to come to a seasoned eel angler.

# Fishing On The Edge

## Barry McConnell

In 1981, while backpacking in the Scottish highlands with a fly rod, I came upon a remote glacial loch hidden away between the jagged peaks of vast mountains in an unpopulated part of the far north.

This was the best place I had ever been and I revelled in the peacefulness and solitude of this unspoilt wilderness with such magnificent scenery and wild, unpredictable weather. The loch contained trout and char but no salmon because they can't scale a huge waterfall that spills out of the loch. When I sat quietly in this huge open space I soon became lulled by the sound of the wind, the waterfall, the waves lapping the rocky shore and the sound of rising trout. The wailing call of both red and black throated divers drifted over the water. It is an eerie sound that touches some inner instinct and is accompanied by the shrill noise of oystercatchers, the melodic piping of sandpipers and the distant sound of grouse that drifts down with the mist from the heather-clad moor. This set of lochs and the surrounding mountains made such a deep impression on me that I have returned every year since

Since the early 90's I have been searching for big eel waters and have always tended to head south to fish in the richer waters of England where eels benefit from the warmer southern climate. It hadn't occurred to me that a highland loch in the far north could have some massive eels in its depths. What spurred me on was a conversation with Pete Drabble regarding the fact that male eels outnumber females, they are also much smaller than females and their instinct doesn't urge them as far inland as the larger female eels. The males generally stay nearer to the sea and are not likely to scale a tall, sheer waterfall. The females, however, when they are still tiny elvers, have a body weight that is light enough to allow them to cling on to damp surfaces and scale sheer obstacles. They can then access the lochs above where they can grow big and old without competition from masses of male bootlaces.



So it came to pass that, several years ago, Peter Drabble and I set off on an eel angling expedition with a load of kit that was far too heavy to be carried up a mountain and deep into midge infested country. We carried brandlings for bait as they withstand travel better than lobworms. I use a massive bunch and cram as many on the hook as possible - 10 to 20 brandlings depending on the hook size. After a long drive, the kit had to be carried 7 miles up a steep hill, past the waterfall, and into the mountains. By the time we got to the loch we were exhausted and fell asleep missing a night's fishing. The following night, for some reason, I decided to cast towards very, very deep water, over 30 metres deep, where it is permanently dark. I thought that this water may be too deep for other species of fish to populate.

A study of science would make the odds seem stacked against success as research reveals that the temperature at this depth doesn't go above 6 degrees centigrade in summer and that eels don't digest food properly, need to feed often, or grow very fast at temperatures below 10 degrees. The optimum temperature for growth rate in eels is recorded at 24 degrees. One of the attractions of specimen eel angling is the way that you often go in to uncharted territory where no angler has been before. When fishing in the unknown, you are likely to encounter the unexpected so anything is worth a go. Even so, it still came as a great surprise to get a really fast run, strike, and feel a good eel pulsating deep down in the loch. I soon managed to beach a fine eel of 3lb 8oz. The same thing happened the next night in a new swim with an even bigger eel of 4lb 8oz, and again 24 hours later with a fish of 2lb 12oz. We weren't able to do any fishing for the last two nights because the wind dropped and we had no choice but to stay in the tent as millions of heat-seeking midges homed in on us. It was impossible to bait and set the rods. It really was unsustainable.



Back at home we reflected on the unexpectedly large size of the eels we had caught and the fact that they were caught from deeper, colder water than expected and from further north than I would have predicted finding big eels. We decided, for the sake of progress, we should endure another trip. A year later, armed with big bottles of midge repellent, we went to the next loch up the system, which is up yet another huge waterfall.

With the aid of an ordnance survey map, showing underwater contours, we could find where the drop-off comes close to the shore. The shallow marginal shelf on a glacial loch often goes several yards out from the shoreline so that, after casting in to the deeps, the line goes from rod-tip out over the shallows then suddenly drops off into the depths in such a way that the line is then grating on the rocky rim of the drop-off. On retrieving the rig it can often catch on the rim as you bring it over. A long tip action rod with plenty of spine helps here. I am currently using 12ft, four-piece travel rods with a 3lb 4oz tc. I find an in-line leger with a 12ins length of tubing through the middle to be the best rig when fishing over rocky ground because it rarely gets stuck between the rocks. When used with a trace of no longer than 10ins it provides a tangle-free method of getting a baited hook into the depths. I don't bother to tack up the trace with PVA string, instead, I prefer to simply cast as far as possible, then, when the rig hits the surface, hold tight without paying out any line or the trace may spiral up the line. The leger and its attached tube will fall to the bottom with the trace and bait lying untangled beside it.

I get an idea of the depth by counting how long it takes to sink. Here the count varied between 45 and 90. At such depths it is necessary to let the weight of the line sink before setting the indicator.

We didn't get a single eel run for the first 4 nights. Then they suddenly turned on and I casually managed to land two three-pounders and a fat fish of 4lb 8oz from very deep water. Our spirits lifted and we made up a motto 'When they are on they are on, and when they are off they are off.'



I hooked yet another good eel that really bent the rod as I winched it up from the deeps. I managed to get it onto the surface and coax it quietly over the snaggy rocks on the rim of the shelf and into the margins where I got a massive surprise as I came face to face with the biggest eel I have ever seen in Britain. Unfortunately, to lighten the load, we had left the landing net behind. I had the eel on the surface in the shallows and it was right there, a rod length out, as Pete waded out so he could shepherd it towards the beach.

The eel was too heavy to bully. I would have been able to steer it calmly into a landing net but it didn't like being dragged towards the beach and the hook pulled out when it thrashed about on a short line as I tried to beach it. The shock left me in a daze and everything seemed surreal as though dreaming. The eel had looked about 8lb, 9lb or even 10lb and I wondered if I had become mistaken by the excitement of the moment. Pete still hadn't uttered a word and I said to

him, "Well, say something. How big did that look?"

"Over 8lb" was his answer.

Memories of the massive eel I lost spurred us on to plan a full assault for this summer with the intention to endure the uncomfortable conditions and try to catch that fish of dreams. We got hold of some really well designed midge-proof suits with a veiled hood shaped like a beekeepers outfit and lightweight one-man tents fitted with mozzie mesh panels. Last winter, knowing that fitness and stamina would be needed for the trips this summer, I did regular hikes carrying a rucksack loaded with 35lb. Of course when it came to pack for the first trip the load weighed well over 50lb. To lighten the load we collected water from streams and ate the odd trout. We took a travel landing net this time.

With heavy backpacks we went over a mountain, across peat bog moorland, down bracken-clad slopes then along the rocky shoreline of the loch. We followed deer paths to navigate through this difficult terrain as they will find the pass or valley through the mountains that avoids tough ground such as soggy sink holes and sheer cliffs. Horseflies and ticks launched themselves at us from where they lay in ambush waiting for the deer. The deer paths ran out at the rocky shoreline where we had to do awkward manoeuvres over the massive rocks with a heavy rucksack. The wind suddenly dropped and immediately the midges became airborne looking for a hot, sweaty victim. Stupidly I had packed my midge proof gear in the bottom of the rucksack. By the time I had managed to get it on I had been well and truly midged. I could also feel ticks on me beneath my clothes but was unable to remove them while the midges were out. We arrived at the swim and I put the new tent up to give some escape from the midges and the fly repellent stick I smeared the vent left a mass of dead midges.



That night, despite being exhausted after the difficult hike and hot and bothered by the midge assault, I managed to catch a 3lb 10oz eel at 4.45am. It was 35ins long with a 7ins girth. Then the weather served up a storm and we had to abandon the trip after four nights. We left all the gear in a cave covered in dead heather where we felt it would be quite safe there in this unpopulated area. Where are we? That remains a secret.

We returned two weeks later with banksticks, butt-grips, Delkims and rollover indicators along with a few provisions to add to the stuff we had left there last time. I pitched the tent on a long,

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thin spit composed of small, rounded pebbles that went out into the lake near the deep water. The weather here up in the mountains is an unpredictable mix of North Sea and Highlands that can suddenly change its mood and by 3am the wind chill had penetrated the tent and I piled on every single item of clothing. I shivered and persevered until 4am when a massive, gusting, gale force wind came ripping towards the mountains behind us to have its force funnelled down a valley where it gathered momentum in to a huge twister which came roaring toward the lake making the birch trees and bracken lie flat as it gathered its full force and directed it at my tent on the spit. I held on for life feeling as though I was flying through the air on a magic carpet. A massive swell came up from beneath my rods and pushed them upwards, out of the butt grips, then launched them on to the beach. Tackle was scattered everywhere and a guy rope on the tent snapped. We hastily gathered the gear and retreated along the shore until we found some rocks where we could jam ourselves into crevices in the cliffs to shelter.



Here there was a rock platform where we could cast in to between 70ft and 90ft of water. We didn't catch a single trout or even have the end of a worm nibbled by one and we wondered if this swim was too deep for trout. It seemed that we had discovered a niche where eels feed with little competition from other species of fish. We wondered what the eels were feeding on. Research revealed that there are no caddis and shrimp at extreme depths over 40ft. Some of the eels were oozing bright orange excrement consisting of many small bright-orange, shrimp-like creatures that have far too many legs to actually be shrimps. I have since identified them as

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a type of clam shrimp, which thrive in the cold, well-oxygenated, deep waters of oligotrophic lakes. In this loch, they are in such abundance that eels are able to gorge themselves. The most interesting fact is that they are exceptionally high in protein which will promote unusually high growth rates that could produce that unexpectedly large eel.

I managed to catch four eels to 2lb11oz using bunches of brandlings on the in-line rig with a size 6 hook, 15lb wire trace and 12lb mainline. These small eels were not what we were hoping for and, as we headed for home, we felt that we had achieved little for our efforts.

On the next trip we discovered a new and very unpleasant hazard. I paid a call to nature in a hole dug amongst sphagnum moss and several harmless looking flies with soft bodies and gangly legs were flying around me. Later, back at the tent, I felt something fluttering about inside my trousers and on having a look several of the unidentified flies emerged and flew away. There was blood everywhere inside my trousers where they had bitten me. Great open red craters were oozing blood as though the flies had injected something to thin the blood and make it flow. I never felt a thing either, so they must anaesthetise the skin making the victim unaware they are feeding. I still don't know what they were. They come out of the sphagnum moss in shaded areas – beware.

This time a full week of fishing produced just two eels of 3lb 13oz and 2lb 6oz. On the last night, as the reddening orange glow of an amazing west coast sunset lit up the ripples out on the lake, we had a wee dram of whisky or two and started to barbecue a trout. We added another line to complete our motto 'when they are only half way on they are neither on nor off'.

Then the wind suddenly dropped and we were thrown in to pandemonium as a massive cloud of midges emerged before the trout was cooked. It isn't possible to eat through midge proof mesh so the trout was wasted but it is possible to drink through the mesh so we finished the bottle instead. In my heart I knew that I was beaten. The environment is too harsh to enjoy long periods on the bank. The biggest eel we caught from the loch this year was 3lb13oz but I will never forget the sight of that fish of my dreams. It was the longest, fattest eel I have ever encountered, but some things just aren't meant to be.



# A Tale of Two Sixes - Part II

Mark Salt

After writing this article, I read it and realised that it made it seem that I only caught eels over 4 lbs so I added this paragraph. That it the case from this one water, but other waters that I fish in the valley do constantly produce eels of well under 4 lbs. The water in this article has (I believe) a relatively small eel population, and no real history of eel captures, apart from a 7 from over ten years ago, and that is of doubtful provenance. The carp anglers that fish the lake now have never caught an eel, and in my first season delighted in telling me "there's no eels in 'ere, mate!" I have been very fortunate in the size of the eels that I have caught here, and believe that my success is due to the care that I put in to researching the waters locally. I also believe that it is no coincidence that the first water I fished in 2006, when I started eel fishing, also produced only three eels (4.02, 4.03 and 5.02). No boots or eels under 4lbs. Once again, the carp anglers on this water had never heard of eels, but I did manage to find a tench angler who had foul hooked a 4 whilst fishing maggots. I am a relative novice to eel fishing, and am sure that anyone could have caught these eels from either water using the simplest techniques. Many years ago, a friend said to me "you can only get so good at casting, choosing baits, refining tackle and so on – the rest is down to where you fish". I do not advocate chasing around all over the country looking for eel waters, but I do believe that spending time only on the waters that research has shown to be capable of supporting big eels is critical. If there's a rumour of a big one having been caught, and no small one's, then the odds of a big eel must be good. By all means have the odd session on "easy waters" – it will stop you going mad! Also, waters that hold lots of small eels do produce monsters. Perhaps you need a lot of eels in the water to raise the odds for there being one "sport" amongst them that is genetically capable of growing into a double. I also realise that I live in a part of the country with tremendous big eel potential, and am spoilt for choice. That said, most parts of the UK have produced monster eels at some time. I think that, for all of us, more time spent choosing a water would improve our chance of a whacker tremendously.



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When I wrote the first article about this water, I had just gained a syndicate place for a pit little further down the valley, and had planned to move on this season. After the two 6s in one night in August last year, I had one more eel of 4.09 a week later and then a series of six blanks in what seemed like favourable conditions, with water temperatures of 58f and above. We then had a really cold spell in late October, and plummeting water temperatures led me to put my eel rods away for the winter. I still felt that this water had not given up its biggest eel, so despite other equally promising venues locally, I decided to start the 2008 season here.

Come the end of March of this year I was really champing at the bit, my only eel fishing through the winter having been at the Port Talbot fish in. I'd caught perch, pike, trout and zander through the winter months, but all of these were poor substitutes for the eel. My first eel session this year was on 17<sup>th</sup> April, when water temperature reached 52f. In the previous season I had caught 5 eels from this water over eighteen nights at an average weight of 5.8. I fished as many nights again on other waters during the spring and summer, and managed many more eels than this, but none over 4.02, with a lot of smaller fish, so I was determined to really give the pit a good going over early on before moving on to the new water. I had read so much about waters with small eel populations producing a few good fish and then nothing that I had began to believe that this was what was happening here, but I did not want to give up prematurely.



All my fish previously had been on either peeler crab or fish section, with worms being completely ignored. This had led to me using worm rather half heartedly on one rod, and fish or

peeler crab on the other two. The start of this season saw me using fish on two rods and peeler crab on the third, all margin fished – after all, that was what had worked before, despite the fact that these eels are small mouthed. After four nights in what seemed like good conditions with 7 pike to my name and not an eel in sight I was a little despondent, but still did not want to give up. I decided to change my methods completely, and my next session saw me fishing lob sections over dead maggots on two rods at what for me is long range, about 4 rod lengths out, over the marginal shelf. I used fish section on the third rod, also over dead maggots. I hooked and lost a powerful fish at 10pm on worm, and then had a series of twitches reminiscent of small perch bites, but as there are very few perch in here, and they were not very persistent, I had a hunch that eels were responsible. I then had 3 runs over the next hour, all of which I struck into fresh air, finally connecting with a fish at 11.25 pm which went 4.3. Three more missed runs ensued until I hooked another fish at 5.35 am which went 4.10. Even this take was odd, as I tightened up to the fish, failed to connect as it dropped the bait, and then hooked it as it snatched it up again.

This night seemed to set a pattern for the rest of the season, as fish and crab baits produced nothing, and worm over maggots continued to produce dropped or missed runs. Strangely, maggots fished over the carpet of dead maggots produced nothing. I did manage a 5.10 and a 6.0 one night in the following week, and then a week later another 5.10, which may well have been a repeat capture. Then followed a series of sessions where I experienced many dropped runs. During this period I used dyson rigs with worm or fish sections, and shock and bolt rigs using worms and maggots both on and off the bottom. The results of all this were at least consistent: more dropped runs, sometimes 4 or 5 in a night, until, after 5 blank sessions, I had a 4.02, on a bait fished on the bottom.

I had at this point started fishing other waters, because I had convinced myself that the dropped runs were from fish I'd caught before, and I have no interest in catching the same fish twice. A conversation with Steve Pitts, a far more experienced eel angler than I, convinced me that I was a fool not to persevere on the water, as it could still possibly produce a bigger fish than the 6.14 of 2007. I had left it too late to start fishing the syndicate water that I mentioned earlier, and I decided to save this for the next year, and I fiddled about on a couple of easier waters for a few weeks, finally returning to do a three night session on the "two sixes" water on 26<sup>th</sup> October. Water temperature then was still 52, so, according to the scientists, anyway, still warm enough for eels to feed. After my experimentation with off bottom, bolt and shock rigs I had gone back to conventional low resistance bottom rigs on all 3 rods, more out of frustration than anything else, with peeler crab on one and worm on the other two, all fished over one pint of dead maggots. I had changed the size and shape of the worm baits, from the bunch of 1" lob sections to three 2" sections on the hook. It seemed unlikely that this would make a difference, but it was worth a try. I also resolved to spend the 3 nights in the swim that had produced two sixes in a night in 2007. I had experienced more dropped runs here than any other swim, and just had to give it a good go. Night one resulted in one 6" take, and then nothing. Once again, not a line bite, as 3" of line was taken, then stopped, and another 3" taken. Not perch either, as it was the only indication of the night. The air temperature was falling all the time now, with very cold weather forecast for the next few days, so I knew that the next few days would be my last chance of an eel from this water until next spring. I arrived in the same swim on the next night, using identical tactics, and introduced half a pint of dead maggots as a "top up". I had reduced the quantity of maggots as the water temperature was falling. I had a dropped run at 9 pm, which took about 3" of line, followed by another 6". Strangely enough, this encouraged me, as I was convinced that an eel was the culprit. At 12.25 am with the bivvy frozen solid, I had a run on worm, and after a short spirited fight landed an eel of 6.10. The barbless hook fell out in the net, and after weighing, the fish was sacked for the night. Delighted at having caught my first eel in the frost, I spent the rest of the night looking forward to measuring and photographing the fish in the morning.

# MORE ODDS AND ENDS

## Rod Hillyer

Since writing my last article for Anguilla, I have come up with a few other things concerning eel fishing that might ( or might not!! ) interest you all...

The summer eel fishing of 08 has been and gone, and unless your name is Mark Salt or Steve Pitts, you may be thankful for this!! I know I really struggled this year to catch anything half – decent but it certainly gave me a lot of time to sit behind motionless rods and have a think about all things eely.

One evening I decided to have a flick through my photo albums in order to remind myself what a big eel actually looks like. Whilst browsing I stumbled upon a couple of “mug” shots of 4lb+ eels I had caught from a local gravel pit a couple of summers back. The eels weighed 4:05 and 4:06 and had totally conflicting appearances; in fact, looking at further pictures of eels weighing between 3 and 4lb demonstrated what a huge variety of “mug” characteristics there are present in this particular water.

There seems to be a 50:50 split between huge eyes/huge pupils, over slung top jaws and small nostril lobes Vs tiny eyes/tiny pupils, under slung bottom jaw and very long nostril lobes. I have attached pictures of the 4.05 and 4.06 to show this on the next page. Hopefully, they will be clear enough for you to see the differences.

The 4:05 shows an over slung top jaw, massive eye/pupil and very small nostril.  
The 4:06 shows an under slung bottom jaw, smaller eye/tiny pupil and elongated nostril lobe.

The obvious question I am going to ask is “why does one water hold such a large number of eels of similar weight categories with such conflicting appearances?”

My initial theory was based on the type of water the eels live in; this lake is very coloured and deep. However, if the eels had evolved according to their surrounding environment then surely they would all portray characteristics as shown by the 4:06; very large nostrils to hunt in the coloured water by scent and small eyes because they are not really needed that much. This was quickly rejected on the basis that the other 50 percent have completely the opposite features!! In an ideal world we could simply catch an eel and ask it a few questions but unless you're a user of Class B drugs you're not going to get much of a response!! So unfortunately all of what I am going to say next is based on pure assumption and not a lot of fact...you have to form a conclusion, somehow!!

I believe that certain waters contain lots of eels that are totally different in appearance yet have almost identical weights because of varying growth rates and/or genetics. I am not talking about mouth – shapes here, remember; we know that these are dependent upon the food types the eels feed on. I am talking specifically about the jaw structure, eye sizes and nostril lobes found on an eel.

For example, could the 4:06 eel be a younger, faster growing fish? The reason I ask this is because when I compared another picture of the fish laying down next to my rod, showing its whole body – length, against a similar photo of the 4:05, it was in absolutely mint condition; no battle scars, no tears or rips in the fins etc. The 4:05, however, was covered in old scars and had lots of nicks in its fins...it looked an ancient fish in comparison.

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On the other rod I put four lobworms on a size 6 barbless hook. A small piece of elastic band is pushed on to the hook to stop the worms wriggling off. When using worm it is important that the indicator isn't too heavy because this can result in bites going unnoticed and the bait may have been stripped from the hook by small fish that nibble the end of the worm. A lightweight bobbin

The eel will ambush a live fish by rising slowly towards the surface and approaching from beneath and behind the fish. Livebaiting isn't permitted on this water so I hook the dead fish behind the dorsal fin then suspend it from the Dyson rig, high up in the water, where its silhouette will look like that of a free swimming fish. After killing the bait I get rid of its swim bladder by squeezing the fish between fingers and thumbs and forcing the swim bladder towards the anal vent until it pops out. I do this so that the bait will be presented naturally, the right way up, hanging belly down from the hook rather than having the buoyant swim bladder cause it to rise into an upside down position.

This water holds both narrow and broad headed types of eel so I put worms on one rod and a dead 4" roach on the other.

I am using the Dyson rig in conjunction with a rollover indicator that has the counterbalance adjusted until a slight but not too heavy tension is on the line. A lightweight bobbin or other type of indicator will do instead but it should be of a lighter weight than the buoyancy of the sunken float ensuring that the float will ride up to the intended height and not be pulled lower by a too heavy indicator load. After casting in, the line is tightened and the indicator placed over it. Pull the indicator down to the ground then let go. The buoyancy of the float will be enough to pull the indicator back up ensuring that you know exactly how far off bottom the bait is being presented. If the float doesn't drag the indicator back up then you know the rig is stuck against something and it is necessary to recast.

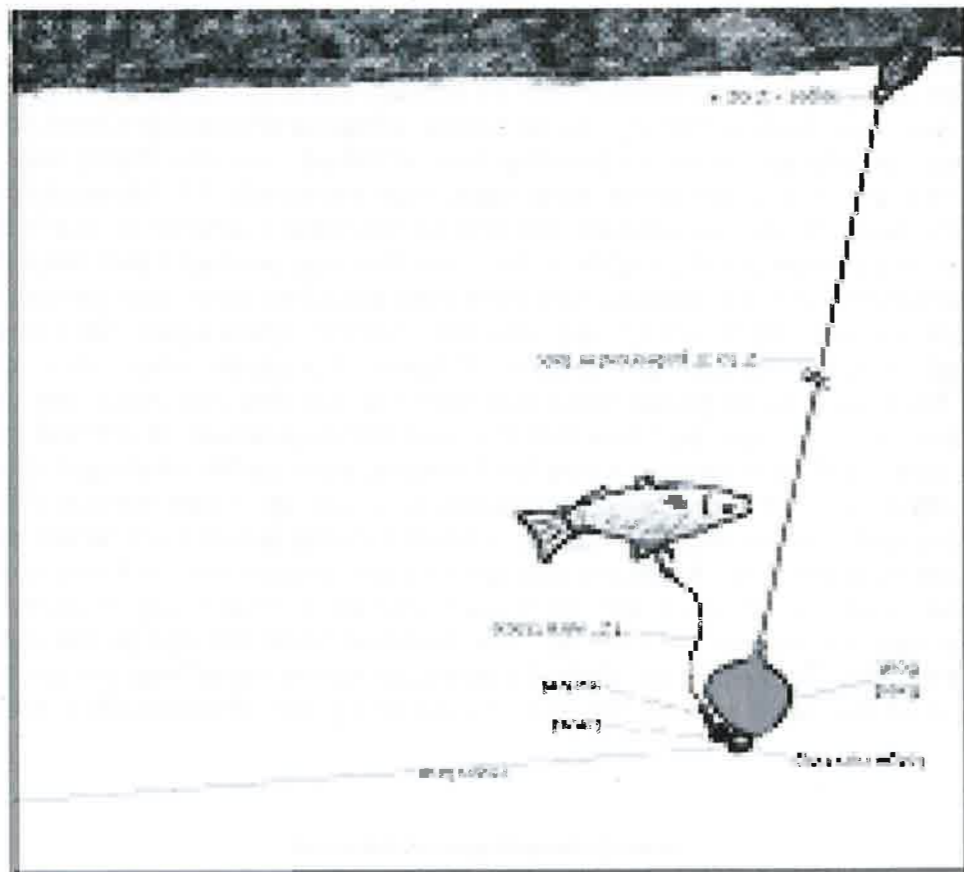
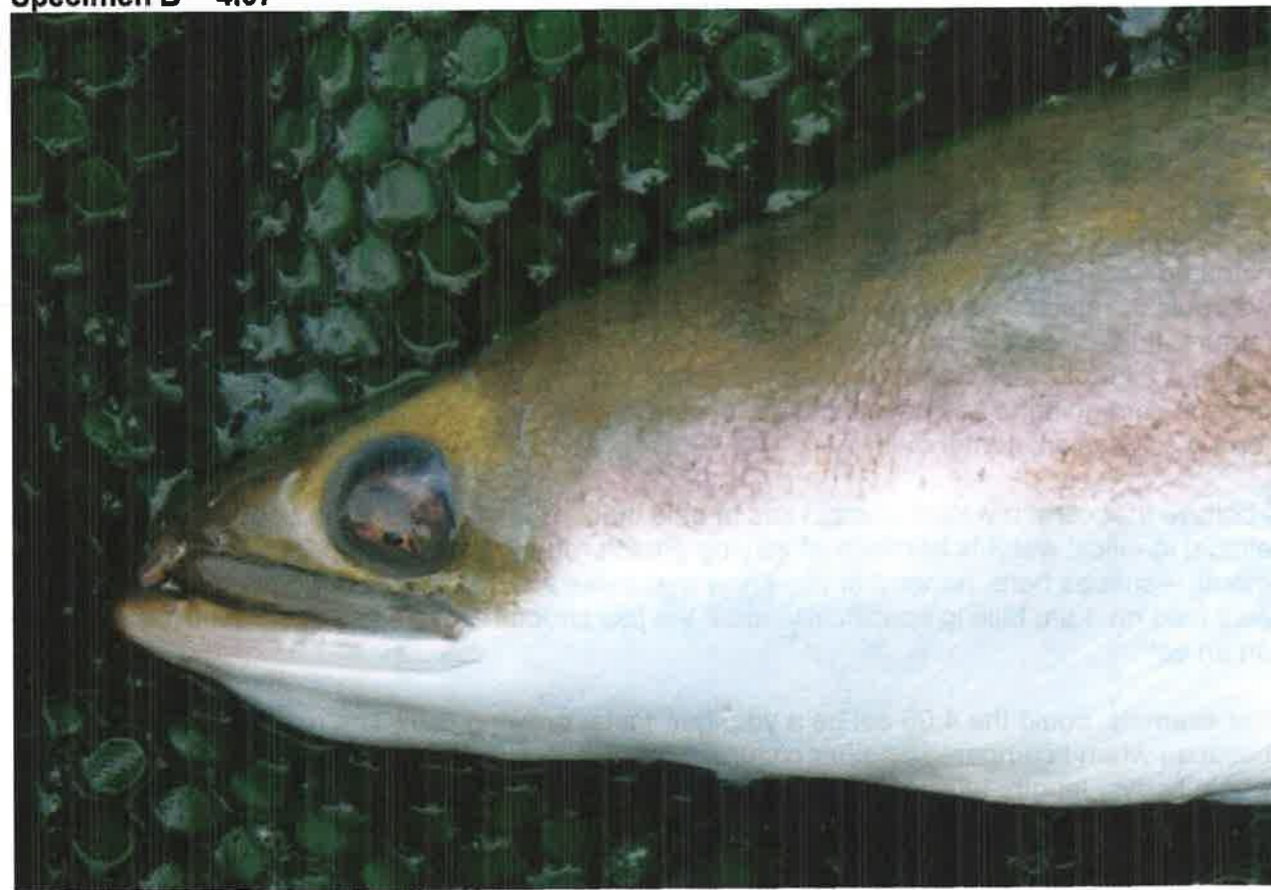


Diagram of a fishing rig



**Specimen A - 4.06****Specimen B - 4.07**

Was the 4:05 on its last legs (or fins!!)? Could this eel have previously portrayed a different appearance, similar to that of the 4:06? Do eels' eyes become larger with age? Do their nostril lobes shrink with age?

Or was the 4:06 of an equivalent weight but with a younger, fresher look because it was a faster growing individual with "good" genetics?

Questions, questions but no answers. We will never know but it's food for thought and if it's prompted another article from a NAC member, then it's been of some use, after all!!

The next bit of this article looks at the social behaviour of eels. When I first started eeling back in the 80s, I was led to believe that big eels were very solitary in behaviour and do not like to feed in areas near to other big eels. Now we're in 2008 and I realise this is a load of cobblers!! The very fact that a handful of anglers have been lucky enough to catch braces of big eels in the same session, and within a short space of time of each other, suggests that really big eels do in fact feed in the same vicinity and overlap the same patrol routes.

Earlier this year on the NAC stand at the PAC conference in Warwick, myself, Mark Salt, Dave Smith and Barry McConnell got onto this very subject.

It was useful to have Salty present during the conversation because he has experienced first hand what it's like to catch a brace of 6s very close together in time...30 minutes, in fact!! Not satisfied with this feat alone, he then goes and catches a 6lb'er during a frost!!

Anyway, it made me remember a barbel session I had on the Hampshire Avon earlier this year. I had caught a couple of chub from a gravel seam beside a huge bed of streamer weed and decided to top the swim up with some more trout pellets and hempseed. I carefully sprinkled the mix over this gravel strip and then sat back and waited to see if any barbel put in an appearance.

After half an hour or so I crept up to the front of the swim and peered into the clear water to look at the gravel patch where I'd put the freebies. I nearly fell in when I saw 2 large eels gobbling up the hemp and pellets. They were obviously pretending to be barbel!! These eels were definitely over 3lb apiece and were feeding together, even turning little stones over with their noses for each other and sharing the feast. I watched them with fascination for over 45 minutes. At no point did these eels leave each others' sides; they swam together, touching flanks and fed in exactly the same spots. It was only when they had hoovered every last bit of food up that they swam off back into the weed bed. This was all on a baking, hot summers' day in early afternoon, in crystal clear water. Wasn't there another theory back in the 80s that said big eels don't feed in the daytime...

I repeated the baiting process twice more in the same spot and each time the same eels ventured out and fed confidently on the bait. This proves without a shadow of a doubt that large eels feed together and it makes sense; there is safety in numbers against predators by feeding in this manner and judging by these 2 eels' behaviour, they were definitely warding off the little chub and dace from invading their feeding space.

It also proves eels adore trout pellets, too!! How many big eels are caught on pellets by the carp lads every year. Food for thought.

Interestingly, these eels only "spooked" when I lowered in my hook bait onto the gravel patch in order to catch a barbel that was looming ever closer to the baited zone. In case you're wondering, I didn't catch the barbel!!

We, as anglers, should apply this behaviour to our fishing. I, for one, make sure once I have caught a good eel I sack it up quickly and get the bait back out ASAP in case another biggy is feeding close by or overlaps the others' feeding patrol route. A similar thing happens with big pike sometimes, too.

Hopefully, I might have stirred some thoughts and ideas somewhere with the content of this article. Get writing !!

I will leave you with a photo of our very own Wayne Staddon returning his 3:10 eel caught at the Hampshire NAC Fish – In, back in September. Prior to taking this picture, Wayne had very bravely demonstrated how to hold a large eel that was fresh out the sack in front of 8 people!!



**AGM – Important!**  
**The AGM Will Be Held On**  
**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2009.**  
**It's Your Opportunity To Affect The**  
**Future Of The Club**  
**Further Details To Follow.**

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# The Secret Location

David O'Sullivan

It's June 2002, the effects of radiotherapy have finally worn off so it's time for a drink. I can't understand why we are all in downtown Warwick and not Leamington Spa. I never used to drink south of the river, but a chance meeting was about to happen. Was it an accident of circumstance or destiny? I like to think it was divine intervention.

I was talking nonsense as usual to my mate Dom, when one of his lodgers -Jim- came over. I'd never met Jim before, but he said to me "Alright Sully! I believe you're in to eel fishing" He had me interested so I quickly said "Yes" wondering what he might say next. He went on, "Well I know a water that must be packed with eels, and never gets fished" Before he could say where, I instinctively knew the Location. So let me explain how.....

I always knew this water existed- it said so on the map. But it had become a myth to me, an urban legend and the Kaiser Soze of secret locations. I tried to imagine what it would look like. When you first see a water it can turn out to be nothing like you expected and a bit of an anti-climax. A couple of years before, my mate Pete and me decided to find this particular water. We slowly found a way through the woods around it, and moved very uneasily across very "Private-Keep Out" land. My mind was working overtime; would I see the lake before I'd meet the figure with the shotgun?! It was tense; we were close. Then, through a clearing we came across the old estate lake. It was not as I'd imagined. But it was no anti-climax.

It was an oasis in deepest Warwickshire, a beautiful, blue jewel forgotten by man and time. The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. There was a certain haunting quality to the lake, and I felt inspired to write this poem.

## The Boating Lake

He glides through the leafy hood,  
 And the trees shiver from head to toe.  
 For he is no stranger to the wood,  
 Yet his track never seems to show.

The hares hide and the deer dart away,  
 Even the adders fear his bite.  
 For all in his path are prey  
 Be it day or be it night.

Over the fence and through the nettles,  
 He passes unseen and unheard,  
 Until a mist over the rushes settles,  
 Which scares out the hiding birds.

He hovers over the old neglected lake,  
 For it has returned to its former glory,  
 Where no fishermen keep fish awake,  
 And no boatmen tell his story.

His vengeance ends on the dam,  
 As he disappears into the water,  
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For this ghost was once a man,  
Who drowned to save his daughter.



(I don't know why, but I felt that something tragic had happened there 200 years before.)

So back to the pub!

"How do you know about this water, Jim?" I asked with anticipation

"Well, I used to work there with the gamekeeper," he replied.

"I'd love to fish there," I said, chancing my arm.

"Don't think anyone has fished it for 80 years! But I reckon I could get us on there. I'm still mates with the gamekeeper. You could go for the eels and I could go for the trout and wild carp." he replied.

"Do you want a drink, Jim, because I'm buying?" I said, and the room fell deathly quiet.

Next time I saw Dom, I said "It was nice dream, but I don't think I'll be hearing from Jim again," Dom replied, "To be honest, if Jim says something he means it."

And sure enough at the start of August, my phone rings one Saturday afternoon. It's Jim!

"Do you want to go fishing for those eels tonight?" (talk about short notice!) "I've got it sorted- It's on!"

Whatever I was meant to be doing with my family or mates that night got cancelled pretty sharpish, and at 7.00 pm Jim came round and I followed in my car. We finally got to a gate I never knew existed. How bumpy was that track? It was pot-hole central. We passed an old hunting lodge, then a house straight out of a Hammer Horror movie and on into dark woods. I knew we would be there for the night, as there was no way back in the dark- but did Jim know this? We slowly snaked down the tracks, until through the trees I saw daylight and then water. It was as if it appeared from nowhere. I stood there in a euphoric trance of expectation.

Jim had brought a barbeque, half a cow and lots of beer. I had a bottle of squash. I was more than a little embarrassed to be tucking in to burgers later that night (but this year my sausages were bigger than his, and I had more beer!) I try to take it all in- it's an eel angler's paradise.

Jim is in the corner, at the end of the dam wall, fly-fishing. He shouts over to me, "Hey Sully, I think I just saw an eel!"

I think to myself- yeah, right! It must be a stick, or he's trying to humour me. He's just seen an eel after 5 minutes- pah! Then as I was throwing some ground bait in, the strangest thing happened. I see an eel jump out of the water- about 2-3 lbs of it launched in to the air, and then it drops back in to the lake. I stood back in amazement and feel like Roy Scheider in Jaws, when he was chumming the blood and guts over the side and the shark surfaces right in front of

him. Imagine the camera focusing on my face, but instead of "we're gonna need a bigger boat" I tell myself, "stop faffing about and get the flippin' bait in!"

The night was humid and heavy, and when first light came I'd caught 9 eels to 2 lb 8oz (not a huge catch I know, but I was still over the moon!) I would have loved to have caught the leviathan that must exist in there, but it was just a pleasure to fish it and get so much action- which I'm not used to.



(some modest eels from the secret location over the years)



Jim had caught eels too- I can't remember how many, and we had both caught a lot of roach as they never stopped feeding all night. Jim was trying to catch me some dead baits, but the roach were just too big. He finally did manage to catch some small ones, and one of the eels was caught on a roach tail section- the rest were on worm.

I shook his hand, and said, "Thanks". He said "No problem! We'll do it again next year" And true to his word, we get permission once a year. Plenty more bootlaces have been caught and some better fish between 2-3 lbs. The dead baits seem to get the bigger ones. Still no estate lake monster yet, but even if I don't catch it it's a bonus just being there and God willing we'll be there again in 2009 for that one summer shot. I've taken 3 other mates along over the years. They've been sworn to secrecy but felt the blindfold and gaffer tape in the boot was a bit over the top.



(heron- nicking eels)

# The National Anguilla Winter Social Meeting

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at the Kegworth Whitehouse Hotel.

**Members present:** Steve Richardson, Nick Rose, Mark Salt, Steve Pitts, Wayne Staddon, Mark Handly Wood, Roy Piggott, Tug Wilson, Jason Morgan, Dave Smith and guest Caleb, Barry McConnell, Neil Wilkinson and Graham Wilkes.

**Apologies:** Steve Gardner, Rod Hillyer, Pat Huish, Paul Williamson and Mike Brettle.

In the absence of our club Chairman, Mike Brettle, who is back out in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban, Steve Richardson agreed to take on the role as Acting Chairman.

The meeting commenced at 11.00am and Steve opened the meeting with thanks offered to everyone for attending and a short polite lecture on the absence of poppies by a few of the members attending given that it was remembrance day and the fact that our Chairman is a serving serviceman doing his duty for Queen and Country in a hostile and intimidating Afghanistan.

Steve requested that we stand and observe a minutes silence for all the fallen in past wartime hostilities. This was observed in an impeccable manner.

Steve then asked if everyone in the room could verbally introduce themselves to everyone in attendance in the time honoured fashion of the NAC.

It was duly noted that there was no Chairman's report from Mike but he was wished safe conduct in his present situation overseas.

## Secretary's report:

Mark Salt said that this had been an interesting year. He said that the web-site was superb and offered his thanks to Dave Smith for his efforts in this regard. Mark said that he and Dave had attended the PAC conference and had managed to gain two new members and felt that a few more might come over when the next year starts. It was also noted that Kevin Huish had resigned from his position as Social Officer and that we would be looking for a candidate to fill this position at the next AGM. Mark also said that he had been thinking about the feeding habits of eels this season and would like to see a data-base set up specifically for this purpose, with feeding times and information surrounding this type of data. Quite a lengthy open discussion took place on this idea and some useful ideas were circulated. Mark also made mention of the club book and the fact that Steve Ricketts book was now well on the way to being published. Given this situation, Mark thought that now would be a good time to resurrect the NAC book project and he said that he would have the time to put into this project if it was acceptable. Nick also offered his help and it was generally agreed that at the next AGM we should set up another book team to work on the project together.

## Social Officers Report:

Kevin has resigned from this position and no report was forthcoming. Wayne Staddon wished to have thanks minuted for Kevin's efforts in this role over the past year; the venues were well attended and much appreciated. This sentiment was unanimously given.

## Awarding of the club trophies:

Nigel Jeyes Memorial Trophy:.....Two candidates were offered up for nomination. Steve Pitts nominated Dave Smith for his work on the web-site and Dave Smith nominated Rod Hillyer for his work in helping to get the Somerley fish-in.

A vote was held and the outcome was 11 votes for Dave Smith and 2 votes for Rod Hillyer.

- o Dave Smith wins the Nigel Jeyes Memorial Trophy.
- o Best eel of the season trophy: Steve Pitts with his superb eel of 7lb 9oz.
- o John Sidley Memorial Trophy: Steve Pitts with his superb eel of 7lb 9oz.
- o Best eel on a club Trip: Steve Gardner with his fabulous eel of 6lb 4oz.
- o Steve Mahoney Memorial Trophy: Rod Hillyer with his article entitled 'Odds and Sods'.

Certificates were then awarded for all eels over 3lb's reported this season. Bronze equals eels over 3lb's. Silver equals eels over 4lbs. Gold equals eels over 5lb's and more.

It was decided that the ceiling weight to qualify for a bronze certificate will be 4lbs from next season onwards. Silver going to 5lbs and Gold 6lbs and above. (to be ratified at the next AGM)

Lunch was taken after presentation of trophies.....an hour and a half of beer and eel talk and raffle ticket selling was enjoyed by all.

Mark Salt gave a talk outlining the NAC roadshow slide show and asked for any constructive comments to making it better. The slide show was superb and thanks go to Mark for getting it all collated. Further ideas and comments were passed on to Mark for inclusion in the presentation set up.

Mark then introduced Barry's talk, slideshow, video concept.....'eeling in the Scottish highlands....Eels and Ferox Trout.' As ever, this was a superbly entertaining hour and a half of fun and adventures. Thanks were offered to Barry for his time and his humour and his efforts in entertaining us all. (Certainly I enjoyed the backing music to the video...superb)

The raffle was held and the winning ticket for the signed book by Terry Lampard was drawn out of the hat by young Caleb and the lucky individual was Steve Richardson.....everyone enjoyed the chance to visit the table, some more than others, like Steve Richardson and Roy Piggott.....the raffle collected £54.00.

Thanks go to Terry Lampard for his book donation and to Matt Hayes for the two sets of sunglasses and a two piece fleece suit...and to all for contributing the other prizes and for supporting the raffle so generously.

Meeting closed at 16.30pm.....with a hasty withdrawal to the bar for a final beer and goodbyes.



# The National Anguilla Club September fish-in.

## Somerley Lakes, Hampshire.

Steve Richardson

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008.....the first day of the Somerley fish-in held in deepest Hampshire....I hadn't been on a club fish-in this season, nor for a season or two in fact, and had decided that this would be the one that I'd attend without giving much thought to where it actually was.....after a little map work on the day in question my initial fears were realised and I prepared for my long Friday motorway drive to get there.

Having not eel fished at all this season, the eeling gear had to be collected up and packed into the car.....after a long mooch about it seemed that I had everything but the kitchen sink packed and so set off on the journey feeling confident that I had all bases covered. (Idiot that I am.) Oxford came and went and Newbury was approaching and thus far the drive had been a doddle.....just past Newbury things came to an abrupt end in the driving stakes....red tail lights and three lanes of motorway standstill greeted me. Time 15.00pm.....nothing to do but sit and ponder things. Dave Gilmour's 'live in Gdansk' sorted out the rest of the waiting time after the pondering had elapsed.

Whilst I managed to get the car into third gear twice in as many miles, my mind started to wander to the problems awaiting me when I finally arrived at the venue....no bait of any kind at all and the very real situation of no time to choose a swim due to the evening closing in and darkness enveloping the complex....some eel angler I am. Frustrated, I sent a text to Kevin and explained to him my predicament and asked him if he could get me a couple of fish baits and to expect me when I got there.....'No worries' was the reply. (Good old Taff.)

Feeling a little more relaxed on the bait scene, I decided to let the 'Sat Nav' have its head and made the decision to turn off the motorway at my next opportunity. Winding here, there and everywhere I finally found open road through the 'New Forest'...trouble was it was an open road with an enforced 40 miles an hour zone but I suppose it was better than first gear on the motorway.

I entered the venue at sunset and found Kevin, Thomas and Rod Hillyer chatting in the 'Welsh zone', along with the bailiff and venue manager, Steve Morgan. I informed them that I was going to go select a swim and get set up before complete darkness descended upon us and so had a little walk around the lake end nearest the car-park. It didn't take me long to simply decide to drop in next to Thomas due to time in me getting sorted out. The swim looked okay, well quite nice really, and covered a nice area of the lake....and allowed me the use of a corner bay....so long as no one else turned up and dropped in it.

I got the rods set up and then looked through the whole of the car for my eel traces.....yep, you've guessed it, kitchen sink but no trace material. (Back in the shed with the pike gear.)...so, off a borrowing I went....Kevin had, and was using, some Kryston quicksilver and so I decided to use this and then find a tackle shop in the morning to replenish my wire material.

Set up and settled, I decided that I would enjoy some time with Kevin chatting about things and getting my bait from him. Kevin informed me that Mark Taylor, fishing about three quarters of the lake away from my swim (a long way away and pitch dark) had two small roach for me to use.....thanks Mark but now you know why I never came round to collect them. Swishing net out, I went to seek a quiet swim where I could try and net a few bait fish. The first two nets

contained a few very small perch less than an inch long and then I hit gold with two small roach.....four baits for the evening and a few back up small perch which I would use if I got four runs in the night.

Satisfied, it was then back to Kevin's bivvy for a coffee and some food, kindly fetched by Rod Hillyer, thanks Rod, and paid for by Kevin, which I still owe him for....thanks Kev. During the time that I had been there, Kevin had already had three runs to prawn, mackerel and smelt which, unfortunately, were all missed.....but it did get the confidence up and running for an action packed night. At 11.00pm I decided to return to my swim and cast out my baits. A roach head was placed in the margin to my left and the tail section was gently lobbed out into open water in front of me. I then settled down on my chair to await some action.

Thomas missed a screaming take on a pineapple boilie (carping for eels) and then news reached me that Wayne Staddon had banked a lovely eel of 3lb 10oz. I put the kettle on and enjoyed the wait in very misty conditions. I ought to do this eel fishing lark a bit more me thinks. The roach head rod was away at 01.25am and I connected with my first eel of the session. Lip hooked, I guessed it at around 2lb and sacked it up until the morning. I recast with the head section of the last small roach into the same area and got on the bedchair for a more relaxed wait. At 03.30 am the margin rod was away again and I missed the take. I decided to put two of the small perch on the hook and replace it in the margin in case the eel came back. At 03.50am I missed a run on the roach tail out in open water and recast the same bait back in the general direction immediately. Twenty minutes later the rod was off again and this time I connected and soon had another eel of the same size as the first nestled in the sack. Nothing else occurred until 05.30am when the margin rod went off and unfortunately I missed that take as well. (God knows how, with such a small bait offering). I recast with two more small perch and decided that the alarms could wake me if anymore action was forthcoming. I was shattered from work, the long drive and a night of no sleep and at 51 years old, I needed some kip. I awoke at 9.30am to a warm sunny day and no further action to the rods. I went and had coffee with Kevin and caught a few small lives with his float rod....roach and rudd....lovely.

It was at this time that I met and chatted to Les Corsie who had managed an eel of 2lb's in the morning but had work to attend and was leaving later in the day. The clock ticked round to lunchtime but I was still in need of a few hours kip so decided to fish, sunbathe and sleep at my swim in the afternoon.....however, others had different ideas and it seemed that everyone visited me for a while chatting about stuff and eel fishing.....I met Paul Williamson at this point who chatted away about poaching waters in the area on the Christchurch ticket without any idea that also in my swim was the fishery manager.....that was quite an interesting and amusing minute or two when mid way through his 'gusting' tales he asked who the chap was.....pure 'gunge' indeed.

At about 14.30pm I decided that the only way I was going to get any sleep was if I told everyone to bugger off and leave me alone.....and so, with as much tact as I could muster, I told them all to leave me alone for a while.....and the message got through. I managed two hours kip and then heard the news that Wayne was going to photo his 3lb 10oz eel before letting it go, so I wandered over to his swim with Kev, Paul and Thomas to see the eel.

Wayne was, as ever, completely eel conservation minded during the photo session and when the eel was calmed down and about ready for the photo session, he asked that it be doused in water to keep it wet.....at which point it became very much revived as well...thus giving us all a few nice memories of holding lively eels for photos.....something that I'm sure we all can relate to over the years.....the eel was stunning and I was well set up for the night session to come after seeing it. (I ought to add that it was at this point in time that I met the lovely Sue and

looked around the 'bivvy from home'.....everything in it but the kitchen sink...which was, of course, in my car.)

Photos done, we all made our ways back to out swims. I decided that I would fish from an early time period and decided that food was an important issue to get done and dusted and so made egg and bacon sarnies for tea in Kev's swim, whilst he and Thomas made some form of 'Welsh Stew'. I then told Thomas that he must try and catch an eel tonight and so re-tackled him up with some items of my tackle and Kev's quicksilver and got him cast out in anticipation of an eel run.

Thomas obviously wasn't fated to catch an eel over this weekend as he had about five runs and never managed to bank one of them. He did have a couple on but they came adrift on the retrieve. Disappointing for him and frustrating for me, as I was more concerned with him catching an eel than myself that night.

I managed two more eels at 21.40pm and 03.00am, both between one and two pounds and Wayne had one at 1lb 5oz in the night.

Morning came and I started the packing away early due to needing to be at a pub in deepest Derbyshire at midday for Sunday lunch before trout fishing in a boat all afternoon. (The result of that afternoon's fluff flinging was a big rainbow of 5lb's plus.)

The weekends fishing was very enjoyable and it was very nice meeting everyone, some for the first time and others who I have known for many years.

My thanks to Kevin and Rod for getting the venue organised and for Christchurch Angling AC for the use of their waters for our fish-in. Next year we may have the opportunity to fish another of their lakes in the area if we desire. I hope that we do and I shall be attending...this time though, I might have the day off work and drive down early to avoid the traffic.

## The National Anguilla Club August fish-in.

Stanwick Lakes , Northants.

Kevin Huish

Stanwick Lakes is situated near in the centre of the country and was chosen as one of the venues for us to fish during 2008 so that has many of the members could make it, plus it was a new venue for the club to fish and give the members a bit of a challenge.

On arrival at the venue I was met by the Fishery Manager Mr. Jon Holmes who proceeded to tell me that a few eels had been caught in the lakes on the complex and he was hopeful that the club would catch.

10 members and two guests fished the venue over the weekend but the eels did not show. There was one eel caught at 5ozs by Nick Duffy therefore becoming the Stanwick Champion for 2008. The venue did look like that it should produce eels, in fact, the neighbouring lake Elson's did produce 3 eels to a good size.

May I give my thanks to the members who fished the weekend and sharing many topics of banter. Mr Mole was very pleased to hear all the going on at the fishing. In fact there is so much gunge he is overflowed with information. More of this fishin report will be given in the magazine including the gunge of course.

# The Gunge Pages



BY

"The Mole"

Well all I can say is I am disappointed with you all. There has been very little whistle blowing, by anyone. Nick/Spike is the only one sending in anything and that is very little as he hasn't been in contact with anyone much. Spike did tell me about an incident from last year involving our very own Shovel (Dave Smith). Apparently he was driving along a local road alongside a stream which after heavy rain had flooded. Total ignoring the police signs and a multitude of pedestrians he blundered on deeper and deeper until the water was coming over the sills and through the door seals. Now all would have been ok if he had carried on in the same gear as the engine because it was revving still blowing fumes through its exhaust, But as he was waving smugly at all the others and swamping them with a considerable bow wave he had to change gear because of an oncoming lorry. The exhaust filled and the engine sucked and low and behold he was marooned in 3 foot of water. The lorry made it through but the Car a total write off. Shovel your way out of that mate.

A certain Mr. Slippery Sully AKA David Sullivan. Has been inundating our bulletin Editor with articles. Which his long suffering other half Andrea spends the night typing for him, he even got his daughter Loz on the case once. You may notice that he tends to insert a poem or two into his writing which worries me coz only arty nature loving anti's are into poems. What worried me even more was the photo of him naked in a wheat field with a large leaf on his head which Andrea sent in.



I suspect it was in an effort to get him chucked off the club so she wouldn't have to type any more. He did say the photo had a perfectly good explanation. Still ain't heard it yet. Spike says go easy on him coz he is gonna break John Sidley's record of articles sent in. Great as JS was, he was not good at punctuation and grammar and most of his 8 or 10 page articles were broken down to 2 pages. But Sully's articles are different; how the fuck can you break a poem down!!!

On the subject of poems Graham the Jockey has put in a sample of his, which he premiered at the Stanwick fish/in to 9 adoring fans. Spike the hedgehog left in disgust soon after and Barry went at midnight the following night.

Strange one that. Barry leaving that is. Now Barry has a reputation of putting up with most things in his pursuit of eels, but does tent to help all this along with the help of special cigs. So when he woke every one up at 1am on the Sat night and announced that he was off because the other anglers (Non NAC members I may add) were all on drugs and were keeping him awake, it smelt of the pot calling the kettle black. In the good old days he would have joined in with Pete Drabble closely following behind. The next morning a mound of bottles was found next to Barry's neighbours bivvy and I might add every other bivvy around the lake. Spike had left the day before; he has more sense than we thought. Sneaking all his empties into other swims.

Talking about Pete "The Anguilla Guerrilla" Drabble, it was omitted from the last Gunge but Nick/Spike our great and wonder full Editor, Products Officer and Membership Sec (who loses cheques and forgets about members that have joined) had texted Pete and asked him if he was gonna rejoin and did he want Spike to put in his cash until he could send it. Pete said yes.

You may guess Spike has not seen that cash and because of a shortage of cash (mostly given to the Jockey, More of that later) Spike has not been able to pay his mortgage and is now homeless. All this while Pete (NOW the Anguilla Yuppie) is whooping it up with his new girl and according to Baz the first. The lovely Rachel who it seems has total control over him has changed him into Stockport's answer to style Guru Giorgio Armani. Barry, his mate and long time fishing companion is now truly "Only The Lonely". I think she now bans him from speaking to Baz. Aaaaa isn't love grand. Maybe this explains Barry's capitulation at the Stanwick fish/in. He is not used to having people near him anymore. Poor Barry.

Neil "Batman" Wilkinson on his way to the Stanwick fish/in stopped off at the Jockeys house the night before for a little social drink. Just a couple. Ho Hum. They were out till 3am and were awoken by the lovely Nicole (The Jockeys much better other half) to get up and sort out this mess. Now Graham had decided that his and Neil's line of attack on the fish/in was gonna be heavy ground baiting with maggots. He started off with 2 Gallon the day before but arrived at the fish/in with a pint each. The sight of the pair of them with Mega hangovers crawling around the floor chasing maggots must have been a joy. The escapees probably have hatched now and Nicole's really got the hump about the swarms of blue bottles that now call her house home.

The winter social was a great affair with a new venue and what a venue. It was warm with comfy seats a nice atmosphere and food available. The lads from down south thought they were in heaven with rock bottom prices for full English at £27 plus £5 a cuppa. Anyone north of Watford starved. Of course the Jockey survived and was seen receiving a large amount of cash from Spike. Now much could have been made of this little back hander but the truth is funnier. Apparently both Spike and The Jockey went fishing on the GU Canal and had to get down a muddy track to this particular bridge. Great no probs but next morning on their return up through the quagmire spikes van got stuck. Now I know what you're thinking, The Jockey charged Spike to tow him out, but no, he hitched up Spikes Van and did his best to pull him out and YES they made it but just as they got out of the mud the tow rope broke and a steel shackle hit the rear of Grahams van, resulting in a hole in his rear door. This resulting in Spikes most expensive eel trip ever, with one night on the canal, no eels and it cost £500.

Rod Hillyer rang Spike about the Southern fish/in info for the news letter and happened to mention he had spoke to Kevin Earwash and was sending him the map. After Spike stopped laughing he told Rod that the way to pronounce Kev's name was Huish.

Before setting out on a quest for a zander on the river, Dave our IT and Mag man Rang Mark Salt about a page for the bulletin only to be told he has gone fishing instead of writing. In the background Dave heard a buzzer go and Mark rang off. Then 15mins later Mark rang back and said he has just had a small one at 28lb 1oz. Dave was well pissed and went fishing but succeeded in finally giving Mark a nick name "Spawny".

Mark then received an e-mail from Dave which read,

FORGOT MUG,  
FORGOT SPOON,  
FORGOT FOOD,  
HAD 6 RUNS MISSED THEM ALL,  
GOING TO TAKE UP GOLF.

Mark replied you would lose your Balls.

The point to all this is Marks new name "SPAWNY".

Duffy and Dave the Shovel have a little bet going on for the winter. It started off as the biggest Zander from the Avon or Severn. But Duffy had a 6lb 6oz "Z" from the canal so he changed the goal post's. Duffy is hoping Dave emulates his results for eels from Doggers Pond, eeeeerm soz Dave how many did you catch? None.

Finally Duffy was on a nice summer trip to a secret eel lake in Staffs with his girl at the time and Ade Lees with his lady. They set up lake side in a wooded area and enjoyed a nice summer evening with a drink. It was suggested that they order a curry which could be delivered to the fishery gate. So Duffy volunteered to go to the gate and fetch it. There he was with two bags of takeaway returning to the bivvies through the, what he describes was the Amazon jungle. "He was lost in the woods". Now both The Shovel and Spike know that this is little more than a wooded coppice. Anyway after half an hour of stumbling round in circles with cold bags of food he rang Ade who had to fetch him. Duffy is not with that girl anymore, I wonder if he left her somewhere and cannot find his way back.



Here are the lads at the Stanwick fish-in with the Jockey inspecting Batman's PB. Notice the huge grin on Duffy's face as he had beaten every one with his mega trophy winning 4oz eel. Luckily for him his swim was just behind and the lads were gonna escort him back in case he got lost.

The truth is very important but so are lies.

Go for it Lads.

**The Mole.**

