

TEAM-TALK'

By
Steve Richardson.

Where to start may prove to be a problem but how to stop will possibly be harder.

The last issue of ANGUILLA was produced in a different format, had colour added to it and included the best ever line drawings that we have ever had. OK, I'll admit that the quality of the photos was not quite what we had wanted but this was completely down to trying to achieve a production deadline. I rushed Jimmy, so that you could all read your Bulletin over the Christmas break. As you can see, we have not tried to stay to a definite deadline for this issue. Let me explain.....

At the AGM which, to be honest, was poorly attended, it was decided that we would only produce two Bulletins per year from now on. These are to be larger in content and should run to around 55 pages minimum. We are staying with the new format, the colour and at the AGM we managed to retain the skills of Damian Wood as line drawing artist by proposing he join the 'Production Team'. Thankfully, Damian accepted and Jimmy, Stuart and myself are very pleased to have him aboard in an official capacity. We decided that the two issues should go out in 'June/July' and 'Christmas'. This would prove to be the best times with the newly resurrected newsletters going out in-between, via 'The Eeling Hedgehog'.

Strangely, considering the massive change to the Bulletin format, by March of this year we had only enough material for about 15 pages. If you don't mind me saying so, and even if you do I am still going to say it, Stuart, Jimmy and I thought this was a disappointing reaction to our efforts and to those of the contributors, who, purely by what they had written, should have provoked an avalanche of material from the membership for the next issue.

In the end I had to personally contact other individuals, to ask them if they could produce something for publication, explaining to them that we were struggling for material. Thankfully they obliged and without highlighting anyone in particular I should like to thank them all, on behalf of Jimmy, Stuart and Damian for coming up with the goods for us. Ultimately though, what I mean to say...'is for YOU'.

We are not going to ask you again for material for the Bulletin. In affect, you have been asked within the pages of every issue of the Bulletin to date and, to be completely honest, receiving and reading the Bulletin should be enough of a spur to write something for the next issue. Unless I am mistaken, we all go fishing, we all have experiences and we all take the odd photo now and again. Unless I am the only one, and I know that those who fish with me are the same, I always have questions to ask, problems to solve and difficulties to overcome. That, in itself, is fuel enough for at least one page of written material for the Bulletin from everyone. Even if you all write in and say that you don't have those problems with your eel fishing, it is something. On top of that, if that is the only reaction we receive, then I for one will be saying "tell me your secrets of problem free eel fishing".....The plain and simple truth behind 'no problems' in eel fishing is this....you obviously don't go out eel fishing.

On to other matters....Before the AGM, the old committee had reasons to re-evaluate the recording of large eels and this led directly to having to examine the structure of the 'Top 50' list. What has come about has already been stated in the latest newsletter but considering the problems with finding out information in the past from club Bulletins, it is best noted here as well for future members to be able to read.

The first major committee decision to be made in a long time was whether we could accept Keith Bradbury's 7lb15oz eel, given the way it was reported to the club. This matter took up the best part of 5 months to sort out. Committee meetings were held to discuss the problems. A meeting between Keith, Nick Rose and myself was arranged and took place in Blackpool at Keith's convenience. Keith listened to what we had to say and after a very amiable debate accepted our reasons for the questions regarding his eel capture. The committee then held another meeting to decide upon what course of action to take, if any. Keith had been asked if he would like to attend a committee meeting, at his convenience, in order to put his side of the affair over, but he declined saying that he couldn't attend any meetings in the foreseeable future due to work commitments. However, Keith did say that he would abide by the majority decision of the committee.

After a long debate and after due consideration it was decided that we would remove Keith's eel from the 'Top 50' list and also re-award 'The John Sidley' Trophy and the 'Biggest Eel of the season' Trophy to Barry McConnell for his eel of 7lb 4oz. This was duly done at the AGM, the presentation being made by the new President of the club, Arthur J. Sutton. The whole affair was discussed at the AGM and all those members present agreed that the committee had taken the correct steps and backed the decision 100%.

We, the new committee, are now in the process of investigating all the eels on the 'Top 50' list with a view to removing any eels which are suspect. We intend to use the club's records to justify any removals from the list. This is an on-going situation stemming from a decision made by the last committee way back in November 1999. We are very fortunate in as much as we have all of Brian's records and also Arthur J. Sutton's as well. Between them there should be enough information to carry out this re-evaluation.

The Records Officer will adjust the list over the season and will present the new list at the Winter Social meeting, giving the committee's reasons for any deletions. I can inform you all now that there are three such eels to be removed so far. I do not feel that I am at liberty to name them, as that is Jimmy's job, but I am sure that they may well make it into print for the next newsletter. Whether there are more to come is something for the future. At the end of the day, the list has to have integrity or it is not worth the paper it is written on. The investigation goes on, as they say.

This will be my last involvement in the production of the Bulletin. I have decided to take a back seat for the Christmas edition, leaving Stuart as Editor and Formatter, Jimmy as Cover Designer, Artist and Printer and Damian as the Line Drawing Artist and Mailing Manager. I have enjoyed taking the Bulletin to the new heights it has achieved with Stuart, Jimmy and Damian but feel that my time within the 'Production Team' has run its course. I always envisaged being the catalyst for the new direction the Bulletin took and once that was achieved and was in capable hands, I would leave. I am not the right man to front the Bulletin now, simply because I would soon start using the Bulletin as my soapbox. This would not be right and anyway I am better suited to the political arena that all specialist anglers are soon to find themselves in. I will enjoy taking, and making, the NAC's stance in this environment.

Speaking with a positive tongue, this decision should allow me to write again with some passion and bite. It will also allow me to read the Bulletin again with a fresh mind. I shall continue to contribute in a materialistic manner, I do have things to share with others and questions to pose.

On the eeling front, I have not yet wet a line for anything. This is the first season for many years that I have not been fishing for eels from March onwards. I must say that the feeling is strange and not welcome but a new work direction, a lull in enthusiasm due to trying to re-decorate our kitchen...unsuccessfully I may add, as this is written (3/6/00) are the main reasons.

My eel fishing this season is going to be conducted with a laid back approach due to the fact that I have purchased a ticket for a water that holds no history of eel captures or sightings. The water does hold large Carp, Tench and Roach, so who can say that it doesn't hold a few eels. Hopefully, if I do make contact with an eel it may prove to be just what I am looking for. The water was dug and flooded in 1950 and that alone makes it a viable consideration for my attentions. This will be the only water I shall fish this summer for eels, apart from the odd social canal session with some close friends. (Confidence boosters I think they are called.) Whatever happens, I shall be out there fishing for eels and enjoying every moment regardless of the results. Who can say when the next run will come, but in-between the start and finish of those sessions I shall probably be writing something for our future Bulletins. With so much time at our disposal whilst waiting for something to happen, I would like to think that some of you may be doing the same, with the aim of making the production of the next Bulletin that much easier for the 'Production Team'.

I would like to end this 'Leader' by thanking Stuart, Jimmy and Damian for all their support, encouragement and camaraderie over the year and a half we have worked together on the Bulletin. I should also like to thank all the members who have contributed whilst I was involved in the Bulletin, without your material the Bulletin wouldn't have materialised into its present format. I believe the new version of the Bulletin is better than before and with these three rogue's in charge, it will move progressively forward given the continued support of you, the membership, in the years to come.

Lastly, huge thanks are due to Pauline, Jean and Erica for putting up with more hassles than anyone outside the 'Production Team' or 'The committee' could imagine.

I hope you all enjoy this issue of the Bulletin. I hope it makes you want to contribute and I hope it makes you want to go out there and catch some eels. Hopefully, there will be some monsters amongst them. Good hunting.....

THANK YOU STEVE.

The "Production Team" would like to show its gratitude to Steve "Dances" Richardson for all his hard work on the Bulletin since **HE** rescued it some 18 months ago. Without Steve's vision, drive and inspiration we would not have the magazine we have today. We also know that we can count on Steve for help and guidance should we need it in the future. The Bulletin is a major part of N.A.C history, and Steve has left his mark on that history. We just hope that we can take "Anguilla" to the heights that Steve envisaged when he was Editor. And a big thank you must go to **Erica** for putting up with all the late nights in front of the P.C, and for her patience and understanding.

Thank you from Stuart, Jimmy and Damian.

THE APRIL A.G.M PRESENTATIONS



The “John Sidley Trophy awarded to Barry McConnell for his monster eel of 7lb – 04ozs, presented by A. J. Sutton

- *Barry McConnell receiving the “Best Eel of the Season” Trophy again for his eel of 7lb – 04ozs presented by A. J. Sutton.*



- *Malcolm “Lucky” Law, winner of the “Steve Mahoney Trophy for his Elvington Fish-in Eel of 6lb – 04ozs. Presented by A. J. Sutton.*

WAS IT WORTH IT.

By
NICK ROSE.

At the end of the autumn meeting in 1998 Steve Richardson said to me we can do that, I said ok like a fool and added yes and while I am at it I intend catching in every month of 1999. For those that were not at the meeting I will expand on this. Steve was referring to the slide shows we had just witnessed and the fact that although we might not catch much this coming year together, we should be able to waste an hour talking and showing some nice scenic views. As for my further statement, it has been one ambition of mine to catch an eel in every month of the year and it would at least provide some extra slides for the show.

My first problem was where to go this was not to easy as I wanted to catch using traditional methods not quivertipping on the Wye with worms for boot laces. This was partially solved by a comment I had heard about a certain Res down south, which was still throwing up eels in November. So off I went on Nov 1st to check it out. I had fished this place loads of times in my youth for eels and pike so I knew the lay out but this was my first time down here for 20 years.

Caseus Res is a very large bowl, shallow on one side at 10 to 15 ft but 35 to 40 ft deep on the dam side, this varied according to the water levels. I can remember fishing for pike one year after a very hot summer and the shallow end was a huge sandbank. It had lost 15ft off the normal level and 15ft of water in this place is a lot as the bowl is 2 mile round the circumference. Now before I carry on, the name Caseus is not the real name of this Res, I derived it from Latin, it means Cheese so you may guess it is Cheddar Res that I am fishing. You will find all sorts of daft names for waters in this article it's just a Hedgehog thing.

On my arrival I went to the site shop and purchased a ticket for the afternoon and made my way to the water, it looked just the same as it did 20 years ago. Now I am not a great lover of walking and if you used the car park here to get to the deep water was a very long trek. Back in those early days it was the same so I found a farm track that past the rear of the dam. The only trouble was it meant a short walk of 50 yds up the dam wall which is at a 45 degree angle and in the winter usually made up of wet grass and mud with plenty of sheep s - - t (better than bull s - - t). This was almost as bad as walking round the bank for a mile, I can guarantee it gets the heart pumping, now I know how the army lads feel after a run with a rucksack full of bricks.

Back to the fishing, after 20 mins collapsed at the top I asked the only other angler there how he was doing, he said he had had a small pike and had just dropped an eel off at the net, I was soon in the next swim and getting my gear out. As is usual when the water levels are up I set up at the top of the dam on a little wall which runs round the whole Res, the local people use the perimeter of this wall as a walk and as it was a lovely crisp sunny November day lots of people were out. Now from my memory this is a worm water, very few eels were caught on deads so out went the first two rods on to a rod pod, a must here as the banks were just a series of concrete steps going down to the bottom of the res. Now came the first problem and the butt of many jokes the coming year, as I was getting my second pod ready I had a run, down to the water and strike and yes an eel was on. Quite a crowd developed and watched me expertly play and land an eel of 2lb 10oz, I was very pleased with the result and sacked it up, I recast and started on my second pod again, the trouble was I could not find the new blue Delkim and after a mega search through all my tackle and a frantic run up and down the bank following my last steps from the van I was still a Delkim short, I then rang home and asked Andrew if I had left it on the radiator as I had been drying them out after a very wet Fenland trip. He just laughs and gave me so much grief I cut him off. So some one in Axbridge has a blue Delkim.

That nights results where 7 eels, best the first one at 2lb 10oz with 2 other 2s and the rest were 1lb plus. I went again the following week but blanked loosing 3 eels in the weed and missing a further 3 runs. At the end of Nov I thought I would try the canal as it was still reasonably warm and blanked out again. Still I had found somewhere I could catch in the winter.

December came and saw me on the fens again with Richo, it was very wet and windy with very little caught (I think Richo had a SMALL Pike of about 17lb) and just some Jacks to me. It was on this trip we discided to definitely do a slide show, the wind suddenly got up into gale force so Steve took advantage of a sticky predicament took a series of photos of me clinging on to my bivvie ending up with it flat on the ground and me underneath it. He was laughing his pants off but he was soaked through and I was dry.

Caseus followed in the break between Christmas and New Year two trips 2 eels on each best 2lb 2oz the rest were big 1`s. It was on these sessions that I was only doing from 3pm to midnight approx and I was still getting in more hours of darkness than in the summer.

January saw me using Caseus as a dead cert catch water and in two trips in the later part of the month catching both times at 1lb 8oz and on the last week end another 2 at 2lb 5oz. I went to three other lakes during the month as it was very mild for the time of year and blanked Richo and Stuart ventured out with me on two separate trips they also blanked.

February and it was a bit colder but not too bad, I made two trips to Caseus, the first was early on and resulted 2 eels of 1lb 14oz and 2lb 4oz the second was a blank. At some stage during the last two months Richo came down with me to catch his first winter eel by design which he managed and I never saw him again that winter, fair weather eel angler. (No doubt he will change this statement before it gets in the mag. Editors prerogative)

March and a mid month trip to Caseus saw me blank out with just some small pike to 9lb 10oz. The end of the month came and I had almost forgot my pledge to catch in every month so on the 31st saw me on the GU canal, it had been mild and I thought the eels should be moving by now. At 8,30pm and eel of 2lb 12oz saved the day and this was followed by a 2lb 10oz'er at 12,15 am to give me my April eel, two eels with one stone.

April and only two trips both to Rays Tip and two blanks, thank god for that April fools day eel.

May and it was warmer and eel fishing was being done by every one now in Ernest (that's not Ken Wards mate Ernest) by all you lads. Three trips to Rays Tip and eels of 2lb, 2lb 2oz, and the smallest eel of the year at $\frac{3}{4}$ lb taken on a 4 inch live roach. While you was all catching at Elvington I was to attend a Severn Consultative meeting on the Saturday I was early so a walk round a carp lake near by was in order, Andrew had been telling me we should fish this place as he had heard of some big eels coming from it. So I had started pre baiting it, if you remember the last paragraph of my article on pre baiting last year I said I was going to chase a known eel, well this was that water. I spotted one carp lad in an obvious state of panic and his mate swishing the landing net about frantically, I wandered over and netted the fish for him, it was 5lb 6oz and he would not even touch it let alone have a photo with it. Then on the 17th I went onto the lake, this resulted in a blank but Andrew had come with me and he had a small eel of 4lb 13oz. Now you know why they call him golden bollocks. He was fishing some 50yds away from my pre baited swim but I still say it was on its way to me, (He gets really arsy if I say he nicks fish from my swim), two more sessions followed at Past A Joke Pool with no action, now guess why I called it that name.

Steve and Stuart were desperate to come fishing with the master so I arranged a session on a B, ham parks pool called Windsor Miller Lake where I showed them how to draw the Island peg and the get out of buying the breakfast by producing an eel in the morning at 5,25 and then betting them I would catch another. At 7,05 I had another, they blanked but Stu did gain something, food, drink and bait as he had forgotten his.

June and 10 sessions at 9 different venues with eels caught best 2lb 14oz and 2lb 12oz. I also fished with Jason Morgan in this month but the threats did not work and he still sends in cartoons about my absent Delkim. Chris Siddall deserves a mention, as he was about to start on a use Nick as a guinea pig season (read last mags gunge). Also in June was the junior fish/in and bar-bequest with yours truly as chief, NO ONE came down with food poisoning.

July and I was now getting desperate for an eel three pound or over. Six different venues and eels of 2lb 13oz and 2lb 12oz the best with 2 more 2s and a further 3 eels over the 1lb mark and yet another Guinea pig session with Mr Siddall I keep telling him I am a Hedgehog not a Guinea Pig.

August was cosmic time with the eclipse and I went down south just to look at an overcast sky and clouds. I was on the Exeter Canal and although I caught it was not in the dark of the eclipse. A trip the day before to Pete Gregory's syndicate lake and a sure fire 3lber (I blanked in true Hedgehog style). Two trips to Past A Joke Pool, the Tame Valley Canal, the Trent Mersey Canal with Richo and the Upper Tamar Fish/in, best eel 2lb 3oz with 2 other 2s and 6 other eels under 2lb still no three.

September 7 sessions and one eel of 2lb 1oz, This month was crap, two fish/ins and not an eel but I saw a lot of big ones 6lb + Well done Malc.

At this point things were getting bad at home so fishing started to get unimportant But still managed 2 Zander sessions up the fens and 2 late Caseus trips in the last week of the month. First session was a blank but I missed 4 runs and lost a fish in the weed. The second saw me catch 3 eels best 2lb 4oz, only two months to go.

November and an eel of 1lb 10oz. That keeps me in the running and no more serious eel fishing this month.

December and one eel to go. Tried a session on A secret Shropshire Mere and blanked as I new I would, it was just an excuse to go fishing with a very good mate. Then went to Lincolnshire with Chris Siddall this was not a Guinea Pig Trip but a piking trip we all blanked but had a SEAL surface in our swim on the weekend hence no fish (I still don't know how Chris arranged that).

Then it was down to serious matters and this last eel. A session in mid Dec at Caseus Blanked.

Two days later another Blank and due to mega troubles at home my next trip was as last year, between Christmas and New Year. On the 28th I arrived at Caseus at 4ish pm cast out and caught at 6,30 an eel of 2lb 10oz that was it I packed up and went home, not even finishing of the session. I was not going to eel fish till March 15th as I thought I needed a change.

If you have read this far you must be keen and as the title says was it worth it.

At the end of the day I fulfilled an ambition so I suppose it was, all I can say is if you want to eel fish during the winter pick a water which has a history of winter eels. It is really hard work with 15 hours of darkness. It came to a point at the end where I just wanted to catch an eel in that month and then not fish again till the next month came round. As for the rest of the season, I am used to fishing on one water catching few eels but of a better stamp than those this year.

So that is it I have completed this task, so on with another season and my next ambition, apart from the obvious (catching huge eels) I really want to catch a 4lber in the winter with snow on the ground, don't hold your breath, I share this ambition with a fair few others and. It's not going to be easy. From December I did a bit of chub fishing, This is what I do usually during the winter and I catch my fair share of decent chub. These 3 months saw me catch a fair number of fish mostly threes but not a four pounder. Now this is unusual as the waters I fish hold a good head of fours is this an omen for the coming eel season?

I did receive a phone call from a certain Welsh man who after 20 years of trying caught his first 5lber, I was well pleased for him, then 5mins later he rang and said they are like busses get one and another one comes along, he had caught a brace of fives brilliant. Young Jared also was with him and had a couple of fours so well done to him. As Kevin said they are like busses and he went on to catch two more fives both times when I was with him trying to nick a good fish off him, still I can only hope for a better season in this new millennium.

Getting back to winter eeling, as I said before it is very hard and the nights are long, you must find the right water which is the major problem, the fishing bit is easy you just blank and get a lot of sleep. Just don't let a hard winter ruin the summer for you. See you all on the bank some time.

PARTNERS IN SLIME

(Copy of an article which appeared in Pike and Predators October 1999.)

Steve Ormrod gives an insight into *Anguilla anguilla* (eels to you and me) and wonders why so few predator anglers bother to fish for them.

I know a few of the readers of *Pike and Predators* will already be addicted to night-time eel fishing during the summer months. I can sympathise with the strange looks of bewilderment you get from anglers fishing for double figure Tench and Bream or monster Carp. How does an eel angler get pleasure from getting themselves and all their gear covered in thick, skin-like eel slime. The pong of roach baits constantly on your hands.

Hopelessly trying to hide the 4 yard stare which you get from watching beta-lights all night and Lack of sleep due to the non-stop rod action. However, believe me you can soon become an addict when you first experience the tremendous power of one of our most voracious freshwater predators. Pound for pound you cannot match the fighting qualities of *Anguilla anguilla*. They are made up solidly of muscle, putting it to good effect when hooked, with Lots of tricks up their sleeves to catch out even the most experienced angler. Not only do they swim forwards, they can also swim backwards and sideways to try and gain a few inches of slack line which will see them slip the hook with ease. The scary part is they know it too!

I hope this has already set the scene and whet your appetite to give eel fishing a go. Firstly, before I get too deep into my experiences and methods I would Like to mention the advantages of joining an *Anguilla* specimen club. I myself am a member of The National *Anguilla* Club, a small club by national standards, but they are the most dedicated group of specialists you will find. Through the club I have made some great friends and have picked up a lot of invaluable knowledge (lets face it, you won't find any copies of 'eel world' on the newsagents shelves)! *Anguilla* is a species we are still trying to fully understand, not an awful lot of information is available. But what information we do have is both excellent and hard earned by anglers like the great John Sidley. You only need to think of the eels' origins, from birth in a great far away sea, to realise this is one very special creature. Most people don't know that a 5lb eel could very well be 60 years old, longevity is another 'Annie' advantage. The simple message is don't struggle on your own, join a club Like the NAC and get off to a great start!

Vicious in habit.

Most anglers don't realise the predatory instinct that eels have, most will say that the eel is a basic scavenger picking up the sick and dead creatures in its path. Of course this is true, the eel is a great opportunist, but it is only part of the truth. The eel is a pure predator and will actively hunt live prey as well as picking on the dead and stricken. There are two forms of the eel we call *Anguilla anguilla*. The narrow headed, small mouthed fish adapted to feeding on worms and crustaceans in line with what its habitat has to offer. Then there is the wide headed fish, it has a formidable set of jaws and teeth and has a mainly fish diet. The wide headed predators are absolutely vicious in their habit. Sneaking along the bottom they spot a shoat of roach. Targeting a chosen silhouette the eel smells excretion flow from the victim, it homes-in on this putrid Laser beam. The eel then delivers a disabling blow to the vent area, thus ripping the roaches tail off in the process and making it easy fresh pickings.

The wide heads and the narrows are very different creatures, but the exact same species! Amazingly, most big eels in this country (7lb-plus) tend to be the narrow headed variety and not the wide headed as expected! It's the big 'narrows' which tend to fire the imagination of the 'big eel' hunter. Methods are quite simple, being mainly running worm rigs, the skill is in finding where they are and then catching them!

Wide-headed predators.

The eels I mainly fish for are the wide-headed predators, they can still reach enormous proportions, the biggies just seem to be rarer than the big narrows. I target these fish as I feel I understand their instincts. Instincts which come with a lifetimes affair with predator angling. This summer has seen some good results so far as I write in August, with a dozen fish at 2+, five 3's to 3.06 and two 4's to 4.10. **all on livebaits**. I highlight these words as it is the most important factor in my success so far this year. A couple of seasons ago I dabbled with livebaiting for eels but gave up as I could not find a suitable rig to present them correctly. I eventually got the rig sorted at the end of the eel season, but did not have time to try it out. For some reason I did not use it the following season, preferring to fish worm and deadbait set-ups instead. However, after seeing first hand the effectiveness of livebaits for eels I decided I would have another go. I had also noticed that other NAC members used the CD rig to good effect and adapted it myself by using a JR paternoster boom instead of a run-ring to lower chances of tangles. Most of you will be familiar with the CD rig. Basically it suspends the bait with the float going in front of the snap-tackle and can be set to the chosen depth by altering the stop-knot on the paternoster link. This rig handles superbly, you can even cast it good distances without any tangles as the bomb shoots ahead of the bait. You must wind down until you feel solid resistance to fish it effectively though. The key factor for eeling is that the rig is free-running. I have since adapted the JR boom to be as free-flowing as possible. I have achieved this by running a curved piece of tubing through the boom section, simple but effective.

Tackle.

I think I like eeling from the fact that it is just like pike fishing. All your pike gear will come into use, no need to rush out and buy anything new. You may feel that you are over-gunning the tackle, but believe me even a good 2lb eel will have a 3lb test curve pike rod bent to the handle! You cannot over do it with the gear as some swims will inevitably have snags, an eel is expert in finding them and putting them to good use. My own tackle consists of 12 foot 2¾ lb test NW Kevlite pike specialist rods, with 6 inches cut off the tip to stiffen the action up. Reels are 6010 GT baitrunners loaded with 24lb 'Fusion' braid. Terminal tackle we have already covered. Indication is via the normal 2 rod-rest set up used for piking (don't use a pod!).

Indication.

I use front-end Delkims on almost zero sensitivity as this cuts down on the small skiddles you get from a lively bait or liners. At minimum sensitivity it takes a line movement of one inch to register anything. If it sounds it means the livey is swimming for its life from an attacking eel. This gives you pre-warning of the run which soon follows and are usually screaming one-noters! Eels tend to take like pike and move off with their prize, to consume in their lair. Indication is backed-up on the rear rod rest with small, lightweight bobbins with bet-a-lights inside to watch what is occurring. A Lot of takes I have had on deads have seen the eel take line up to the bobbin, feel the slightest bit of resistance (the bobbin literally shakes!) and will then drop the bait or rip it in two! As you will have realised you need to fish with

an open bait arm and have your clip set lightly. Always point the rod in-line with the settled rig too, this reduces any rod-resistance. You can do this in daylight before fishing by casting the rig out and making any adjustment. It is very important not to make too much noise at night as the fish can literally be under your feet. The rest of the gear is standard specimen stuff. I use a large unhooking mat to give you plenty of room in the initial tussles to get an eel under control (more later). My Landing net is a 36 inch, wide mesh to get into tight corners, yet be large enough to fit in a big eel. A lightweight net is also an advantage for scooping any livebaits in the margins, a process also known as 'swishing'.

Locations and hooking.

Most of my eeling is done in the margins or just an underarm cast out, so reducing the risk of the eel running to anywhere tricky. I will pick a swim that has an obvious eel lair close to, such as a submerged root system with a nice overhang above and with a bit of water depth nearby. I also plumb the water in front of me to find any drop-offs as this will be a patrol route. To start with I will fish at least one rod close to the likely looking lair at dusk. Moving it to open water after I get a run or when it has gone fully dark, whichever comes first. My theory is that you will only get runs from the most eely looking areas when it is going dark or when dawn is approaching. Reason is that the eel is either leaving or returning to it's lair. Most of the night will see it out on a specific patrol route which it will cruise round and round in search of prey. Therefore you will waste your time fishing these lairs all night, hence fishing the open water drop-offs most of the time.

Don't be afraid to fish open water in front of you, so long as there's a drop off or slight depth variation to present baits to. I tend to set my bait to fish high in the water as the eel will tend to attack from below at the silhouette. Don't be misguided by the saying 'eels don't like moonlight!'. Some good hits can be had on a full moon fishing livebaits high in the water as the eels use the moonlight to pinpoint their prey. A typical session will see a fish on the bank soon after dark, takes are very confident on lives. After you first miss a run then things start to get tricky. I have another theory that when you get a lot of runs it is probably only a few eels constantly having a go at your bait in the locality being fished. On the first run, they are not cautious, but as they keep having a go they will wise-up and you will get a lot of dropped runs and snatched baits. Do not underestimate the intelligence of your quarry, eels are really smart. When I get a run, I tend to gently wind down with the rod tip pointing directly at the run and feel for any solid resistance. Only then will I give a firm side strike, away and slightly upward from the direction of the run. Its no good striking at any run without feeling for this resistance as the eel may have dropped the bait, its your livey that's giving a continuance of the run! Better to get the bait back than give them a freebie, you can also study your bait to see where it has been taken and adjust your hooking arrangement to suit, this eel will be back for more.

A big eel will engulf a decent size livey, I usually fish one bait of 3 inches and a larger one of say 5 inches. The smaller live will give more runs, which tend to be from smaller eels (2-3lb). The larger bait will sort out the better fish (4lb+) as smatter eels won't be interested. Most takes are absolute screamers as eels hit livebaits very hard and often with no warning. I hit all runs as soon as possible to avoid deep-hooking, most fish are hooked solidly in the lip area making life a lot easier when unhooking. One last note on good eel times, watch for spawning fish such as carp as eels won't be far away, it's a free harvest of food. Also, fish on a falling moon cycle for best results in the summer.

Handling eels.

Handling eels can be a nightmare and I know we all cringe at the thought of an eels slippery characteristics. Visions of an eel tangling everything in site, wrapped round your arm, slime everywhere and it's dark! There are no immediate solutions, other than don't fish for them if you are at all squeamish. I can only give my advice as to how I go about it, learned from trial, error and sheer terror! Let's start at the first point of contact, the Landing net. If you are inexperienced with eels I would strongly suggest you go with someone who is, or at Least don't attempt it alone. A spare pair of hands is a real advantage. Wear some sort of head torch and switch it on the moment you get a run, don't hold one in your teeth or hand, it will be useless.

So the eel is beaten and approaches the landing net, you will be worn-out already after keeping the fish from escaping during the fight. Your arms will ache with the constant bang, bang, bang on the rod. Then the sudden tail walk over 12 feet of water as the eel decides it's remembered the sunken branch to the left (don't think it's just pike that do this). Sink the net as deeply in the margin as you can and keep the handle over your left shoulder (right if you are left-handed). Only when you are sure the eel is beaten do you draw it toward the net, keeping it's head well out of the water. This helps to disorientate

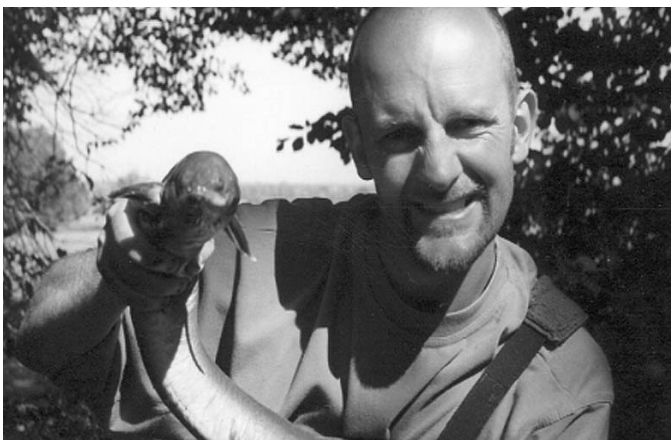
the fish as it's now seeing an alien environment. Draw the eels head right up to the spreader block and lift the net. Eels have a great trick of latching hold of the net rim with the tip of their tail, I'm convinced they must use it like a giant finger. The eel will then swim backwards and leave your hook in the net rim, I've had it done.

Once in the bottom of the net the eel will just squirm about a bit, but won't get far. Always check your net for holes, especially after scooping for lives as branches tangled in the mesh can cause damage, eels can slip through even the smallest of holes, a real headache! Keep the eel in the landing net while you unhook it on the mat, this gives the eel no place to squirm to. I have found it vital to use a snap-clip to easily release the trace from the main line. You can then wrap the eel in the net while you move your rod out of harms way, remember it will be dark too. For unhooking I use a pair of long nose pliers as forceps will not cope with large, thick-wired hooks. If the eel is deepish hooked I will slip it straight into the keep-net and unhook it in daylight, sometimes they will spit it out during the night anyway! Only if the hook is within easy reach do I unhook it there and then.

I tend to get the fish on its back and gently stroke it for a few minutes until subdued. A sharp pull on the hook will release it easily with no damage to the fish. This stroking process tends to relax an eel and they almost become comatose, it takes patience, but it is worth the effort. Do not leave an eel on its back for too long though as it will eventually choke to death.

You can also use this process to calm an eel for weighing and photography, but it can take up to 20 minutes to fully relax the fish. You need to run wetted hands along the whole of its body, massaging any tension out, just imagine its Kelly Brook! You will get a nice covering of slime, but allow it to dry and it just peels off like a second skin! Its your waterproofs, net and mat that take a bit of scrubbing. One last tip, I tend to use a plastic wallpaper bag for weighing, it can be discarded at home after use, is weightless and they are long enough to take a good sized eel.

All I can say is try it out and the best of British!



- **Top Left : A 3.04 livey masher taken on a hot July night.**
- **Top Right : A 4.10 which ripped into a roach livebait and gave the kind of fight you would not believe without experiencing first-hand.**
- **Bottom Left : Eel fishing partner in slime Eric Brown shows the business of a 3.11 eel.**
- **Bottom Right : Location : this swim has a good eel lair to the left and lots of water in front with a nice drop-off not far out.**

MY FIRST 4LB. EEL.

By
Brian Crawford

I have caught many hundreds of eels over the years. My first was as a young teenager from the yachting pool on the seafront at Fleetwood in Lancashire. I remember the event most clearly, mainly because I "discovered" that eels are coated with slime when out of water. However, following several chance encounters with eels from firm ponds, I had my first deliberate eel session at about 16 years of age on a pond on a recreation field, one warm summer evening I was successful and landed two of about 2lb. I was most impressed with the fight on my float rod. I had not head of ledgering at that time but decided I needed a stronger rod if I wished to catch bigger eels, knowing at the time the record was 8½ pounds.

My plans for bigger eels had to be put on hold as I went into the army, serving as navigator on small tugs and landing craft firstly at Southampton, and then for 15 months in the Gulf based on the Island of Bahrain, where the sea temperature got into the 90's and an temperatures into the 140's in the Summer. I left the army in December 1964 and moved back to Fleetwood with my new wife Jill. I began working for my father in his shop. It sold just about everything and was open 9am until 8pm every day of the year except Xmas Day. I worked every other morning or afternoon and every evening for £10-00 per week (out of this I paid a mortgage, ran a car and our housekeeping!). In the summer of 1965 I began fishing the local reservoir serving the railway sheds where I once worked as a steam engine boiler washer in the afternoons when I was free, 2pm until 5pm, set up with gear for eels. My tackle at that time was a single eel rod, a solid fiber glass 7 foot spinning rod, Mitchell 300 reel, 10lb nylon line and a long shanked Aberdeen size 2 sea hook. I used a running pierced bullet ledger of 1 oz, stopped with a swivel and the hook tied direct to the 10lb line with a trace length of about 2 foot. The bait was 2 or 3 lobworms collected from pulling back tufts of grass from the edge of the reservoir. The rod was placed in a single rod rest pushed into a gap between large stone blocks and the butt placed level on the sloping bank. The bite indicator was a plastic clothes peg clipped onto the line between the first two bottom rings, about 2 yards of line pulled from the spool and the peg laid onto a concrete block. Obviously when I got a bite the line would tighten and I would hear the peg rattle on the stone blocks. It always worked. As soon as the line tightened and the rod tip began to bend round I would strike.

The rest of my gear was just as simple, a plastic sheet to sit on if the grass was damp or if it rained it was big enough to put over my head as well. I sometimes took along a built cane float rod as well to fish for the bream and tench until the eels decided to bite.

Even though at that time I was only able to fish in the afternoons, I still caught eels, quite a few between one and two pounds. The reservoir was square in shape, sloping stone block banks with a vertical 2 foot wall at the top - impossible for eels to migrate from - a "prison water". Each bank was about 150 yards with peg numbers painted on the wall every 3 or 4 yards. The reservoir water was very murky and about 16 feet deep in the middle, which was towards where I cast. The bottom was deep silt.

As I was doing quite well with eels most afternoons, my brother-in-law Terry Lomax, decided to try the action for himself so during the first week in July 1965 we had our first session together. I tackled up in my usual way and cast out, then as he was fishing the next peg, helped him set up also. He said "How long do you wait for a bite? I replied "Sometimes I get a bite instantly but if not I reel in about 2 yards of line every 10 minutes until either I have to recast or I do get a bite." As I had not had a bite I reeled in about 2 yards and reset my peg. Just as I released the peg it shot off towards the rod. This is the usual event - getting a run just after moving the bait As the line tightened right up I lifted the rod and swung it over my head to strike into the eel. At least I pulled the butt of my rod over my head the rest of the rod was still pointing at the water and the rod almost in a circle. "Funny!" I said. "This has not happened before. Perhaps its a bigger one" A bit of an understatement. The rod obviously could not cope with the eel which continued to try to swim away and taking line off the clutch. This was the first big fish I had ever had on so was not too sure what to do. Eventually I was able to slowly gain line and bring the eel towards the bank I then thought of a new problem. I only had a small landing net - as had everyone else who was fishing the res that afternoon. "Get hold of it when I get it to the bank!" I told Terry - "BUGGER OFF!" said Terry - "YOU HOOKED IT - YOU BLOODY LAND IT" Great! I desperately scanned the Crawford memory bank: to see if I could log onto useful information to enable me to get the beast safely onto the sloping bank "Bing!" Out of the murky depths of my consciousness I recalled an article by Dick Walker or some such writer that the best way to deal with eels was to wrap them in newspaper. Terry had brought a paper with him to read! "Quick!" I yelled to Terry, "throw me your

newspaper." "But I haven't finished reading it yet!" he replied, a bit bemused at my unknown intentions for his daily read, but he still threw it at me.

Delicately, while hanging onto the bucking, bending rod with one hand, I used The other hand and my feet to spread the paper near the water's edge and eased the eel nearer and nearer the bank "You're not going to put that eel in my paper are you?" Terry shouted in his loud scouse accent. "Its alright. " I replied " I don't think it can read." and just then the eel shot out of the water, up the bank and onto the newspaper. I dropped the rod., grabbed the pile of thrashing eel, newspaper and several tufts of grass and threw everything up the bank, over the top of the wall and onto the level grass. I followed immediately and threw myself on top to secure it. The eel however, was having none of it. It strongly objected to being wrapped in newspaper and being manhandled by Brian Crawford. I had experienced nothing like it before, not even Jill on our wedding night.", Hold still you bugger!" I said - to the eel not Jill

Terry had almost fallen into the water screaming with laughter. Eventually I had it tamed I was covered in slime and bits of newspaper - as was the eel - but I had it. One of the other anglers had a set of scales. There were about 10 anglers grouped round - none had seen an eel so big. After deducting a ounce to allow for the newspaper and grass and other rubbish stuck to the eel - it scaled just 41b - nearly 50% of the British record. Nobody had a camera so the capture just had witnesses although it was filed in my memory forever. An hour later I had an eel of 21b. Two weeks later at the same time in the afternoon I had another four pound eel but this time I was better prepared - I had a large hessian. sac to capture the eel in.

Since that summer of 1965 I have enjoyed many, many sessions, most on my own but lots with a multitude of eel angling characters. Many sessions were memorable, many were not - but that's eel fishing.

STARTING OVER

By
Steve Ricketts.

After such a long lay off from writing an article on fishing this is not going to be easy but I suppose I should start back where I stopped.

I was fishing a water in Hertfordshire which is known as very hard, no matter which species of fish you fish for. Eels have been caught up to 7lb but they receive virtually no pressure, even today the lake only attracts the attention of serious bream anglers and the odd carper. The '94 season was a complete blank with no fish of any species coming to my rods in 43 nights fishing. The '95 season was better to the extent that on 2 nights out of 37 I caught fish. The two nights they did feed I had 13 fish with 5 over 5lb; the best 5lb 12oz and numerous runs all night.

The struggle to get runs, the break up of the B.E.A.C. and work commitments started to take its toll and I drifted out of eel fishing into sea fishing from a boat. This set new challenges for a while, like keeping food down in a ten foot swell and pulling up three hundred foot of rope with a twenty pound anchor on the end; this had the effect of making humping all my tackle round a lake again seem attractive.

So by the start of the '98 season with the boat sold and my tackle dusted off I found myself back on my old lake. And it felt great to be back fishing the water again, 180 acres of water with rarely any one else on it, features of every description shallows, deeps, bars and weed beds but, as remembered, very few signs of fish life.

The season didn't really go well until August when my third run out of seventeen nights produced my first comeback eel of 4lb 10oz to deadbait. The lake seemed to have taken on a new lease life with bream to 16lb taken by bream anglers. The lake seemed full of bream fry with small perch chasing them everywhere. By the end of August the bream lads stop fishing the lake and I had it all to myself (makes taking photos a bitch, you have to hunt down another angler or mug a passing birdwatcher). The fishing improved with single fish coming on each of the next five night sessions; three being good fish of 4lb 2oz, 4lb 7oz and 5lb exactly and several pike to low twenty's. A very satisfying return for my first season back eeling.

The '99 season couldn't come around quick enough I'd been well and truly bitten again so June 15th saw me bivvied up on the lake for the start of the season with about ten bream anglers (the lake still operates a close season being a S.S.S.I. site). Five days later not one fish had been caught by anyone and no fish had been seen. At the time of writing this on December 17th only two small eels and one bream have been caught, and not by me. And there's some very well known anglers fishing the water. This season I've put in 33 nights on the lake and if anyone knows why a lake does this I'd be interested in their opinion.

The lake has done this several times in the past, sometimes with very large shoals of fish visible, yet nothing gets caught of any species. However, the following season the place fishes well. The lake has a lowish population of eels, averaging 3 to 4lb with some very good fish dotted about, (my best from the lake is 6lb 3oz) with much bigger fish lost by bream anglers through inadequate tackle. This I have no reason to doubt having witnessed one such incident. The eels show no preference for worms or deadbaits and I've never suffered small fish nicking worms, there isn't any. Nothing has ever been caught during the day and baitfish can only be caught from the river behind the lake. The river sometimes produces good Barbel and Chub, which help the long summer days, pass.

So I've joined the NAC to meet some like-minded anglers, as no-one I know now fishes for eels; they've all gone carping or quit. I'll try to attend some fish-ins this coming year and have a crack again. Tight lines

“PRESSURISING” EELS. PART 2:

By

Damian Wood and Jimmy Jolley

As the season is about to start for most people, the majority of us may be searching for those possible waters that might produce the eel of a life time, or returning to waters that have been kind to us over the years, hoping one day the next take may be the one. With a possible notion in mind, of trying a different approach, either fishing other areas of the water, or a different presentation from the season before, hoping it will make a difference?

Going back to my article 'Pressurizing Eels' it could be possible that some of us may be fishing for eels that have already been caught once or twice before, or may have been hooked and lost in their own life-time, just because somebody tells us they never get caught again, should we take it as gospel? John Sidley who caught as many eels as he did, never took records of markings, natural, or un-natural! Most eels look the same, but how do we know for sure, if we don't take any notice of unusual markings?

Could it be possible that not all eels leave a water after capture as we are meant to believe? I'm having doubts at the back of my mind about certain aspects of eel behaviour and eel fishing methods that most of us may take for granted, be it right or wrong!

At the Trentham Gardens fish-in I caught an eel of 3lb 8oz which in the morning, I took her out the sack to take some photographs, on doing so I pointed out to Steve Gardener, Mark Smethurst and Steve Ormrod, that this eel may have been caught before, or been hooked before, due to the fact that she had old scars of 'line-wrap' all along her body, if so, this goes against 'text book' eel fishing! As I've mentioned before, is 'Association' more apparent than we want to believe? Do **all** eels leave the water after capture?

At the Winter Social, Nick Rose and Steve Richardson did a slide show, in the slide-show Nick mentioned a water he had been fishing, and he said that he had caught the same eel twice, from opposite ends of the lake, the reason he was "sure" it was the same eel, was due to the fact that the eel had a distinctive black spot near the tail end, the captures were seven days apart, and a large distance of water between them. The first time it came out, it was caught on worms, over a 'pre-baited area' of cockles, the second time it came out was on a Roach head near a sluice gate, and it may have been leaving the water before it was caught again? It may have been there for many other reasons and a may be coincidences that it was caught near an exit point. Even though it was an exit from the water, it also could be a 'natural' feeding area as well, which could attract 'bait fish', to small items of tiny vertebrae, that possibly may live near it, or on it? but the point is, he is **sure** it was the same eel. What are the possible chances of more than one eel having the same distinctive small black pigmentation of colouring, near its tail? Nick also told me, quote " *There must be more recaptures than we think, because most eels look the same, we don't notice it, unless it has unusual markings*" I would just like to thank Nick at this point for his help and the valid information he gave us.

But how do you explain waters that are less than thirty years old, that were man-made, especially these new carp waters that pop up all over the country producing big eels all of a sudden? For example 'White Acres' and 'Docklow' (how do we know there wasn't a small pool or "wet-land" area previous to the excavation of the said waters?). Do these eels come from somewhere else at weights of up to 4lb and eventually reach a weight of 7lb's + in some cases, in this relatively short space of time? It seems to be a very common coincidence that extremely large eels come from "carp-waters". Could it be down to their constant diet of 'High Nutritional Value and High Protein baits' (H.N.V. & H.P boilies and pastes)? To me an eel is neither a scavenger nor a predator, but more of an opportunist feeder, like all fish are.

Even if they do leave after capture, do they forget why they are leaving in the first place? Or are they still cautious towards baits and how we present them? Probably even more cautious because they

are in a new environment, until they get used to their new surroundings? Could it be just a natural way for eels to travel from water to water no matter if they have been caught or not? Who knows the real answers?

(Foot note): It would be an interesting experiment , to set up two fish tanks with two eels of the same weight, one in each tank, both tanks set at the same water temperature, for a period of time, probably over a length of twelve months , both eels are weighed and recorded, before putting them into their separate tanks, one will receive a controlled diet of either maggots, worms or fish, while the other eel is fed on a controlled diet of H.N.V baits and at the end of the period, each eel will be weighed to see if an eel that is fed on H.N.V diet grows quicker than an eel fed on natural food, or visa, versa, or does it make no difference what so ever? There is one down fall it this experiment , which I think has a detrimental effect on how quick eels grow and that is the “energy” used by the eel to obtain the food ,the easier the food is to obtain, the less energy is wasted and the quicker the eel will grow.

Arthur Sutton said in his brilliant article “ A Case for Moon-light Eel Fishing” about a water he was fishing at the time, with the first twelve months producing very good eels, but their run rate demised as the season progressed, thinking they had caught all the eels from that particular water. Only to discover after talking to the owner that they hadn’t caught all the eels ,but in fact the eel population had resided to a “safe area” from angling pressure, under some over hanging, tree-lined banking, which at the time they couldn’t fish. Crawling out along the branches hanging over the water ,they witness to their surprise all types ,sizes of eels and not just a few, some estimated well over seven pounds held up together! And a change of tactics and presentation released a new lease of life! Every bodies interpretation of this will be different from one another’s, but the facts still remain the same! Observation and experience to me out way assumptions about our quarry, even Sir Isaac Walton knew this and quoted it in his book “The Complete Angler”, written more than three hundred years ago. Arthur’s observation blow’s a lot of assumptions about eels completely out the window in one foul swoop! (that most may take as gospel).

Bearing in mind that more than fifty years ago it was “public knowledge” that carp were considered to be caught purely by accident and couldn’t be caught by design! Dick Walker proved all the sceptics wrong and is commonly know as history in the carp fraternity today, but even certain aspects of his theory on carp awareness, have been proven wrong by carp anglers of today, for example he wrote that carp hibernate in winter and don’t feed until spring. The important thing is that Dick walker set the foundations of today’s modern carp angler in the first place, in “ Walkers “ day carp-anglers were a minority, un-like now, with every one and his brother being carp-anglers, due to the massive boom in the 80’s. Probably down to publications like Kevin Maddocks’ “Carp Fever”, and George Sherman’s “Carp and the Carp Angler”. Even these are out dated by today’s modern methods, but they still work today in certain situations.

All we can do is surmise and learn from our own and other anglers experiences, or do most of us ignore the possibilities that eels **do** associate with angling pressure **but** still get caught again (there is probably more eel anglers and anglers in general know than there were then)? If no one bothers to write about it, positive or negative! how will we know for sure?

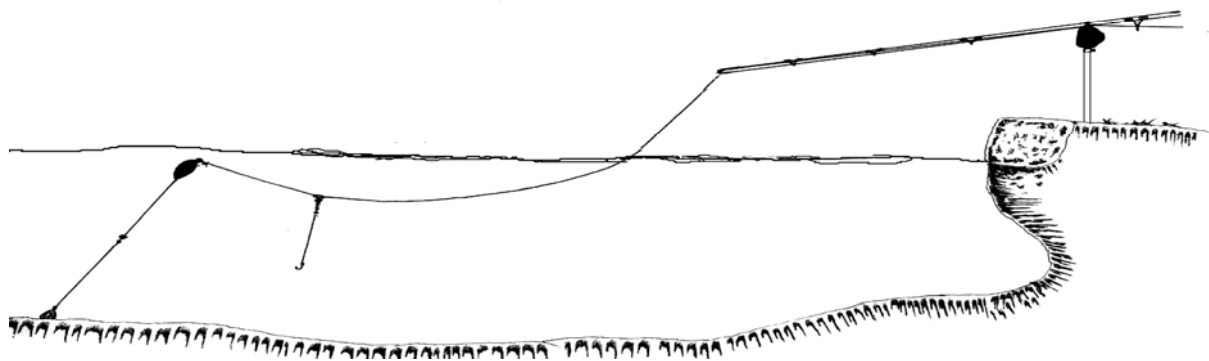
Could this be a reason for some of those “aborted runs” we get? Or “indicator pull outs” from the ‘Drop-arm indicators’ and then nothing happens? All of us have experienced this from time to time and just accepting them as a part of eel fishing in general and not asking the reasons why?. Okay they may not all be eels, but we’ve learnt at first hand that not all eels feed the same (as described in “Pressurising Eels” Vol 37, Issue 1 of “**Anguilla**”). The problem with the baits we use for eels are that they not very selective from other species of fish taking them, but the “Dyson rig” itself reduces the list of “nuisance” fish taking our baits, that are intended for eels., as we found out last season, purely by accident , because the canal we are fish is full of carp,(as most other waters are) even when we are using worms, it seems that the carp don’t like a bait presented on a “Dyson rig” and when we got a run it was an eel, but it still doesn’t deter the Perch (which we don’t mind at all in our canal as they have been reported to well over 4lb’s) and Pike, (which are very far and few between in our canal.) After what we both experience last season, we are now looking at ideas to reduce this problem by modifying our rigs, just to see if it does improve our catch rates? Could we be fishing for the same eels seasons after season? Or fishing for eels that have been caught before, by other members, or other anglers in general?

But just let us re-track my steps back to” **Aborted takes**” and “**Indicator pull-outs**” for a moment. We have been using the “ Dyson rig “ exclusively for our eel fishing last season, due to the problems that our waters present to us. We have both been Fishing the same rigs and baits, working as a team and not against one another, even though our catches have wavered from each other (that’s just sod’s law) as Jimmy says to me “*You could fall in the canal and come out with a gold watch and a set of waterproofs*”, we still had certain things in common.

The first being a reduction of “Aborted takes” and the second is a decline in deep hooked eels, even though we still both encountered missed runs and “Indicator pull-outs”, even so, this was down in comparison to our run ratio, the questions are, why? And what is the next step to take? to reduce it even further? The biggest equation to us both was the change over to “ **Braid** ”, the second was a well balanced presentation. The third was trying to understand what is happening when an eel takes a bait presented on a “Dyson”, or more importantly what happens after the eel takes a bait? As we have already mentioned before about the advantages of using braid over mono, we will try and give likely reasons for our decline in “Aborted” takes and why some of these “ Aborted runs” are not what they seem and could possibly be “ Indicator pull-outs” in which case the eel may have already rejected the bait, bearing in mind we are still taking about “Dyson” presentation, (Or maybe it happens no matter how we present a bait?) but because the majority of you are still using mono it will appear as an “Aborted run”.

As you can see from the diagram (Fig 1) above fishing a “Dyson rig “ using mono, due to the properties that mono-line has, its natural reaction is to “sag” in a concaved manner, resulting in slack-line between rod and rig, as an eel takes the bait, it has a lot more “lea-way”, before any bite- registration signals on your bite alarms, giving the eel plenty of time to drop the bait, if it feels something isn’t right.

Fig 1: The Standard Dyson rig using mono



For one simple reason, “mono-line” has a “ **Line- Memory**”, so it’s natural reaction to being release from under “**tension**” of a “Drop-arm indicator”, as the bait drops through the water, to the lakebed is, to still continuously to fall off the spool, or “ Line over-spill “, giving the indication of a “ Aborted run” on your bite- alarms. With the **braid**, there is no memory at all, so when it is released from the clip, the bait falls through the water to the lakebed , only taking the required line off the reel and doesn’t suffer from “ Line over spill”, but in both cases the eel may have already rejected the bait. The question is why?

We know it isn’t any thing to do with the resistance of the “drop-arm indicator “. Could the reason be down to the swivel hitting the eel on the head as the line is un-clipped? Or the possible chance that the eel may have already come across it before? Or may have been caught on it before?

Fig 2: Our (Jan 2000) Dyson rig using braid

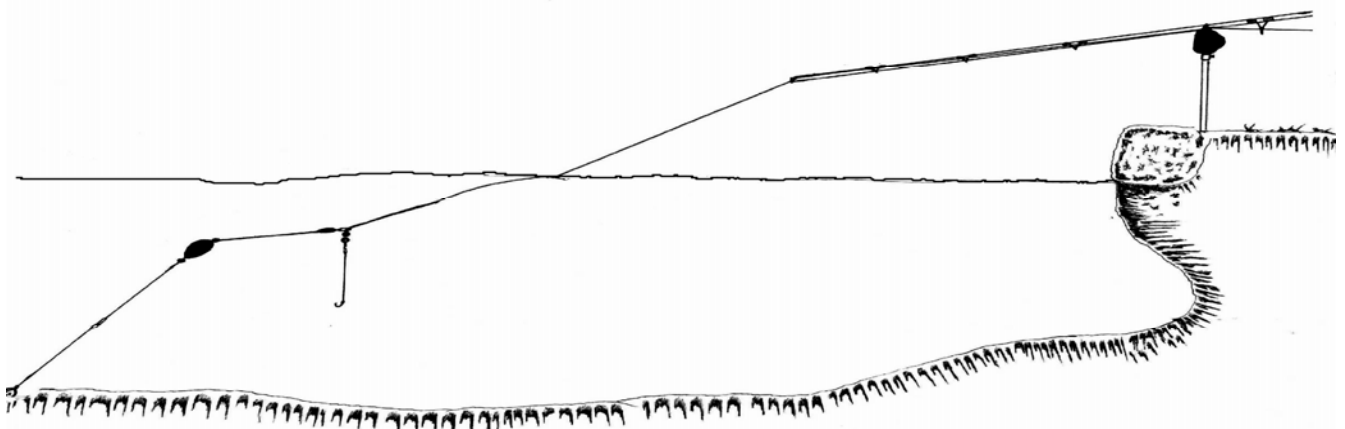
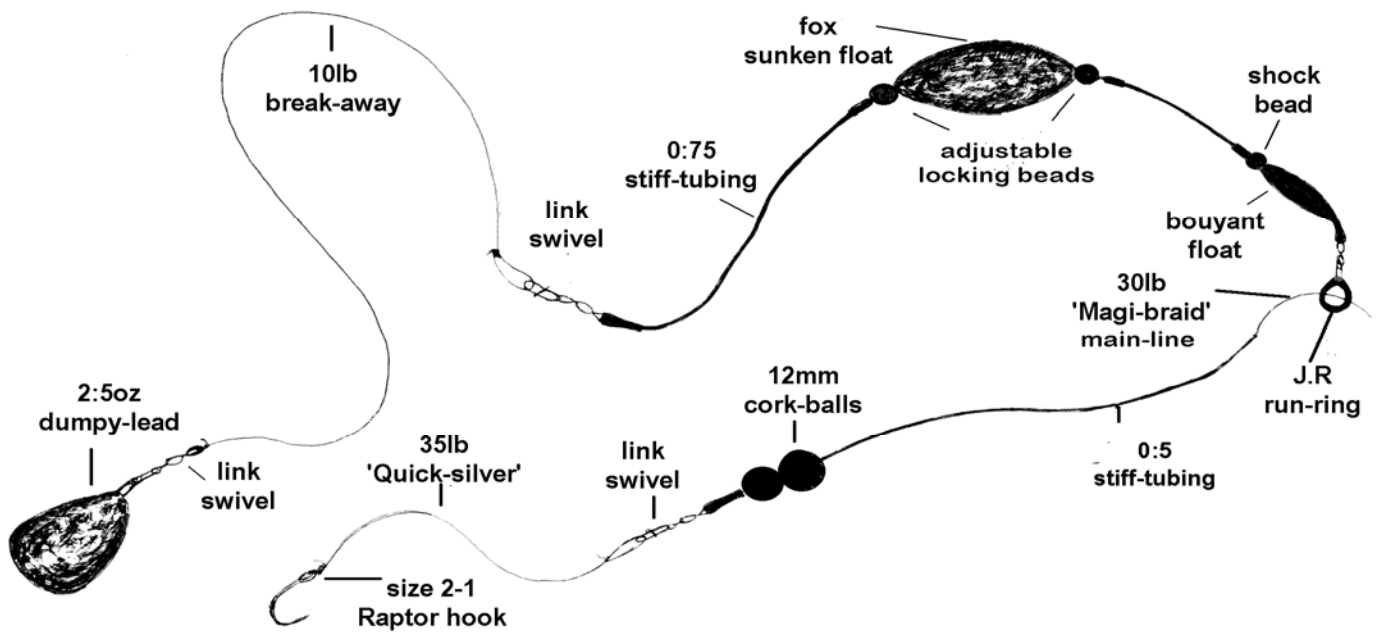


Fig 3: Our “Dyson rig” (JAN 2000)



As you can see from the diagram of our “Dyson Rig” ,we now have two floats on the fixed 0:75mm stiff tubing , the second bouyant float near the J.R. run-ring and is an aid in keeping the rig buoyant, fine tuning the buoyancy of the set up,(even after it has been un-clipped by a taking eel), while the two cork-balls prevent the swivel and bait, dropping through the water, or hitting the eel on the head. These cork-balls will keep a relatively large section dead-bait up as well, you will also notice that we have the cork-balls positioned on to a 15” length of 0:5 mm stiff rig tubing, this tubing helps to prevent a “Live-bait “ tangling the “Braid “when they are being used and also to prevent the eel tangling the “braid” in the safety of the landing-net. Even this simple edition to the presentation could make the difference between an “ Indicator pull-out” and a rejected bait, into a more positive run.

This rig is fished in the same way as before under “**Resistance**”, from our “ Drop-arm indicators”, this can only be achieved more efficiently by using “Braid” due to the fact it has only 3% stretch, it is impossible to get the same amount of resistance using mono-lines, this is down to the fact that mono has a “stretch factor” , also adding to this problem , any mono-line has more weight than braid and doesn’t float “naturally” (**See fig 1**) un-like braid, causing the line to sag in the water creating slack-line between rod and rig. Which increases even more over long distances, possibly causing a decline in your hooking potential, and you could also be missing out on those more sensitive bite registrations that **do** occur from time to time.

The size of our baits and how we present them on our hooks, could also be a contributory factor to “ Missed strikes” and “Aborted runs” , when they are presented on a “Dyson rig”, especially as **we** do under “ Resistance”, but we will have to say that the majority of our “Missed strikes” were on fish baits! If you had seen the size of those eels heads, that we caught last year, you can understand the reasons why connection wasn’t made. Their heads were smaller in comparison to the rest of their body, even though their heads were not wide, they were long in the mouth, and a problem that both of us are looking into at the present moment. However, when we have fished all the changes that have been discussed in this article, we will be informing the membership through the pages of the BEST, single species publication, “**Anguilla**”.

MEMBERS ON LINE.

Here are a couple of e-mails sent by members who are on-line and have an e-mail facility. These messages just go to show that some of the things put into this magazine can produce a response from the membership. The first e-mail from Mark, was sent to all of the members that are on-line and the second e-mail is Jimmy’s response.

EEL SIGHTINGS.

By

Mark Handley Wood

Hello everyone and a Happy New year,

It has been a poor one for me so far due to suffering something terrible from a rotten cold. Never mind, things can only get better.

I have just finished reading the bulletin and found it very interesting, I really enjoyed Jimmy's article "trying to make sense of things".

In particular, the descriptions of his sightings of eels over the years. I have on two occasions, been witness to strange behaviour on the part of eels. The first sighting was in the early eighties. A friend and myself were on a fishing (and drinking) holiday in Ireland.

We were fishing for roach and bream on a large famous (to pike anglers) Lough called Lough Ramer, we had caught a net full of fish in the morning but this was mid afternoon and everything had gone very quiet. All of a sudden there was the sound of a fish crashing out. We both looked up and to our surprise, saw an eel of about 3 lbs. Was it the same eel?

Earlier on this year I visited some relatives who live at Carnforth, near Morecambe. While I was there, my uncle took me to see round his local golf course. At the side of the golf course is a small lake where you can fly fish for trout. Naturally I had to have a walk around this lake (like you do).

The lake water is very clear and at one part of the lake which has a sandy bottom and is very shallow. I saw something which at first I thought was a branch sticking up in the water.

The eel had the bottom half of its body laid on the lake bed. The rest of its body was sticking up in the water at an angle of about 45 degrees and was gently swaying from side to side. It looked as if it was sunbathing in the heat of the afternoon. I saw two other smaller eels doing exactly the same thing a little further out. When I disturbed the eel, it gently and very gracefully lowered its head to the lake bed and all three eels slowly moved off into a nearby weed bed.

The effortless and graceful way in which the eel moved its head and body up and down in the water showed me just how easy it must be for an eel to attack its prey from underneath.

EEL SIGHTINGS.

By

Jimmy Jolley

Hi there Mark,

I'm glad you enjoyed my small contribution to the last issue of "ANGUILLA", regarding the eels I've seen over the years, and I thank you for responding so honestly.

Your e-mail was just the response I was hoping for when I "penned" the article. I'm glad I'm not alone, and that someone else has seen some strange behaviour from our chosen quarry (and isn't afraid to disclose it). So far you are the second person to respond to the said article, the other member was no other than our esteemed Chairman Mr Kevin "Taff" Huish, who once witnessed a 3-4lb eel feeding on golf ball sized piece of cheese, intended for chub on the River Stour on the Dorset- Hampshire border, in a swim called "The Aquarium".

Once again I thank you for your e-mail about your "sightings". I think that the more we pool any knowledge we have come by (either accidentally or intentionally), then surely the more we will be able to understand the eels behaviour and habits, and hopefully, the little "easier" it may become to catch them.

Hope to hear from you again very soon, B.F.N. and "Tight Lines", Jimmy.

IN RESPONSE.

By

Anthony Jolley.

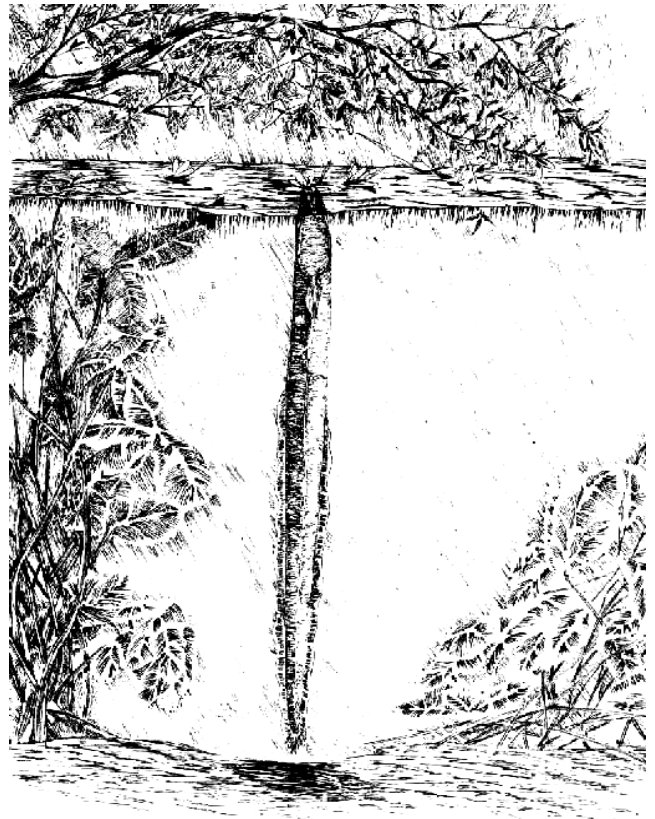
I thought I would put pen to paper and try to expand on the article "Trying to make sense of it all" ("**Anguilla**" volume 37, issue 1).

Firstly, I can verify the events I witnessed with my brother Jimmy, these being the following;- Eels in the margins of a local carp lake and that of the Eel that moved across the surface like a snake in the reeds of another lake.

I never thought that these sightings were important or unusual until I read the article, but I now realise how important they are and I feel privileged to have seen them. However, I think I should go a little further by

relaying a sighting I made at St Erth's Pool in Cornwall. Seven years ago, Jimmy, Damian Wood and my self made a trip to fish for carp. The time of year was May and as there was no close season in Cornwall, that was the reason we why we travelled 372 miles there to fish.

After a frustrating night on my part, of fast takes to meat and boilies but no fish. At first light I made my way around the lake in search of feeding fish, at this lake there is a small back water approximately 3½ - 4 feet deep. As I approached the area I kept low to the ground because the Sun was beginning to penetrate through the trees behind me like a "super trooper", with bright beams of light. At one point were the light hit the water I could see what I thought was a stick just below the surface, on closer inspection I could see that it was not a stick or branch but an Eel of approximately 1½ lbs (see illustration). This Eel was almost completely motionless in a total vertical position, mouth just below the surface. I thought that the Eel was possibly caught on some line that may have been hanging from the overhanging bush. As I watched, the Eel broke the surface with its mouth. As I observed this, I realised that this Eel was not tethered to the bush as first thought, but was actually taking newly hatched flies off the surface. Not only that, but was actually waiting for fly to land on the surface and then ever so delicately taking them before sinking back just below the surface again, no smash and grab here. This I watched some 10 – 15 minutes as this Eel repeated the same pattern over and over again until it sank gracefully into the depths.



Now I know that some of you may think that I just imagined it or it may have been something completely different but I know what I saw, and that was an Eel taking flies from the surface. I know that anglers have caught Eels on fly by accident, but I don't know if these have been taken on dry or wet flies (I suspect they were the later). I'm not suggesting that we all go out fly-fishing for Eels, but this demonstrated to me how Eels will make the most a food chain at any given time.

I must put this question to you. Am I the only person to have been privileged to have seen this happen? Please let me and the membership of The National Anguilla Club know through our own brilliant magazine "**Anguilla**". I know that there have been other sighting of Eels by other members of the N.A.C and I would like these members to take the time to convey their own experiences as well, sort of "looking backwards to see forwards" if you like.

So come on tell us all about them, please.

ELVINGTON II, THE RETURN TO PARADISE.

By
Jason Morgan

After missing out on the first visit to Elvington due to a slight technical hitch (I don't have a car and I'm unable to drive (legally, anyway)), I was itching to fish this eel haven and had managed to book a place second time round. Sean Pope who had also reserved a place, and as cycling to Yorkshire under a mountain of tackle did not appeal to me, was good enough to be my chauffeur for the weekend.

The days leading up to a fish-in always seem to last an eternity in the humdrum of the call centre where I earn my monthly bread, well, crusts. A day can seem to last a week, and a week can seem to last much longer than it's intended. But just when my brain feels as though it can take no more and is beginning to resemble an unstable mass of Rowntrees finest, 5:30 arrives and I scramble for the door and freedom. So it was on the Friday of the second Elvington trip.

The gear was readied the previous night, all checked and double checked and all I had to do was kiss my beloved farewell for the weekend and load the kit into Sean's car. Finally we were on our way. The conversation in the car was of eels and little else. Sean and I have only fished together on a few occasions, so there was much to discuss throughout the long journey. Baits, rigs, new waters and of course the results from the first fish-in at Elvington. The air of anticipation was tangible!

On arriving at "that area of the map" (garage, aerospace museum, ring any bells?), it was already dark. So concerned was I at the thought of setting up in the dark, I failed to notice that we were having a bit of trouble locating the lake. In fact we had been down a private driveway, turned the map upside down and come in from the other direction, been down a long dark road and round an estate. All jolly good fun, but we were still nowhere near our desired location. We were actually parked in a closed garage forecourt more than a little frustrated at our inability to find the lake. I had already tried to contact "The Hedgehog" on my mobile (obviously I had failed to read the small print when purchasing my "Pay as to go" mobile. It should have read "Pay as you go, but don't go outside of Stafford town centre, as you will not get a signal anywhere else in the bloody country. Finally after standing on my head, directing the phone SW and whistling the National Anthem backwards, I managed to contact Mr Rose about 9pm-ish. After absorbing Nicks wise words I found myself back on the phone around 20 minutes later, we were still no closer! After an intake of the second lot of instructions, Nick enquired if he had said if anything had been caught in our last conversation. "No" I replied. "Oh" said Nick "Malc Law has just had a 6-04". Very soon afterwards Sean and I were busily unloading the tackle from the car, eager to get onto this hallowed water.

As we were unloading the car in the dark, a face appeared out of nowhere right next to mine! After I had finished having a mild heart attack, I discovered he was the owner and was just checking that we were with the eel fishing lot, and instructed us to be as quiet as possible.

The sequence of events that follow are true, despite what you might have read in the Gunge pages. As we approached the gate we bumped into Mark Smethurst, who had also been driving around Yorkshire for a while. Mark warned us that the owner was very strict about noise and they had been warned on the first trip, so we had to be careful with the gate. As all three anglers marched through, Sean did the gentlemanly thing and closed the gate behind us. Unfortunately he had misjudged the position of his foot and the gate rebounded off it and shut with a hollow clang. After the previous warning, I found this quite amusing and chuckled to myself (I don't get out much).

After the second or third trip back to the car for gear, I was instructed that my swim was on the far side of the lake, "around there somewhere". So off went "Bushwhacker" Morgan, through the undergrowth barely able to walk under his mound of fishing tackle, hanging off in all directions. Sean was quite a way from me, and after he had found a swim that had not got a deckchair reserving it, settled in for the weekend. I wished him luck, and then after witnessing the verbal abuse between the Siddals on netting techniques (as a 3-13 waited patiently on the steps for father and soon to stop bickering and book her into the sack that had been reserved for the overnight stay), I continued to my swim passing Malcolm Law, who was completing his umpteenth lap of honour around the lake. He was still in a daze and who can blame him? A six four, well done that man, well done indeed!

Camped next to Jimmy Jolley, I was able to get sorted quite quickly. This was probably due to the fact that Jimmy had watched me fumbling around for a while and had probably had enough of me grumbling and swearing, so he kindly lent me his headlamp. Trying to assemble a bivvy with an old bike lamp lodged in your mouth, whilst remaining upright is not easy! With Jimmy's and Phil Lukins help I think I was fishing by 11pm-ish. There's a definite knack to this night fishing lark. Thanks lads.

At last I was sat on my bedchair with a cup of tea and both rods out (off bottom worms on one rod and a roach head on the other). The ground had been so hard that the bank sticks had had to be hammered in with the aid of a brick. The commotion of which would surely mean that no self-respecting eel would be visiting my swim, for a while at least!!

I was wrong, just after midnight, the off bottom worms were hit with great speed. My alarm went into overdrive as the line zipped off the reel. Closing the bail arm, the tip banged round and Jimmy did the honours with the net. She was a low two, but I was well happy, that is after Jimmy had helped me find the eel, after she had done a Houdini from the net and headed straight for my bivvy. Recaptured she was put safely in the keep-net. Shortly afterwards I had another identical run blazing away. So excited at the thought of another eel in the net, I forgot I was only fishing the margins and struck like a man possessed. Narrowly missing my bonce, the two-ounce lead flew past my head and embedded the rig high into the tree above, and there it was to stay for the rest of the night. I think this little saga amused Jimmy. A case of Bleeeeeeeeep, click, wind, strike, whoosh, thud, "What the.... Oh I don't belie... Oh *****!!!"

An emergency roach was cast out, then after such a long day I decided to get some rest. Despite the constant bleeping of alarms all around the lake, I was able to drift off quite easily, as the eels in my swim had obviously gone on strike. A few hours later I was awake by a cry of anguish from the other side of the lake. "Oh no", then I think I heard an enquiring voice, but the next bit I remember quite clearly. "I've just p***** on my rod bag". Shortly after I was asleep again.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of Jimmy's worm rod announcing a screaming run. I tottered down to the waters edge, where Jimmy was trying to convince a good sized carp that an old

sunken fence was not the best place to go and his landing net would be much more comfortable. Even on heavy gear this fish did not know the meaning of surrender and it was a while before I could net it. 16lb 9oz, if I remember correctly, not an eel true, but still a nice looking fish (I have yet to land anything above 11lb).

After a wake up cuppa and some grub, I wound in and went for the traditional wander round, to see how everyone else had done. Sean had a 3-08 and many more eels had been taken Chris Siddall 3-13 and Phil Lukins 3-11 to name a couple. Elvington was the first time Sean had met anyone else from the club, and to take an eel on your first fish-in, let alone a good three is a worthy achievement. I said I was going to watch the photographing of Malc's 6-04, and eager to see such a beast, Sean decided to join me. When we arrived at Malc's swim there was already a motley crew of members assembled, cameras loaded and ready for action. As the mighty eel was revealed, there was a rustling in the bushes. There was something approaching, "What's all this noise"....."How dare you disturb my peace". I think it was human, but I couldn't be sure. "Morning Ken, didn't wake you up, did we"? enquired one of the others. AH, so that's who it was, I thought I recognised that face. The eel was truly amazing, perfect in every detail (apart from not falling to one of my rods), certainly an eel to provide inspiration and many more sleepless nights.

For the rest of day one, I sat about chatting to Jimmy, discussing rigs and things, hoping to pick up any useful hints that might improve my chances. It was during one of these discussions that Jimmy noticed that the line on one of my rods was leaving the spool in a hurry, yet the alarm was silent. I had forgotten to switch it on (stealth method). The take was on a big bunch of lobs that I had dumped in the margins, under a tree. On winding down to take up the slack line, I discovered that the bait was nowhere near the tree, and was in fact halfway across the lake with no fish attached!!

Shortly afterwards I decided to change one of the rods to fish a piece of lamprey, and blasted the bait out as far as I could. Sean had brought some of this weird looking baits with him and kindly donated a few sections for me to try. The middle of the day was hot and it was nice to be out in the open air, with good company on such a splendid day. I'm never as confident during the day, regardless of the venue and my mind tends to wander.....quite a distance, but at Elvington it didn't have a chance. At midday, the lamprey rod burst into life. The run was a real screamer, with the unseen fish just stripping the spool. I hit the take and the 2lb test curve pike rod doubled up....and carried on going. Whatever it was, was heavier and bigger than anything I have ever hooked before. I tried to slacken the clutch, to allow it a bit of line and ease off the pressure, but the rod sprung straight. My heart sank as I retrieved the bait, the hook had pulled. I recast to the same spot, but I knew my chance had gone. The daylight yielded no more runs

I would like to think that it was just an accidental carp, but deep down I know that I probably lost a good catfish or maybe..... No I can't think that, it would be too depressing.

Anyway on with the article. Night number two was quieter, as usual, but I believe a few more anguillas slipped up and had a trip to the bank. All too soon the final morning dawned, and it was time to pack up, but not before a monster photo session with the majority of the eels caught over the weekend (the six had been returned), side by side for everyone to have a good look at. Mine was the baby of the bunch, though that doesn't matter. Whether you catch an eel or not, fish-ins are always a good social outing. A chance to meet other members that you read more about, than see on the bank.

It was nice to see Steve Richardson make it, thanks to the ever-helpful "Hedgehogs" taxi service, taking time out from running the shop on day one and speeding to "Dances" aid. I felt it a little unfair that Nick blanked, especially as while he was away Mark Smethurst nabbed an eel from next to or was it from Nick's swim. Ah well, that's fishing.

Before I sign off, I would like to answer a question I am often asked when discussing eel fishing with other people. It seems I have been giving false advice. The question is "Do eels bite?" The answer is yes, as one of our ranks found out while posing for a photo with his prize. I think it was Mark Smethurst who narrowly avoided the loss of a finger, from a snap happy anguilla.

With the group photos taken, it was time to depart, with handshakes all round after such a productive and enjoyable weekend.

I wonder what the eels were thinking as they finned their way back to their respective lairs, especially after seeing so many of their brethren out of the water at once. One thing's for sure; I can't wait to go back.

I wish you all a season of plenty.

WORMHOLES.

By

Chris (Snickers) Hodgson,

It came as quite a relief when my “fishing cupboard” was exposed as the terrestrial terminal of the space-time wormhole. I’d always assumed that the missing items of tackle and clothing were just a symptom of my own forgetfulness AND therefore you can imagine the relief brought about by this discovery.

My house is no different to anybody else’s, things disappear, and then miraculously resurface again months later. I used to put it down to some cyclical mechanism, like convection current in the atmosphere. The “must be worn” lucky fishing socks are worn, washed and replaced at the bottom of the pile of “must be worn” fishing attire. No problem so far, a simple example akin to stock rotation. The item eventually comes to the top where the cycle begins once more. (Note from the Author:- *“must be worn” is the generic term used by my wife for any item of clothing whereby the apparent state of disrepair banishes said item from wardrobes, drawers, and, airing cupboards*) This is evidently a perfectly normal process likened to, for example, precipitation and evaporation, or, sedimentation and erosion. As with any sane person I would have to agree with this process – had I not search in vain, a hundred times, for a missing item, only to have it magically reappear at some arbitrary point in the future.

When logic robustly refuses a mundane explanation, one has two choices: You can adopt the Hippy Position, smile superciliously and drawl, “Hey man that’s really weird etc etc etc. However this first choice is essentially mindless dope fuelled drivel of the type which makes me want to address the New Age with a shovel to the side of its head, leaving me with the second option. This second alternative is that behind the absent items must lay some mysterious explanation from beyond the sphere of our current scientific competence. I believe that one day, just like the magnet and the solar eclipse, (*Phenomena once attributed to witchcraft and demonic possession*), the events which baffle us today will eventually succumb to explanations derived from patient observation and experimental methodology. These instincts were vindicated last Friday when, on preparing for the first fishing trip of the year I discovered the situation now associated with my fishing cupboard and finally realised that it was an interface between two parallel universes positioned at a 45 degree angle to the constellation *Anguilla Major*.

So, I hear you ask, what can we conclude from this wealth of information ? Well surely that’s obvious. Once we accept the theories as presented we are in a position to save ourselves a lot of time, money and more importantly aggro. Picture the scene. Its half past March and you’re having to explain to your beloved why you’ve had to spend half of the mortgage money on a new blue delkim. You know you lovingly packed it away at the end of October but now its nowhere to be found. As the wife’s rage diminishes you agree to let her look in the cupboard, and, yes you’ve guessed it by some absurd quirk of fate she emerges with the missing object and you end up having to sell a kidney in order to catch up with the house repayments. So do yourself a favour. You know you want to start fishing in April so start getting your kit back together in March. Give it time to reappear from whatever extra terrestrial plane it has travelled to. And, if for some reason when you go to your fishing cupboard you discover some futuristic and revolutionary piece of tackle remember this story and send me a copy. Be prepared and be lucky.

BAITBOATS - Worth the Weight?

By

Steve Polley

The use of bait boats seems to be an emotive subject and initially I was sceptical as to their use. The original electronic bite indicators were hailed as unfair or unsporting in their beginnings in much the same way but now they are considered essentials. Remote controlled boats have been around for a good few years now and most of the original glitches have been sorted out.

Those of you I have met may have noticed that I have limited use of my right arm following a motorcycle accident and because of this my casting distance is limited in range and accuracy as is any sort of baiting up which involves throwing. I got hold of a second hand bait boat for a reasonable price, having been convinced of their usefulness by a friend and having used it for a couple of



seasons now I feel I can pass on a balanced opinion as to their use.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Not the easiest things to carry along the bankside - mine weighs about 14lbs and requires its own carry bag - others are lighter but much longer. Another thing to carry along with bedchair, bivvy, sleeping bag, food, bait, rods, nets,etc etc etc!
2. Banned on some waters (why?)
3. Attracts interest/ scorn from other anglers - not too good if you are trying to keep your baiting patterns quiet!
4. Require attention to batteries etc to prevent loss of power.
5. Can get snagged under overhanging branches (even with flexible aerals - believe me I know!!)
6. If they become unreliable - you are in for a lot of grief - door releases can jam so bait is not released, water ingress and loss of control of boat can be a real pain.

ADVANTAGES

1. Accurate baiting - loose offerings dropped directly around bait
2. Ability to drop rigs under overhanging bushes (without risk of loss of rigs and baited hooks - essential in pike fishing) i.e. around islands, far banks etc.
3. Putting baits and free offerings beyond casting distance
4. Simplified rigs (anti tangle tubing etc. can be left off rigs)
5. Bait is in better condition when it hits the water (livebaits do not get stunned on impact - though they can be a pain to keep still in the hopper) and soft baits can be hooked lightly without fear of them coming off the hooks.
6. Bigger baits can be used if required.

Probably the best known manufacturers of bait boats are Broadlands and Angling Technics but there are others available as well as a host of one man industries creating their own boats for friends. I can only comment on the Broadlands and Angling Technics boats and they are probably the most different in design.

Broadlands - they do a couple of different models depending on the type of hopper on the back - single, double or large. The boats are low wide and long making for good stability. The boats have removable rechargeable batteries and have a propeller and rudder mounted underneath. They are fast!

The original Angling Technics boats are dumpier than the Broadlands, with higher sides, the hoppers are located on either side. Batteries are internal and recharged through a socket on the top of the boat the entire unit is sealed so no water can get inside. The boats are driven by two jet pumps which enable steering and there is a single jet at the front for reverse. Lots of accessories for these boats- carry case, solar panel for recharging, livebait hopper covers, flexi aerals, bankside chargers - finally there is a simple sonar option - which gives a depth reading in feet or metres on a small handset and will also 'beep' when a fish is passed. This company now sell the Microcat which is lower, faster , has a longer range and a greater carrying capacity and all the accessories the original boat has.

Baitboats are not cheap, but if you were thinking of upgrading to a pair of distance rods and reels they would probably cost about the same and if you can split the cost between a few friends (and can come to an agreement as to who is going to be using it) then the initial costs will be halved. So the choice is yours. I would advise going for one of the commercially made boats, unless the model you have seen has a proven track record, as a leaking unreliable craft will probably end up gathering dust at home.

My fishing has been enhanced by their use, there is no real substitute for accurate casting and baiting up and a boat can help. Worth the weight? - well I think so - but I have bought a tackle trolley as well!

INTRODUCTION TO BARRIE RICKARDS ARTICLE.

By

Steve Richardson.

Barrie Rickards???? Some of you reading this will be wondering why we have got an article by Barrie Rickards in our Bulletin. It is a fair question and one that deserves an answer. The answer is rather dull considering the stature of the man in 'angling circles'. Put quite simply, it is because he is an angler who has targeted eels as a species for most of his angling life. Unbeknown to many, he has fished for eels, and written about them, in a quieter manner than his other better known passion, Pike, but he has been out there doing what we consider 'proper fishing' for a long long time.

Barrie, to my knowledge, has never had a monster eel, even though he has fished for Pike and Zander on numerous waters and at time periods when one could have been expected to come along and snaffle one of his dead or live-baits.

Most people know Barrie as a pike angler. However, he is also something of a Tench expert, having written a book dedicated to this specie of fish with his long time friend, Ray Webb. Most interestingly, and one of the reasons why I chose the unlikely combination of two eel articles from the past, one by Barrie and one by Dr. Terry Coulson, is the fact that they both worked on chapter 15, 'Modern Research', in the book 'Fishing For Big Tench'.

Dr. Terry Coulson has always been renowned for his scientific research and his dedication to this area of angling has always led to a better understanding of the quarry he has concentrated on. The Tenchfishers' certainly benefited from his work and we, as National Anguilla Club members, know of the impact that Dr. Terry Coulson had within our ranks in the 1960's and 70's.

Taking into consideration the time Barrie has spent in fishing for Tench over the years, I am amazed that a huge eel has not fallen to his or his companion's rods. This does however, show just what we as single-minded eel anglers are up against in our quest for big eels.

Barrie's 1st and 2nd published fishing articles were on eel fishing. Both were published in 1962 in 'Angling Times'. I have Barrie's permission to re-print both articles in a future edition of 'ANGUILLA', and I've no doubt this will happen sooner rather than later. I am sure they will be of interest to us, as eel anglers. I took it upon myself to ask Barrie if he would like to write a new article for us from his perspective of eel fishing and he has agreed to do this in the near future. Something else to look forward to, me thinks.

In Barrie's article, he mentions the fact of 'Freshwater eels' living in the sea all the year round. Research that took place in 1999 has proved that Barrie's thoughts were correct, way back in those days.

I hope you find this article interesting and enjoyable.

This, along with Terry's and Brian's old articles, are gems that sit proudly in the history of the Bulletin and of the club.

I would like to thank Barrie for allowing us to use his old articles and for the support he shows for eels, and eel anglers, in meetings when the humble eel is spoken about as if it didn't have the right to be held up as a specie to be protected, never mind fished for.

AN EEL IN EVERY "CRATER"

By
Barrie Rickards.

No one welcomes the revival of interest in eel fishing more than I do. I have fished for them enthusiastically for many seasons, mostly in small ponds and shallow, Weedy lakes, and it is the problems set by these waters I should like to deal with now.

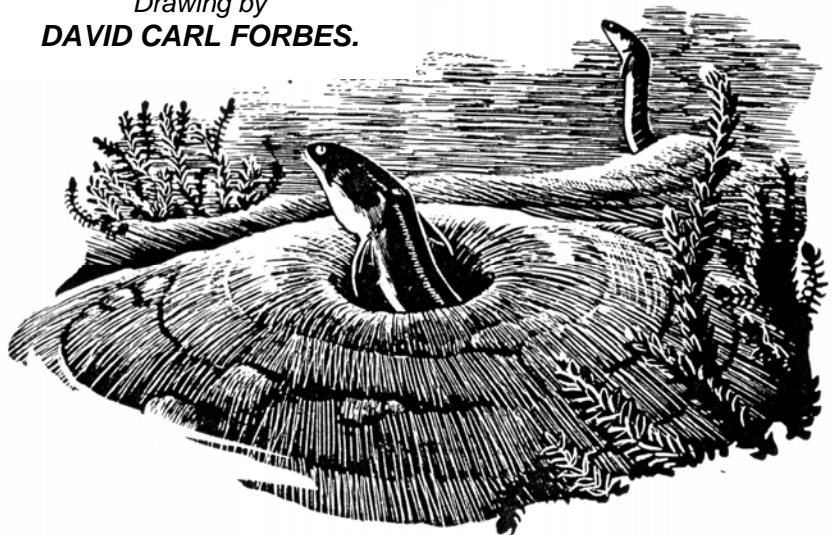
A great many of my eels have been relatively small; on one water almost every fish weighed between 2 lb. 2 oz. and 2 lb. 6 oz. Nevertheless, I have managed a sprinkling of fish over 3lb, and one of 4 lb. 8 oz.

Before dealing with the specific problems of catching small-water eels, one or two observations on the mode of life of the eels in these ponds might be of interest.

A few seasons back one of my, favourite waters had its level lowered by about half, and in the 2 ft. of clear water remaining it was easy to watch what went on. At irregularly-spaced points on the bottom of the pond, both in the open water and in the weed bed's, were very low cones of soft mud with a hole in the, centre like small volcanic craters.

I puzzled about these for several trips until, one evening, about an hour before dark, I saw a smallish eel emerge, from one of the holes. The next day I waded out to examine the holes. Each contained an eel, but it proved impossible to catch any with a net because of the muddying of the water

Drawing by
DAVID CARL FORBES.



by my feet. The holes-or, perhaps more correctly, tubes-had one entrance only, about 2 in. wide in what was quite soft mud or clay.

The whole structure tended to collapse at the merest touch, and because of the muddy water it was impossible to study them closely. I decided that this burrowing by the eels must be abnormal behaviour brought about by the unusually low level of the water, although I knew, of course, that eels do like to hide away in man-made holts, such as oil drums, brickwork, etc. Since then, however, I have seen the eels in the freshwater tanks at London Zoo, and some of these certainly live in holes burrowed in gravel.

These tank holes are U-shaped, and often an eel has its head sticking out of one end and its tail out of the other. I did wonder whether these might be man-made holes, as in the case of the conger eels of nearby tanks-they have lengths of pipe to hide in-but if this was the case there was no indication of it. In some of the deeper ponds I have fished there have also been indications that the eels have particular lairs to which they carry larger baits before eating them. On one of these waters companions and I carefully marked on the chart of the pond exactly where we had placed the dead baits usually close to a weed bed and the interesting point was that every run on deadbait, except one, followed the same pattern.

First of all there were a few preliminary twitches followed by a steady run. The fish then stopped, and we waited for the textbook style second run. Nothing happened. In each case the fish had run to a weed bed and then stopped to swallow the bait. A strike after a few seconds usually resulted in a fish, but a lot were lost because they were heavily weeded.

The eels always ran into a weed bed, but not necessarily the one near which we had placed the bait. Clearly they were not running to any weed bed, but to a specific one-and possibly a definite point in that weed bed, namely, their lairs. Here, though, I'm not suggesting that all eels live in holes in the bottom of the pond.

When we used worms for these eels we could strike quickly. But this resulted in so many tiny eels that it wasn't really worthwhile, particularly as the feeding period of the eels in our ponds often seems to be quite short. We just had to use dead baits and hope that we could get the fish out.

The eel that provided the one exception to this rule of running for cover gave a textbook bite and ran into the deep, open water, and it turned out to be our biggest yet from that particular water. It is very common to get standard eel bites on larger, deeper waters, and from large eels, and it seems possible that in these waters an eel's 'lair' consists merely of the deep water furthest from the bank. These larger waters, however, do not present the same problem though I don't doubt many have their own difficulties.

Eels are extremely delicate in the way they pick up their food. Many roach anglers will have reeled in and found a 'bootlace' eel well and truly hooked without it having given the faintest indication on the float.

I once watched a $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. eel attack a deadbait in my garden pond. I wanted that eel 'dead or alive', for it attacked every new fish placed in the pond and ripped its stomach out. It approached the deadbait quite carefully, but at its first grab its' mouth closed over one of the small treble hooks. To my surprise it simply shuffled along the bait until its mouth closed on flesh with both jaws. It then bit a big lump out of the bait and drifted away. Eventually I had to drain the pond, because it simply wouldn't look at worms or maggots. I don't think the fish was suspicious of the hooks on the deadbait, but it was probably simply that it could see and smell a dead fish, so it expected to taste fish, not something hard and inedible. One kind of water that I always make for is the type reputed to contain no eels. In my part of the country these are usually very shallow, very weedy lakes. My favourite tench water of a few seasons back hadn't yielded an eel as long as the regulars could remember, and their information went back over 30 years. Then one evening I accidentally hooked, and landed one of $3\frac{1}{2}$ lb. on tench tackle.

The next night, armed with stronger gear and using the same bait of two huge lobworms, I hooked another one, this time $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb., and netted it after a terrific struggle.

Since then quite a lot of sizable eels have been taken at night by anglers fishing specifically for them, though they have found it quite hopeless to use dead bait's.

Both the eels I took provided interesting information. The first one stood on its tail in the net as I lifted it ashore and disgorged 28 semi-digested baby toads all over my shirt front. The second one did a repeat performance, except that this time I got covered in the insides of two swan mussels.

My wife, who has watched both pike and eels attack swan mussels in tanks, tells me that the fish wait until the mussel's foot is fully extended and then attack it with great ferocity.

I'm convinced there's a deal yet to be learnt about the eel and its habits. Why is it for example that on the East Yorkshire coast you can catch 'freshwater' eels, of all weights up to 3-4 lb., all the year round? Do these fish ever enter freshwater at all?

We took one of these fish home with us once and compared it with a similar-sized pond eel. There were no obvious differences. In fact both fish looked like yellowish pond eels.

How big do freshwater eels grow ? Not many over 6 lb. have been landed if we are to believe some recent statements. But these are just some of the problems and questions which centre on the eel, and if just a few of them are solved and answered by the many interested eel-fishers then I shall be more than pleased.

INTRODUCTION TO Dr. TERRY COULSON'S ARTICLE.

By
Steve Richardson.

Dr. Terry Coulson needs no introduction to most of the members of the National Anguilla Club, however to those of you who are newer members to our ranks perhaps a few words would be appropriate.

Terry joined the club in the early stages of its life, 1964 being my earliest notification of his involvement, however he was not a founder member. He was though, one of 25 dedicated eel anglers who formed the backbone of the clubs structure. Other well known 'anglers' of the day were also among this gathering of minds.

George Moss (President) FM, John Larty (Press Secretary) FM, Jack Bellamy FM, Jim Gibbinson FM, Neil Game FM, Jack Smith FM, Keith Dickens FM, David Marlborough and lastly, but not least, Mr. Arthur J. Sutton (Secretary) FM.

The first Club Bulletin came out in June of 1964 and the second went out a month later in July.

Terry soon galvanised the club members into getting their teeth into reporting eel captures. All manner of data, from the time caught, water temp, air temp to moon phases and this, along with other scientific information, was gathered and analysed by Terry. He then published the data back to the membership with the findings. This, in a different sort of way, brought about serious questions on how, when and at what time it might be best to concentrate members efforts in pursuit of very big eels.

The club, at this time, used to concentrate on a water and fish it mob handed. This allowed them to glean information quickly and also gave the waters a good testing for its eel capabilities. Given the time period and the lack of understanding and information on the freshwater eel, this attitude was, with hindsight, the best policy to furthering angling's knowledge of our favourite quarry. All those named above, and the other members of the NAC at the time, were pioneers in fishing terms and we owe all of them our thanks for the path they cleared for us to tread.

Terry has recently written to me in reply to my request in allowing us to re-print his article below. He states that **"it is a sobering thought that nearly a third of a century has passed since I wrote that article for 'ANGLING'"**. He also added **"if you feel it might be of interest to the present day members, I should be delighted for you to reproduce it. Indeed, please feel free to use any of my old pieces"**.

I shall quote from the letter Terry sent to me, to give you an insight into one of the most important members that the National Anguilla Club has ever had in its ranks.....

"I remember spending a deal of time collecting and digging into records of 'double figure' eels spanning a period of many years, some fairly apocryphal, some seemingly quite valid, but overall it seemed virtually certain that such great eels were around and capable of being caught. The pre-eminent problem confronting the specialist eel angler, it always seemed to me, was that of location: Were the great eels scattered more or less at random around the country's waters?- or were there particular types of water where efforts could be concentrated with the best chances of success? The 'prison-water' theory (Hypothesis, I suppose one should say, to be pedantic) was one of a number of ideas –not my personal favourite, I have to say: I thought there were one or two more plausible contenders, but worth considering. I recall writing the 'ANGLING' article in hopes of provoking some useful feedback from the zoologists – without, as I recollect, much success!

Finally, congratulations to the club, and all its members, on the great progress made over the years, and may I wish you all everything you would wish for yourselves in the coming season."

When I read those words, I just wished I had been around in those early years, fishing and exchanging ideas with those early pioneers and learning with them along the way. I hope you feel the same way when you have read these extracts from the letter and Terry's article. We owe all the members who were around in 1964/65 a great debt. They formulated and shaped our great club, they gave us the desire and the belief that big, very big, eels were out there and were a realistic target to

pursue. Terry was a huge contributor to this ideal and, quite rightly, we have honoured him with 'life membership' of the club as recognition for his input into the National Anguilla Club.

I remember none other than Arthur J. Sutton, the man behind the dream to form this great club of ours, saying to me 'that when Terry joined the club's ranks things really took off'. Both of these men deserve our respect in differing ways and both rightly hold the positions awarded to them. Both are icons in this club's history. I can think of only one other person who comes close to standing side by side with these two men and, fittingly, he also has an article in this issue of the Bulletin. One day soon, I am sure that he will be covered in the 'Archive Article' section as well.

At the height of his involvement with the NAC, Terry held the position of President of the club. Dr. Terry Coulson is now in his mid-70's and still holds fond memories of the club and by reproducing his work below we, the present day membership, record our gratitude to him for his services to 'The National Anguilla Club'.

The NAC has gone through some lean years since those far off days but I believe that the club is in a similar position now as way back then, in as much as we now have a membership keen to exchange information and ideas, without worrying about being ridiculed if, what they observe and explore seems, on the face of it, as being somewhat obscure or unusual, with the rest of us. None of us knows everything about eels and eel fishing. However, the one thing we do know, is that there are no experts.

An example of this is the fact that even though I have been seriously fishing for eels for over 18 years, I have only seen one eel naturally within its environment. Simply by offering an article on eel sightings, Jimmy Jolley has opened up an area where, it seems, that eel sightings are quite common. Up until this point, probably because the subject seemed 'out of this world', no one has put into print actually seeing eels behaving in these different manners. Now, over the space of one Bulletin, we have others who have witnessed eel behaviour in the water.

Way back in 1964/65, everything that was written on eels was subjective but it was only by sharing these thoughts and ideas that we find ourselves where we are today. So, by exchanging our different experiences in the pages of the Bulletin, we are carrying on the traditions laid down for us by the original group of men who started this club. Dr. Terry Coulson and those gentlemen named above, created an organisation that still holds the respect of the specialist angling community today. It is our duty, all of us, to continue to carry the banner of the NAC and maintain the status quo.

Hopefully, when you have read the following article, penned in 1965, some thoughts will formulate in your mind and these may well make it onto paper in the coming months, for the rest of us to consider in later issues of the Bulletin.

The 'Production Team' would like to thank Dr. Terry Coulson for allowing us to use the following article and for his written response to our original request. We hope you like what follows.....

BIG EELS: DOES THE "PRISON WATER THEORY" MAKE SENCE?

By

Dr Terry Coulson.

Most anglers who do any amount of eel fishing even in fresh water -occasionally catch an eel which they describe as "a silver". Anglers who fish in the sea and in estuaries catch these silver eels more frequently. Friends as far apart as Yorkshire, Sussex and Hampshire tell me that, at the right times of year, silver eels are caught very freely in their local estuaries.

I believe there used to be a British rod-caught record silver eel in the sea fish section, and at least one big association still recognises a silver eel entry in its record list.

At first sight, there may seem to be nothing remarkable about these points. But now see what the late Professor Leon Bertin, an international authority on eels, wrote on the subject: "... the eel ceases to eat from the beginning of its sexual maturation (in August) and continues in a very strict fast until the time it migrates".

Prof. Bertin goes on to describe how the eel not only fasts, but how its digestive tract physically degenerates to a state of "dilapidation" in which the ability to digest food is lost. He mentions, too, the case of a silver eel from the North Sea which the zoologist Schnakenbeck found had gone so far in this degeneration that even the vent had become seated up.

Again, many readers will no doubt recall the great interest aroused amongst anglers, a few years ago, when Dr. Denys Tucker proposed a new theory on the breeding of eels. The main idea in this theory is that our European eels do not succeed in getting back to the Sargasso Sea to breed, as had previously been supposed, but that our stocks of elvers arise from American parents. We need not go

into the fine detail of Dr. Tucker's closely-reasoned case; the point of interest at the moment is that one of its central features is that silver eels are fasting, and simply have not got enough fuel aboard to enable them to swim the 3,000-odd miles across the Atlantic to the Sargasso.

Dr. Tucker's theory has been subjected to much detailed and learned criticism, but although almost everything else has been called to question, the idea that silver eels are in a state of strict fast was not questioned. Indeed, it is impossible to read much about the zoology of the eel without concluding that this fasting of silvers is firmly established fact.

This is a remarkable situation, if you like. We have the zoologists' picture that silver eels are not feeding. Yet we have anglers bait-fishing and - at times - catching silvers freely. It is not even comparable to the case of salmon which (I'm told) can be tempted or irritated into snapping at a lure whilst they are fasting: the anglers' "silvers" will actively forage for a deadbait.

It would be fascinating to resolve this paradox, out of general interest alone. For the angler seeking big eels, however it has a particular and practical significance. The reason is this. Many anglers think that some of the very big eels we hear about from time to time - eels of record-breaking size, even in double-figures - may have reached their great size because they found their way into a water from which they could not get out when the time to migrate arrived; and that they therefore stayed and continued to grow.

This "prison water theory" is a sure-fire topic for hot debate whenever keen eel fishers discuss tactics. Some oppose it on the grounds that the zoologists know that the eel stops feeding when sexual maturation starts; its gut degenerates, and its vent may even become sealed; so that an imprisoned eel would be doomed to die of starvation some time after it reached its "term" and these processes got under way.

This argument is just as vigorously countered on the grounds that silver eels demonstrably do not stop feeding, because we can catch them on baits; and moreover that the zoologists have shown that when silver eels are prevented from continuing their migration, the processes of sexual maturation go into reverse and the eels resume feeding and growing.

So, from the viewpoint of big eel tactics, it would be very valuable to resolve this paradox one way or the other. How can it be settled?

The first and most obvious question, I think, is whether the "silver eels" the bait fisher catches are really silver eels at all in the zoologist's sense of eels in process of maturing sexually and about to begin - or in course of - migrating. Thinking about this at the beginning of last season I could not recall positively any eels of mine which I thought were silvers at the time; but I decided to pay more attention to their appearance, in future, and see whether I could identify any silvers amongst my catch.

I had in mind Dr. Winifred Frost's description of "yellow" eels as having olive-green backs and yellowy-white bellies, with broad heads, wide mouths and relatively small eyes; and "silver" eels as having bronzy-black or dark-brown backs and milky-white or silver bellies, with pointed snouts and larger eyes.

The interesting thing is that amongst the first few eels I caught, there were three which were distinctly bronze in colour, strikingly different from the general run of olive-green. Did they qualify as "silvers" under Dr. Frost's description? Their backs were brown and their bellies white; but I confess I found it impossible to decide whether their heads were broad or narrow, their eyes large or small - these are very subjective judgements.

I quizzed my friend Dave Marlborough about these criteria, and he was kind enough to draw attention to a recent paper by Prof. Umberto D'Ancona which gives a full and well documented summary. Prof. D'Ancona lists nine features which characterise the silver eel; in non-technical language, the list is as follows:

1. The skin thickens and the secretion of mucus diminishes.
2. The black (melanin) and white (guanine) pigments in the skin increase; the scales and lateral line become -more conspicuous.
3. The eyes get bigger.
4. Behaviour in terms of body flexibility and movements change.
5. Both the pectoral fins

and the snout become narrower and pointed.

6. Changes in certain glands occur.
7. The sex organs develop.
8. Feeding stops and the gut becomes "reduced".
9. The structure of the gills changes.

Of course, 'for an ordinary angler like myself, with no special laboratory facilities, several of these features cannot be checked at all, and others can only be taken on a subjective, comparative basis. Still, the crucial point seemed to me to be the state of development of the sex organs, if we are to decide whether an eel which looks, like a silver is really in process of maturing and about to migrate. Eels of angling size are almost all females, and the ovary is a very easy organ to find.

During the rest of the season, I did not catch any eels with the classical "black and silver" coloration - but I did catch a further half-dozen of those strikingly bronze eels. They seemed to me to answer the general description of silver eels given by Dr. Frost and Prof. D'Ancona quite well - biggish

eyes, pointed pectorals, conspicuous scales and lateral lines, and so on. Moreover, every one of them had a great, big, fat, ovary, opaque and cream or pale orange in colour - obviously far further developed than the usual pale, translucent ribbon-like ovary we find in an ordinary "yellow" eel.

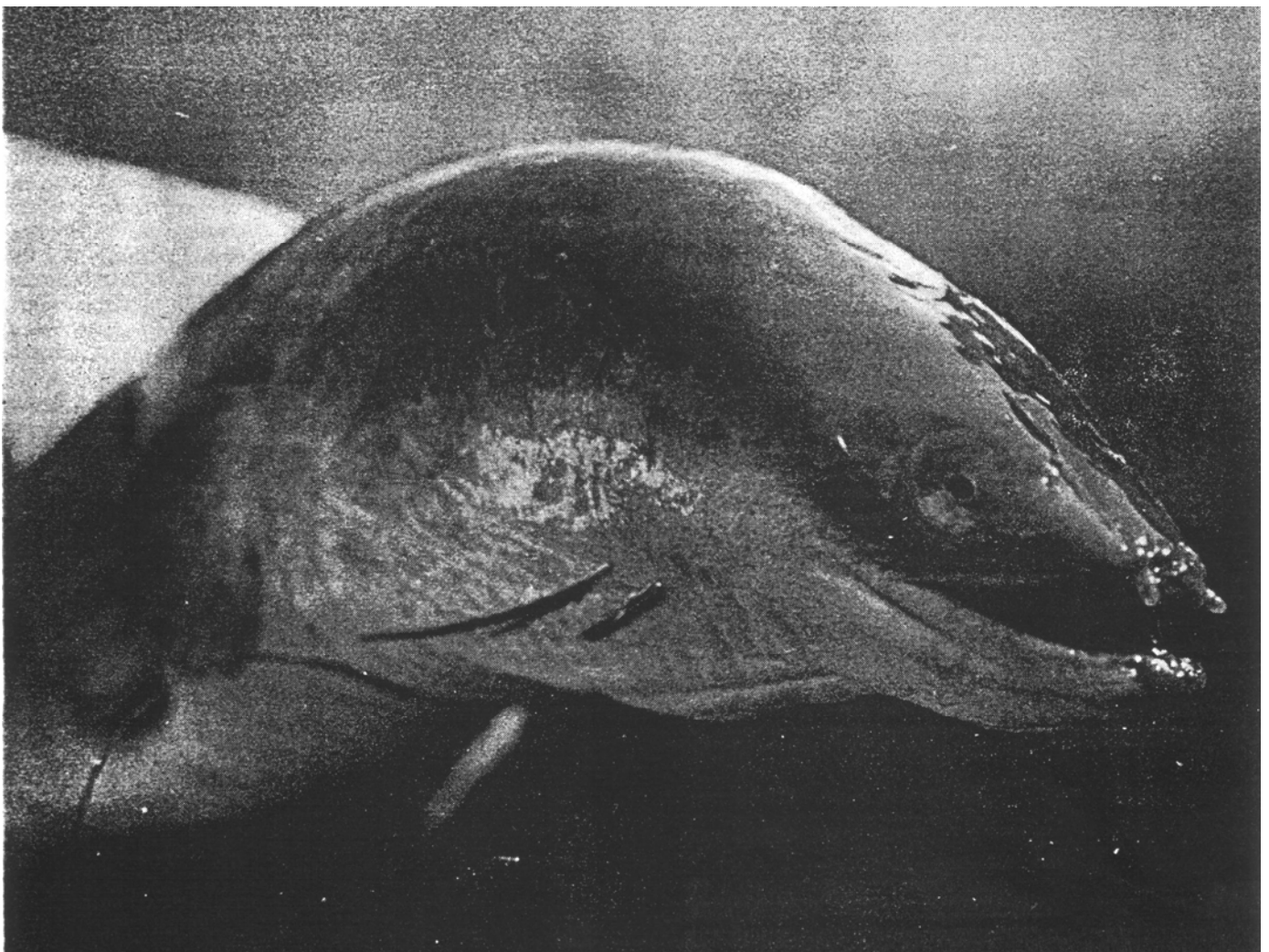
Next year, I shall be joining one or other of my seaside friends to see about catching some of those estuarine "silvers" and if they, too, have well-developed ovaries, I feel we shall have a fair question to put before the zoologists, and we may learn something as a result.

Because all this seems to pose some pretty deep questions, doesn't it? Do we really know the true natural history of these events? Does the simple distinction we try to make between yellows and silvers correspond to the facts of nature? Even accepting that the extreme yellow and silver forms are clear cut, what is the range of variation, and what happens in the transitional period?

At what stage in the metamorphosis do the eels stop eating? Does it happen suddenly, or does the feeding diminish gradually, over a period? Does it happen to all eels alike, or only some, in different degrees

and/or on different time-schedules? Where do those bronze eels of mine fit into the story? And if silver eels really do enter a "strict fast" in fresh water, do they start feeding again when they reach salt-water? If not, what are the "silvers" the sea anglers catch? If they do resume feeding, does the degenerated gut regenerate again? Was Schnakenbeck's eel with the sealed vent only a unique freak?

Is it, perhaps, that the zoological facts have so far been made to fit an oversimplified, layman's picture of the situation, instead of the reverse? I don't know - I'm not a zoologist, and I'm sure the zoologists know many, if not all, of the answers to these questions. I'm also sure that the many serious eel-fishers we have these days would be vitally interested in the answers.



Big eel study: 5 lb. 5 oz. and caught by Bob Ralph during a National Anguilla Club exercise Last Year (1966).

Dr Terence Coulson.

INTO THE SHADOW OF DARKNESS

By
Jason Morgan

Things were much quieter now. She had been resting all day, tucked away, concealed in a tangled mass of tree roots, watching the barges chug idly past. There had certainly been a lot of activity on the canal that day, a lot of small roach and perch coming and going. "Must have been a match," she thought, observing the mounds of abandoned groundbait.

A solitary bream drifted past, his bronze scales glinting in the late evening sun. He halted briefly to inspect the sweet smelling heaps, the balancing carefully with his fins, up-ended and picked off a few loose casters, before righting himself again and continuing his journey down the canal.

With twilight fast approaching she uncurled herself slowly, then under the cover of darkness slid silently from her lair. Gliding stealthily through the warm, murky water, inches from the thick carpet of silt, her every sense fine-tuned to the pursuit of a singular goal, the location of prey.

Suddenly, detecting the minute electrical pulses of a wounded or struggling fish, her speed increases. Cloaked in the shadows of the crumbling brickwork, she closes in. Stopping abruptly, hovering just off the canal bottom and slowly raising her head, she scans the upper layers. There silhouetted in the bright moonlight is the source, a small roach tethered from above tries desperately to free itself.

The strike is launched with supreme accuracy and timing and is over in a split second. For a moment the anglers alarm blasted into life, but the run is short-lived, leaving him only a ragged piece of elastic band and a baitless hook as a souvenir of her lightning fast attack. Retreating to the canal bed with her prize she leaves the angler to try once more.....

Record Officers Report. (October 1999 – June 2000)

by Jimmy Jolley.

As usual at around this time of the season not a lot of members have started their eel fishing yet, which makes the job of writing the Record Officers Report that little bit more difficult (thank goodness the N.A.C has dedicated members who fish for eels all year round or this report would consist of three words..... No eels reported!....So I must offer my most sincere thanks to **Nick Rose** and **Steve Pitts** for sending me their monthly catch reports, which, by the way, they were not obligated to do so....and also my thanks to **Pete Gregory** for including fish caught after the October closing date on last seasons catch return....to **Steve Dawe** for starting to sent monthly returns....And **John Davis**, **Barry McConnell** and **Anthony Jolley** for sending me an early season return.). So on to this short report.

On the 29th/30th of October **Nick (The Eeling Hedgehog) Rose**, fishing Caseus Reservoir, took Eels of **2lb – 04ozs**, **2lb – 00oz**, **1lb – 14ozs** and **1lb – 07ozs**. All of Nick's fish came to worm baits in a full moon.

On November the 22nd/23rd on Caseus Res Nick had a fish of **1lb – 10ozs**.

On to Nick's December catch return, On the 28th again fishing Caseus Res, the Hedgehog completed his quest to catch an eel in every month of the year with an eel of **2lb – 10ozs**, (well done mate).

April 9th/10th Nick fished the G.U Canal at "Last Hope Bridge" and took 5 eels, one of **3lb – 06ozs**, three of **1lb – 08** (approx) and a fish of **2lb**. 23rd/24th again at "Last Hope Bridge" eels of **1lb – 13ozs** and **1lb – 05ozs** fell to Nick's rods.

May 7th/8th on the G.U, once again fishing at "L-H-B" he caught an eel of **2lb – 07ozs**.

Fishing on Blackberry Pool on the 9th of October, using Sprat as his preferred bait **Steve Pitts** caught and recorded an eel of **2lb – 13ozs**. On the 16th, Steve was fishing on Bunty's Pit and duly had 6 runs which produced **two** eels under **1lb** to Mackerel section. Back on Blackberry Pool on the 23rd, Steve, this time using Lamprey as the bait caught an eel of **2lb – 09ozs**. Returning to Bunty's Pit on the 30th, Steve took eels of **1lb – 08ozs** and **1lb – 09ozs**, caught on Mackerel tail and Sardine head respectively.

And on the 13th of December back at Blackberry Pool Steve took an eel of **2lb – 02ozs**, this fish took a Mackerel tail, fished in conjunction with a bolt rig. (Incidentally, Steve has fished 26 sessions since the 9th of October to the 26th of February, keep it up mate).

The 1st April, Steve had eels of **3lb – 02ozs** and **1lb – 01ozs** from Woodland Waters L..P both took Roach section. On the 7th, he had an eel of **2lb – 09ozs** and on the 8th, fishing Woodland Water Sand-pit, Steve took eels of **1lb – 12ozs**, **1lb – 14ozs** and **2lb – 15ozs**, the two smaller fish taking

Roach Head with the larger taking Perch Tail. On the 20th, Steve fished Snake Pit and landed an eel of **3lb – 12ozs**, then on the 21st, back on W.W Sand-Pit, he caught eels of **1lb – 03ozs**, **2lb – 02ozs**, **2lb – 01oz**, **14ozs**. and **3lb – 13ozs**. Then returning to Snake Pit on the 22nd, had eels of **3lb – 07ozs** and **1lb – 01oz** both fish falling to Roach Section.

And finally on the 28th May, at C.M. Pool, Steve eventually caught an eel of **3lb – 09ozs**, I say eventually because in Steve's own words "The trouble at C.M. Pool is 13 Catfish over 3 days and 4 nights from 5 – 11lb, finally got an eel on last night of trip" now that's persistence.

Another N.A.C member who has recently started sending me monthly returns is **Steve Dawe**, and what a start to the new season Steve's having. On April 1st Steve had eels of **8ozs** and **1lb – 01oz**, and on the 2nd he had fish of **1lb – 04ozs** and **2lb – 01ozs** from Hogsbrook Lake these eels took worm and live-bait. On the 7th, again on Hogsbrook Lake he had an eel of **2lb – 04** to live-bait. Then on the 29th, at Upper Tamar Steve took eels of **3lb – 08** and **2lb – 05ozs** once again to live-bait.

Here's where it starts getting a bit frantic, May 7th, fishing ledgered live-bait, Steve takes eels of **1lb – 02ozs**, **1lb – 00oz**, **1lb – 08ozs**, **1lb – 02ozs**, **1lb – 12ozs**, **1lb – 08ozs**, **2lb – 02ozs**, **1lb – 00ozs** and **2lb – 12ozs**. then on the 8th, eels of **3lb – 00oz**, **3lb – 10ozs**, **2lb – 09ozs** and **3lb – 06ozs** and again all fall to live-baits. On the 9th an eel of **2lb – 02ozs** and on the 12th Steve had eels of **1lb – 04ozs**, **1lb – 07ozs**, **1lb – 00oz**, and **1lb – 04ozs**. and on the 13th fish of **1lb – 12ozs**, **1lb – 00oz**, and **2lb – 08ozs** to live-baits. And finally on the 26th landed eels of **1lb – 12ozs** and **1lb – 04ozs** falling to Rudd Dead-baits (for a change) all the above eels also came from the Upper Tamar.

John Davis has also sent me an early catch return, on the 26th October whilst fishing a Fen drain with free-lined Lamprey Section John caught an eel of **3lb – 06ozs**.

And on the 28th/29th April he took an eel of **3lb – 10ozs** on a Dyson Rig fished worm bait.

In May, John had eels of **1lb – 08ozs** on the 7th, **1lb – 03ozs** on the 8th and **3lb – 00oz** on the 22nd, all these eels came from a Midlands Lake, and were also caught on worm fished in conjunction with a Dyson Rig.

On the 2nd of October, **Pete (Passport) Gregory** netted an eel of **3lb – 07ozs** from a Devon syndicate water. This capture took a piece of "Smoked Venison Stick" (which Pete informed me over the phone, resembles Pepperoni and was purchased on his recent trip to Canada) fished on a Free running/Bolt rig. And on the 17th, again from the Devon syndicate water, using the same bait and method, Pete played and landed an eel of **4lb – 06ozs**.

On the 30th of October, **Tony (B.T) Jolley**, using a live Gudgeon, fished in conjunction with a Dyson rig took an eel weighing **2lb – 00oz** from the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. And on the 31st, Tony took an eel of **3lb – 08ozs** also from the L & L Canal this fish also took a live bait on a Dyson rig.

In April a fish of **3lb – 07ozs** fell to ledgered worm.

Early in May, Tony took eels of **1lb – 02ozs** on a ledgered dead bait, and **2lb – 12ozs** to Dyson fished live bait. The 26th/27th were "red letter" days for B.T, after many years trying, Tony managed his first eel over 4lbs, (and what a fish !!!) a new P.B eel of **5lb – 03ozs** taken on live bait, he also took a fish of **4lb – 02ozs** on worm and C.D rig and another of **2lb – 02ozs** to roach dead bait on a ledger rig.

And on the 9th June Tony took another eel of **4lb – 07ozs** on a Dyson rigged roach live bait. All the above eels came from the L&L Canal. (Well done bro').

On a trip to Cornwall, **Barry (Only the Lonely) McConnell**, at Wheal Grey, from the 11th to 13th of April took eels of **2lb – 08ozs**, **1lb – 01oz**, **1lb – 00oz**, **2lb – 08ozs**, **2lb – 01oz**, **1lb – 10ozs**, **1lb – 09ozs**, **1lb – 06oz**. **1lb – 04ozs** and **1lb – 09ozs**.

After 14 blanks, whilst fishing from a boat, using an home made bivvie and bed chair, "Lonely" finally cracked it, from this very difficult Shropshire Mere he landed an eel of **5lb – 13ozs**. (keep it up Baz).

In conclusion to my second Record Officers Report, I must again thank all the members who have reported their captures in great detail to me, so that this report could be possible. And to all the members, (like my self,) who haven't yet started eel angling in earnest, good luck for the forthcoming season, and please remember to send in your completed catch return to me at the beginning of October, and in addition, if any member is fortunate enough to capture a large eel, or a new personal best eel, or even have an exceptional eeling session with a large number of eels taken then **please, please, please** do not hesitate give me a call as this would help in doing the next Record Officers Report for the next issue of "**Anguilla**". and would also help Nick with future Newsletters.

So once again, good luck and Tight Lines to you all.

ARM – ACRES

By
Steve Dawe

(Part 1: May 1997)

This article summarizes three years of weeklong holidays I had at a campsite in Cornwall, the venue is well known being Whiteacres near Newquay. The complex has everything on site and has many hundreds of fixed caravans and also caters for touring vans and tents. It has over the years earned itself an excellent reputation for match and pleasure anglers alike.

The reason I first went to this Cornish oasis stems entirely from the fact that my parents had recently purchased a new touring caravan and that they were determined someone was going to use it. My wife was 5mths pregnant at the time and so it was decided we wouldn't go too far from home and as Newquay is only one hour drive from our house, Whiteacres was the obvious choice. The added bonus was when my father offered to drive the caravan to the site for us; this allowed me to escape the barrage of abuse bestowed upon our caravanning brethren by all other road users.

The date of this first trip was the first week in May to avoid half term but still have a chance of good weather. We arrived on the site and were both very impressed but thought it a bit crowded we soon realised that we were in fact in a lay-by 5 minutes later we actually arrived on site and were even more impressed as the roads in the camp were of a higher standard than the ones we had travelled down on.

We booked in quietly so as not to raise suspicion with the real caravaners as we felt we would stand out not having towels around our necks and a copy of Touring Times under our arms. We hoped we would be able to walk freely amongst them engaging in topical conversation like have you seen the awning on that, and what a lovely pair of gas bottles. As luck would have it most of the people staying were a mutated type of visitor being half caravaner half angler allowing me to pass largely unnoticed.

I managed to negotiate some fishing time with the wife while she placed all of our tinned food into the thousands of tiny cupboards littering the modern caravan interior. I grabbed my gear and headed off towards the lakes full of anticipation and excitement. As I approached the first ponds I could hear the sweet sound of snapping pole elastic as yet another 8lb ghost carp dislodged a brightly coloured match angler from their even brighter coloured seat box. Then I arrived at Pats Pool the venues specimen lake, a menagerie of bivvys and Argos dome tents were visible in every swim. As I walked passed each tented cul-de-sac it soon became obvious I had entered the east end of London and that cockneys controlled the specimen pool. The swim I had chosen was halfway along the back arm in a little bay that was rarely fished, I was given this information by someone in the know. The only problem was at the mouth of this arm the Mitchell brothers were bivvied and to my right Chas and Dave. I asked Phil and Grant where their baits were and after some head scratching and looking out towards the lake they came to the agreement that it was high time they cast out. I left them to work out why and when they had reeled in, probably before they had drunk that crate of beer. I set up my rods placed my white chocolate boilies in pva bags and dropped them in my own margin I then spooned in my secret boilie soup recipe. As you might have guessed I was fishing for Carp at this point, but that was before I saw the light and became a born again Eel Angler.

Anyway back to the story I had just set my traps and was sat back ready to enjoy the wafting aroma of pie and mash when the left hand rods away. Not a bad start a 12lb mirror and the rod goes back out closely followed by a dose of boilie soup. Half an hour later the other rods away this time a 16lb 8oz ghost carp graces my net, Chas and Dave are staring and the Mitchell brothers start to grunt and bash their knuckles on the ground. As I replace the rig into the water I feel like everyone is watching me. Soon I have another fish on and Chas and Dave start shouting to Phil and Grant, there buddies what a surprise. I decided to call it a night as I felt I had overstayed my welcome and the London lynch mob had started on the beer so it was indeed time to go. As I walked past the Mitchell's I could not help noticing their rods were still not cast out. The walk back to the caravan was magical with the twinkle from the rows of caravan lights flickering like the lights on a Christmas tree during a December night. As I stared at this city of fibreglass and chipboard a scary thought entered my vacuum like head, which caravan was ours?

After a short time logic kicked in (about an hour) and I reasoned that I only had to find the car, some time later I was safely tucked up in the caravan, in what can only be described as a shelf. Surely they don't call them beds do they? However they are comfortable. The next few days were devoted to the wife and the sights of Newquay, like the unbelievable World in Miniature which consists of half a

dozen fibreglass statues of wonders of the world desperately in need of bird shit removal, five fruit machines with a £1.00 jackpot, and potters wheel operated by a ageing hippy called Stan. And this great day out was available for the special price of £5.00 per person; the only thing I will say is they aren't kidding when they say it is the unbelievable world in miniature. I realise I have digressed from the fishing but it helps create the right ambiance and it might save some of you £5.00 per head even though Stan was particularly good with the wheel.

It was now time to do a night on Pats Pool and over the course of the week I had managed to communicate with Phil and Grant and learned they were in fact London Cabbies so they must have the knowledge and there's me thinking they were drunken yobs. Chas and Dave were also decent blokes and it just proves you can't judge a book by its cover; they did however still think I was jammy Devon plonker. I got down to the lake knowing my swim would be available as the Mitchell's had said leave it to them.

I hauled my tackle past the bottle bank that was once the Mitchell's swim nearly tripping over the rods that had migrated even further from the waters edge, I was beginning to wonder if they had actually brought any bait. The arm looked lovely and a fish crashed in the middle near my selected swim, a good omen.

The Titan was erected and my little home set out ready for the night, before casting I decided to have a quick chat with Chas and Dave. Chas real name Brian was beaming as I approached with good reason as he had landed a superb brace of fish that day. The first fish was the biggest Carp in the lake Nelson the one eyed ghostie at 20lb 7oz and the second was a Wels Catfish also at 20lb 7oz both on boilies. There is a weekly trophy at Whiteacres for the biggest Carp and Chas new it had Brian written all over it. He explained that they were going to celebrate that night at the clubhouse and I was welcome to join them, I declined but offered to keep an eye on their kit.

I set up my rods and cast out to await the first run of the night, a stranger suddenly appeared from the shadows, a man I later named the weasel or to be exact the Cat weasel. He asked me if I had caught and before I could reply he proceeded to tell me that he had landed hundreds of carp up to 25lb that week. Well I took an instant dislike to this guy and it went down hill from there, as he continued to tell me I was in a terrible swim and my methods and bait were all pants. It seemed amazing to me how the biggest Carp in the lake had lost over 4lb in weight during one week but I didn't want to prolong the conversation with this annoying parasite so I let him babble on. He also pointed out that I was fishing in catfish alley where he had landed many huge catfish during the week and lost a monster at the net. As luck would have it Grant and Phil were striding over and weasel beat a hasty retreat. They enquired as to weasel's topic of conversation and laughed when I relayed the information back to them.

It would appear that weasel had set up in the swim I was in and promptly cast over the Mitchell's lines, a feat I found amazing as the chances of their lines actually being in the water defies belief. Weasel then reeled in bringing all four of their rigs towards him setting off their alarms and sending them running from their drunken slumber. A huge tangle ensued which ended with weasel freeing he's own rig and lobbing the knotted mess belonging to the other two back into the water. Before Grant and Phil's abuse gland could be activated weasel had got in first "you idiots how much of the lake do you want " (good move weasel). A huge ruck erupted which saw weasel turning into whippet and legging it off to Mrs weasel.

Grant and Phil were heading off to the Clubhouse with Chas and Dave for a good old sing song and maybe a pint. I put on the kettle and made a cuppa, the night was busy and I landed several doubles up to 15lb. Weasel had got me thinking about catfish though and as the owner Andy Seery had also called this area of the lake Catfish Alley it had to be worth a go. I reeled in a rod and proceeded to set up a running lead with long trace and size four hook not really knowing much about catfish except they were not keen on resistance and liked livebaits. A 4inch roach was quickly attached and the rig cast to the middle of the arm in about 6 feet of water. Half an hour later and the Roach bait became highly active and then the alarm started to scream as something scooped down the bait and headed out of the arm. My heart was beating fast as I struck the rod and it hooped over as the unseen fish kicked for freedom. A dogged and powerful fight produced not a catfish but a huge eel, I couldn't believe it I had not known eels to take livebaits before and this was a corker. The Eel went just over 4lbs and made my night, I cast another livebait to the same area in the hope of another pickup. A short time later the heavens opened up and rain lashed down the drunken Chas and Dave staggered past and garbled have I had anything. I filled them in on the details and they were not as impressed as I about my recent extraction of a huge eel but they did hope I caught lots more. The rain seemed to get harder and I was starting to worry about the water level in the pond when the right hand rod tore off. The fish fought relentlessly and I could not get it on the surface to look at it eventually when I had become as wet as the fish it rolled over for me to slide the net under. The fish glimmered in the folds of the net like a bar of gold

it was a huge ghost Carp, a quick weigh showed the fish to be over 20lbs and was bouncing between 20lb 4oz and 20lb 8oz.

The decision was taken to wake up the crafty cockneys a brave decision as the fish could topple their Carp of the week. They very obligingly came around in the pouring rain and witnessed, weighed and photographed the fish and even congratulated me, the carp however weighed 20lb 5oz two ounces smaller than the one Brian had landed so there was no friction. I returned the fish and wound in to dry out and get some much needed kip.



• **Steve's "Ghostie"
Of 20lb – 05ozs, taken from
the famous Holiday
Complex of Whiteacres,
near Newquay Cornwall in
May 1997,**

The next day was a scorcher and my kit was able to dry out before I packed up for the last time on this trip, that night we went to the presentation evening to say farewell to the Mitchell's and Chas and Dave. I was also interested to see if weasel turned up to get the trophy for biggest Carp, biggest overall weight and biggest plonker, but alas he did not and he's name was not even mentioned funny that. Chas picked up the trophy for the biggest Carp of the week and I got a very nice trophy for coming second, Grant and Phil picked up the award for the anglers least like anglers, needless to say the evening went well and it ended the break on a good note.

(Part 2: May 1998)

Nearly a year later and I was once again preparing to have a Whiteacres adventure this time there were some significant changes and a new game plan formulated. My Wife was substituted for my fishing pal Chris Hodgson (not literally) and the same week booked. We loaded the car to the gunnels and set off on a Friday lunchtime stopping off at the little chef for a slap up meal, but had to make do with the lazy loafers breakfast with a side order of free lollypops. It may have not been a banquet fit for a king but it was priced as one.

We arrived at the lake with the old adrenalin coursing through our veins and the hope that the swims we know we wanted were still available. Pats pool had been overhauled during the winter and new signs had sprung up and where once there was mud, tree mulch now paved the way. As we strolled towards the back arm I was amazed at the lack of anglers on the lake with no other bivvys and just a handful of day anglers. The Swim I wanted was available it was the very same swim occupied by the Mitchell's the year before and covered the mouth of the arm where it met the main lake. The reason I wanted to fish this area was that I had set my stall out to catch Catfish and Eels this year, this area was the deepest part of the lake and I believed the Cats and Eels hold up here during the day and venture out into the lakes shallows during the night. This would allow me to have my baits placed in a bottleneck where these fish would have to pass twice, once on their way out and once on their way back, well that was the theory. Chris was still in the Carping frame of mind and fished down the arm near where I had fished the previous year, placing his baits in the margins. I planned to fish one rod three quarters of the way across the mouth on the top of a slope, which ran down towards the deeper water. The middle rod was to be placed half way across and at the bottom of the slope in about 8 feet of water, the third rod was to be a cop out rod and was fished in the margins with boilies. I had spent a lot of time studying my new quarry and tied rigs based on suggestions from the Internet I had joined the C.C.G. catfish conservation group and the N.A.C. in the hope I could gain information on both species, this proved

invaluable. The baits were to be popped up with half-inch polyball's, the hooks were to be size 4 Cox and Rawle Crab Hooks and 12 inches of 20lb amnesia made up the trace (see rig diagram 1).

As an added bonus Richworth Attracta leads filled with fish oil were to be used to increase interest. The baits were to be live and consisted of Roach and Rudd swished in the margins, but done discreetly there was no ban on livebaiting but it was a match orientated complex and I didn't want to be responsible for the imposing of a ban. I cast out my baits and both Chris and I were both quickly into Carp on the margin rods, both fish being low doubles the average size in this lake. It was as glorious evening warm and with a lovely sunset, we sat drinking coffee and discussing our prospects with our conversation periodically punctuated by the screaming take from a margin fished Carp bait, until the sun slowly sank. We both returned to our slippery eel coated shelters and awaited further takes, Chris was constantly having action on his three boilie-baited rods but all was quiet in my area.

The left hand rod signalled the livebait was still alive and the bobbin started to bounce around almost trembling, the bait must be worried, the middle rod with the other livebait also began to become agitated the time was 10pm and the bait movement continued for ten minutes then stopped. I was concerned that they had both had simultaneous heart failure brought on by Chris and his amazing thrashing Carp net which he seemed to have constantly in the water scooping out Carp (you can swish doubles at Whiteacres). I moved towards my rods to see if there was any vibration on the tips when the bobbin smashed to the top of the left hand rod and line poured from the baitrunner. Chris enquired as to which rod was in and I shouted the livebait rod but had still not picked it up for fear of the possible leviathan on the other end. Luckily my angler brain was on standby and took over control of my functions allowing a swift strike to take place, the baitrunner now clicked onto rear drag and still continued to run as the fish headed towards a island in the main lake. Then suddenly the fish had stopped had I lost it I wound down and it kicked again then went slack I frantically wound to keep in touch with the fish as it swam towards me straight past and down towards Chris's swim. The fish eventually saw it my way and plodded around in the margins before surfacing with a huge gapping mouth and protruding whiskers, it was indeed my first Wels Catfish Chris netted the beast and we placed it on the mat. I was absolutely delighted, all the planning and thinking had paid off the end result lay before me a beautiful creature that most would call ugly. The Cat was weighed and took the scales to just over twenty pounds by one ounce, my first Cat turned out to be a twenty. A celebratory cup of coffee was to be my penance and rightly so, I re-baited with another livey and turned in feeling extremely tired.

I was awoken not by the dawn chorus but by the Delkim symphonic orchestra as the livebait twins started doing the Highland fling. I checked the watch which showed five to midnight, I strained to see towards Chris's swim and all was quiet, Chris and his net were tucked up in bed. As I turned to study the glowing bobbins the left hand one rose steadily to the top and stayed motionless for what seemed like an age then the alarm started to scream as the left hand rod was off again. I tried scrambling from my bag but ended collapsing my bed I had my suit on and must have looked like the great Houdini as I writhed around on the floor trying to get free. I scrambled out and struck the fish just as it had reached the junction with the A30 on its way to the Volga Delta, as this was indeed another cat.

A fight to mirror the first ensued and as I scrambled for the net, then who should appear but Chris who kindly done the honours. This fish weighed 21lb 10ozs a new personnel best in under two hours what a night, the Cat was photographed and returned the rod re-cast and we turned in straight away as we were becoming zombies and needed a sleep fix. Incredibly at 02:30am the same rod was off again I struck and rather complacently tried to bully the fish towards me pulling the hook in the process, sleep deprivation had cost me a fish and I did not recast but wound everything in I was turning into a Mitchell. The next morning was bright and sunny and the temperature began to rise rapidly this in turn caused a stampede of brightly coloured caravaner's to walk aimlessly around the ponds, pausing only to bump into your bivvy or chuck stale bread at the ducks, who must have wondered what an earth they had done to receive this pummelling by doe packed missiles.

The Ducks quickly took evasive action and hid on an island. Determined to unleash their leftovers on some form of bird life the caravaner's then proceeded to dispatch a barrage of bread bricks at the wild bird population managing to take out two Wagtails and a Bullfinch before their ammo ran out. With their good deed done for the day they then set about the task of angler interrogation, "have you caught ought", "you must be mad you lot", "how boring" and "you don't put um back do ya" are just a few of the more intelligent questions asked. As my rods were not cast I decided the best way to avoid the camping Gestapo was to don my brightly coloured shirt and trousers and stroll over to Chris and pretend to be annoying him, I had noticed they do not like to work in groups and reasoned we would be safe whilst we kept up the pretence.

Morning soon became afternoon and we both had all our rods fishing for Carp as the sun was beating down and sending the fish to the surface. We were drinking afternoon tea when a stranger appeared as if from no where, he's opening sentence went something like "I am having a blinding week

so far landing two twenty's and ten doubles". He continued, "one of the fish is the biggest carp in here and I had him last night from the point, I have also bagged up on the cats and lost a monster at the net". Weasel! It couldn't be could it? I took off my shades sure enough it was weasel sporting a slimy Hitler type moustache and greased back hair, but never the less it was indeed weasel.

Chris managed to squeeze a word in edgeways saying we had not seen him last night and that we had landed several carp and a brace of twenty pound cats from the mouth of the arm. This seemed to have unsettled weasel and he made the excuse that he was off to Newquay to pick up a box of squid for the next catfish trip he was planning. He was gone as fast as he had arrived leaving Chris asking the question that wasn't weasel by any chance was it?

I had already described this annoying parasite prior to the trip, we laughed at this sad little man and wondered why he was like it, but he was harmless enough.

The evening arrived and the baits were cast as the night before but Chris had now included a live bait rod and done away with a Carp rod, serious stuff. The evening was extremely stuffy and dark clouds festered in the distance a storm was brewing, Chris's livebait rod burst into life before darkness had even taken hold.

He struck like he always does with passion and meaning the rod hooped over and the fight was on. I legged it round to his swim is it a Cat? I enquired I don't think so was Chris's reply. I stared into the chocolate brown water as the rhythmic swaying of a large Eel slashed the surface of the water; I dug the net deep and netted the beauty first time. Chris was delighted at the monster snake and at 4lb it could have almost been the fish I had landed the previous year. The second night had started well another P.B, if we only new what Chris was to catch later that year to topple that Eel, but that's another story. The storm that had been brewing was imminent and the thunder started to rumble in the distance, I hate thunderstorms and I was not relishing the forthcoming one. I climbed into my bag as the rain started to splat on the top of the bivvy and a clap of thunder vibrated around the lake causing pheasants to screech.

I pulled my bag up around my head and prayed I wouldn't get a run, lightning lit up the inside of the tent like a giant x-ray machine I was sure I could see my bones for an instant. The rain began to hammer down and I decided to reel in and wait out the storm, in the few seconds it took to retrieve my lines I got drenched but with spare clothes and a kettle inside I was soon dried out and sipping a steaming hot coffee. I returned to my bag and carried out a leak check of the roof of the Titan, all was well, money well spent I thought even at Nash prices. This storm was one of the worst I have had the displeasure to be out in and I was starting to wish I was somewhere else, several hours passed before the storm abated. Everything became still with just the delicate splashing of water droplets from the sodden trees and the distant hum of Chris snoring oblivious to anything or anyone. I cast out my rods and over the next few hours had several runs missing many and only retrieving mangled livebaits, I did however manage to land a few small Eels who were quite probably the culprits.

Morning arrived early with the honking of startled geese as a day angler stomped to his chosen swim in the early morning mist. The lake was cloaked in a vale of grey and the islands loomed out like twisted dragons as the dense moist blanket dissipated. The Sun was starting to burn through signalling the start of another hot and long day, I decided to reel in zip everything up and have a nice hot shower and a full fat unhealthy good old English breakfast at the restaurant, my treat. I enjoyed the breakfast and felt better for the shower and shave and decided to walk back slowly stopping to look at some of the other ponds. As I walked past the tackle shop I heard the winging pest known as weasel complaining about the fact that someone was breaking the rules and what were the owners going to do about it? I carried on past thinking that weasel was going to upset the wrong person one day and end up as an endangered species.

As I reached our swims I could see Chris was in sun bathe mode and the kettle was steaming so I grabbed my cup and ambled over to fill him with tales of glorious breakfasts. We sat watching the Carp bumping into the bank as their spawning gene became active triggered by the sudden temperature rise, the complex bailiff appeared over in my swim then spotted us and made his way round on his arrival he looked somewhat uncomfortable. "How are you doing lads"? He asked "fine" we both replied. "Do you know we have a new rule this year stating that you cannot stay bivvied up in the same swim for more than 48 hours" he stated.

We explained that we were aware of this rule, as we had read all the fishery rules before commencement of fishing, but felt that as we had been the only anglers on the water for the last two nights there was no need to move. He agreed that normally they do not bother enforcing the rule until the busy summer weeks or unless someone complains. He then told us that someone had complained that we were hogging the best swims on the lake and that they wanted us shifted. Our reply was that we would move when we had been in the swim for 48 hours which would be around 16:00 hrs as all the good swims were now occupied by day anglers, he agreed that was acceptable and bid us farewell.

I then told Chris that I had heard weasel complaining earlier and we both agreed that he was no longer harmless but public enemy number one.

The swims we had chosen to move too were occupied by a couple of pleasure anglers and during the afternoon we had popped over and had a chat they told us they were on a strict curfew to be back for their tea at 17:00pm. The Swims were quite big and they were quite happy for us to chuck our gear behind them and start setting up at 16:00, which was perfect.

The afternoon was spent packing up the kit and a change would probably be a good thing, the new swims lent themselves to being more social as they were closer together. Then as the time to depart was approaching who should appear in the next swim down but Weasel and he was sporting a new friend who was automatically named stoat. They were trying to be as cunning as a fox who had just past a degree in the art of cunningness by dropping their kit in the next swim down and making exaggerated pointing motions to fictitious areas of the lake directly in front of them. I decided to wait until 16:00 hrs exactly and then move my stuff item-by-item setting up each item in the process. This certainly had the desired effect as weasel paced stone faced up and down the bank before shouting up "are you moving and would you like a hand", my answer was straight to the point "Yes I am moving and No I don't want a hand", if only the Mitchell's had been there.

By 18:00 hrs I was completely moved and could drag it out no further even leaving behind individual lead weights had bought me as much time as possible. I now concentrated on the new swims, which in fact were very nice indeed with the biggest island in the lake directly in front of us and the snaggiest island on the lake to my right. We were also on a well covered point meaning it was more secluded and there was no need for any one to come down there unless to see us. Two livebaits were cast one towards the big island and one to the right but not near the snaggy island it was too risky. The third rod was the standard cop out boilie in the margin. Chris also placed out two livebaits one towards the big island and the other in a glorious looking gap between two islands and the obligatory Carp rod in the margin, our traps were set and we could sit in the middle of our two Titans and have a good old chinwag. At 21:50 the live baits began synchronised swimming with up to four latching lights on at any one time, indicating something was amiss 15 minutes later and Chris's left hand rod in that gap was flying a tough fight followed and resulted in Chris's first Cat at 18lbs 10ozs.

Two hours later and my right hand rod was off I struck and the rod went straight over and the fish stormed off towards the snaggy island, I could not stop the inevitable as the line emptied from the spool and the fish sensing sanctuary pumped up the volume and that's where we parted company. I was gutted that was a real monster Cat and I had blown it I did not bother to re-cast as I felt that the chance was gone. Chris's rod then burst into life the same rod as before and he was in again this was a hectic night, I slipped the net under the long Cat as Chris's P.B was toppled by a 19lb 4oz whisker. I was inspired again and I reeled in the Carp rod as well, and all three were fished with livebaits and this was to remain the case until the holiday was over in fact that was the last time I ever fished for carp.

Sadly weasels swim was strangely quiet and so was he for a change, but then he would have heard all the commotion taking place in our swims and was probably more interested in formulating a plan for our extradition. The sun stretched its golden arms over the inky sky signifying the arrival of dawn and the little black box under my rod signalled my early morning wake up call. The baitrunner was whirring as the fish that had scoffed the Rudd live bait decided to leave the area. I struck thinking either an Eel or Cat would once again grace my net when the culprit revealed itself as none other than Mr Carp, this was a new one on me but gratefully received none the less.

The day was once again a scorcher and Chris had several runs from carp during the day but my rods remained still like carbon sentinels until about 15.30pm when the liveies lived up to their name and became lively. The sun was still blazing down and the lake was packed with anglers and a steady stream of passers by. I stood by the rods to examine the shaking tips just as the right hand rod jerked round and the alarm screamed signalling the Rudd had either acquired a belly full of spinach, or was now being used by a predator for dental floss. The swift strike did nothing to help the Rudd's predicament except perhaps bringing the perpetrator closer to justice. The culprit swiftly identified as an angry Wels decided that with such a large audience available it would cause as much embarrassment as possible by heading down the right hand margin where at least half a dozen anglers lines stretched out towards the islands. Chris decided to take control of the public relations side of this capture by running down the bank warning people to reel in immediately as a large angry Catfish was heading their way towing a small angler behind it. I was desperate to stop this fish causing any more chaos on the lake but by the time I had managed to get control and have the fish cruising the area directly in front of me, Chris was selling tickets on the bank behind me as everyone on the lake turned up to watch. He then re-enacted a scene from predator as he stripped off to his underwear and jumped into the margins scaring the hell out of me the fish and the watching crowd. "What are you doing Chris" I exclaimed " I am going in after it ". The crowd murmured their approval as they probably felt this added to the atmosphere

and besides there were several home videos on the go hoping I suspect that Chris would fall right under or be savaged by this monster fish. On several occasions the fish rolled over to be netted only to be driven away by Chris's frantic thrashing of the water with the net, eventually the cat managed to sneak past him and beached itself but not before he pounced on it with the net between his teeth and grappled with it in his arms to gasps from the audience.

After a few death rolls Chris climbed out triumphant with the relieved cat in the net and much cheering and clapping from the crowd. The fish weighed 19lb 12oz but had probably lost several pounds in the struggle with Chris, the photos were taken and as I returned the fish and the crowd abated someone stated that must be the smallest Cat in here. Weasel and stoat had been watching from the back row and could not go without passing comment. I replied politely "how did the squid go last night"? "The moon was causing the pressure to drop and the easterly wind forced them into a period of inactivity" he explained. Chris added "more like your rancid squid forced them into our swims as we had two and lost one last night". Stoat congratulated us as Weasel was lost for words and they then wished us luck and went on their way.

That night Chris had two more runs the first bounced off after a few minutes, and an hour later the same rod produced a slow run that resulted in the biggest Cat of the trip and new lake record at 24lb 12oz a real cracker and I didn't even dive in and wrestle with it. The trip was more successful than we could



- **Chris "Snicker's" Hodgson displays his 24lb – 12ozs again from Cornwall's Whiteacres Complex in May 1998.**

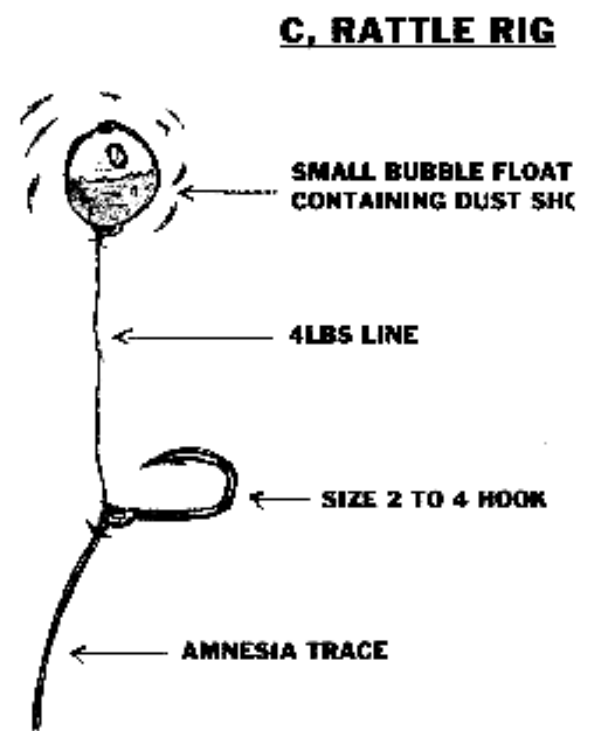
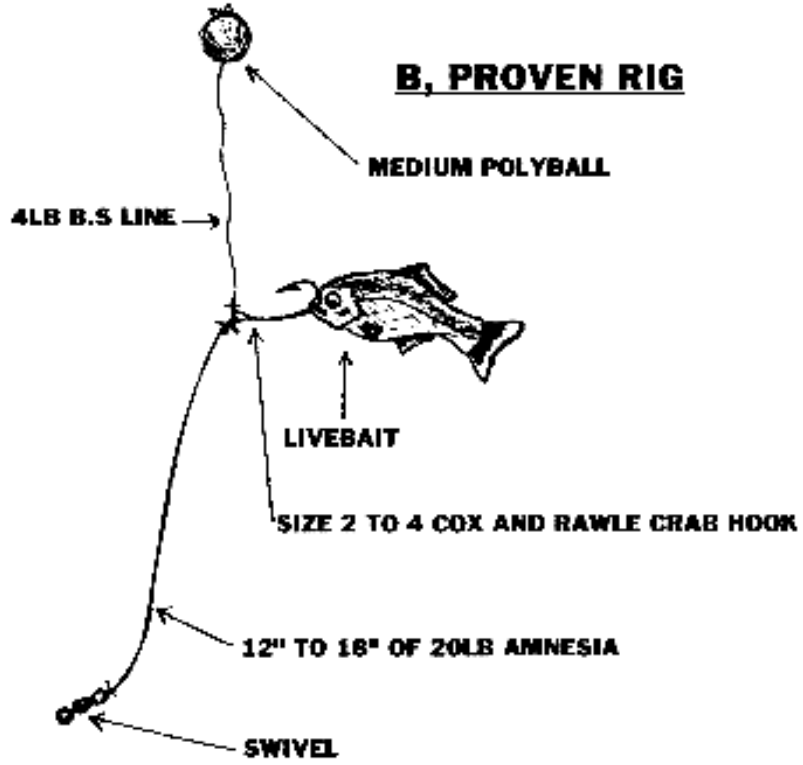
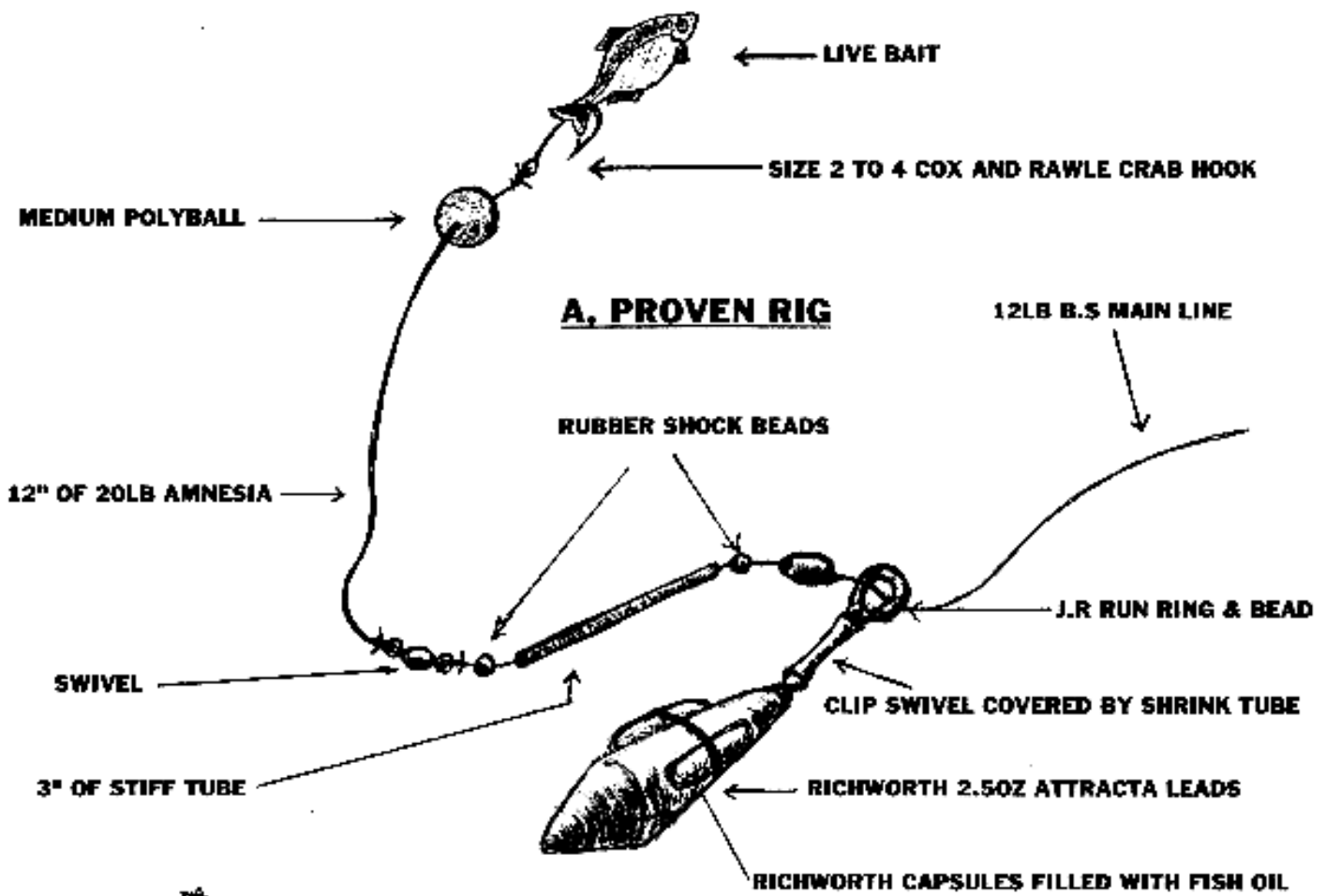
have hoped for with both of us taking P.B.s and beating them again and setting the lake record on top was a real bonus.

The final tally was 114 Carp mainly doubles up to 15lb 8oz, Catfish of 18lb 10oz, 19lb 4oz, 19lb 12oz, 20lb 1oz, 21lb 10oz and 24lb 12oz plus four lost cats, 6 eels up to 4lb 1oz and a 4lb 3oz Tench. We found out afterwards that the lake only contained 11 cats so lady luck had most definitely been on our side that week. The C.C.G. award scheme rewarded us both with silver pins and certificates me for my brace of twenties and Chris for the lake record. As soon as I returned home I decided to return the following year to try for a new best Cat and possibly a new P.B eel as the lake had thrown eels to 4lb 12oz so an Eel bigger than 5lb 1oz was a distinct possibility.

(Part 3: May 1999)

April 1999 arrived quickly and I found myself preparing for another Whiteacres trip, this year however Chris was substituted for more gear in the car, (he had taken up running this year). The same week had been booked, the first week in May and no Carp baits would be going this year. I arrived at the complex on Friday the first of May and the weather was warm with a westerly blowing up the lake. I parked the car and strolled down to see which swims were available hoping the swim on the point was free as my plans had revolved around this area. As I surveyed the lake I could see instantly that the point swims were taken but with no

DIAGRAM 1 RIGS



bivvys set up, there still might be a chance of fishing there. I walked around the lake towards the point passing several bivvys exchanging pleasantries along the way (what a nice bunch we anglers are). As I reached the end of the swim I could see that the guy on the end was day fishing and I bid him good afternoon we chatted for some five minutes and when I explained I was fishing for Cats and Eels he was more than happy to let me set up behind him as there was loads of room and I could also take my time. By 18.00 I was completely set up with all the rods rigged and ready to go I just needed to catch some bait but they shouldn't take long. The Angler in front of me who now looked surplus to requirements quickly packed up and wished me the best of luck.

I now had the green light to start the session and the float rod was quickly flicked out baited with double pinkie. The short but essential bait gathering session was proving difficult and all I could muster were two smallish roach and a perch, but swishing would probably turn up more fish in the night. During this trip I had planned to use a new rig based on the previous years rig but with the incorporation of a rattle, with enough baits to start I baited up and cast out, as it was now 18.45. The first rod went to the left in a channel between two islands the same spot that produced Chris's fish the previous year. The middle rod with the Perch bait went four feet of the large island in shallow water and the final rod went to the right in the direction of the snaggy island but well short. The first ten minutes and the baits were very active but soon settled down giving me a chance for tea. I had just finished off my steak baguette when another angler popped his head around the door of the Titan and enquired how it was going? He new I was fishing for Cats and Eels and explained he was fishing for Catfish for the next couple of nights but had no idea about rigs or baits and had been told by another angler to use Mackerel or Luncheon Meat. This Chap seemed very nice and I felt could be trusted not to abuse any information I passed to him regarding these Cats. I ended up giving him some tied up rigs and told him my views on bait choice and left him to come to his own conclusions. He was delighted and after drinking a cup of coffee headed off to rig up and start fishing. My left had rod started to bounce as the small roach became active the bobbin struck the top and a jerky run ensued, I struck and after a short battle netted the first predator of the trip an Eel of 11lb 12oz. It was still light enough to use the float and I managed another roach fairly quickly and cast back to the same spot. The wind was a westerly and quite warm causing a good ripple on the surface the sky was cloudy a good thing I felt, as there was a full moon.

My confidence was high as the first night the previous year had been a great success for me giving me two personal bests; I brewed up and sat back on the bed surveying the lakes surface awaiting the arrival of the lakes nocturnal feeders. The Perch rod jumped into life and the bobbin rose and fell in rhythm with the run lights pulse. The other two baits also became agitated a sure sign one of them was being stalked, this started around 20.00pm and by 20.30pm had still not developed, the middle rod then shot off. I picked up the rod but let the run continue until I could establish which way the fish was running if it was a Cat it is important to get the hook towards the corner of the mouth. A hook hold in the central area quickly loses grip as the Cat has bony pads full of tiny teeth at the front of its mouth. The fish was steaming left so a swift strike to the right was carried out resulting in a hooked Catfish, which as usual just kept running. I played the fish gingerly not wishing to lose it, the fish then changed direction and headed towards me I wound frantically to catch up and was met by the rig skipping across the surface minus the Catfish. I was gutted and felt that the chances of getting many Cat runs on this trip would be few and far between. I rang my wife on the mobile and relayed my depressing news, she did not take it as badly as I had and told me that I would get another if I tried, reassuring words but probably used to get rid of me. I desperately tried to swish another bait but in an effort to get another take I was being extremely fussy over bait selection, eventually opting for unusually hard looking Rudd.

The new bait was recast and I settled back on the bedchair praying for another chance, I was sure if I could get a catfish it would be a personal best. The rods remained silent and the baits settled down for the night but as 22.00 arrived the right hand rod sprang into life and without any warning from the baits a steady run developed. I picked up the rod and let it take line towards the snaggy island I couldn't risk letting it go too far in case it was a big Cat so I struck hard and pumped the rod instantly not allowing the fish to think. The fish came towards me steadily with the odd kick and felt like a reasonable eel as there was plenty of head shaking. As the fish reached an area in front of me about two yards out it boiled on the top, it was dark but I had seen a huge body and if this was indeed an eel it would be a monster. I tried to guide it back to the surface for a positive identification but it suddenly woke up and sped off stripping line from the reel, I couldn't believe the sudden surge of power and it was a full ten minutes before the fish was back in front of me. The clouds parted allowing the moon to radiate downwards illuminating the surface of the lake just as the fish surfaced showing a wide gaping mouth and long whiskers belonging to a huge Cat. The fish now ready for netting rolled over in the margins and I slid the net under it but had to drop the rod to lift the net out to safety, as it was extremely hefty. I placed the net and fish on the mat and pulled back the folds to reveal a definite personal best well over 21lbs, I unhooked the fish quickly and weighed her but the scales went right round to the thirty mark and

bottomed out, trust me not to bring bigger scales. I placed the fish in the Catfish tube and tidied up and allowed my self to calm down for a second as I was shaking I had landed a thirty and could not believe it. I decided it was imperative to get an accurate weight on the fish and so reeled in the other rods and set off in search of bigger scales. I new there was a couple of anglers on the lake and one of them I had assisted earlier, I arrived at his swim and made the usual coughing noise made when trying to get someone's attention. I was shocked when a woman's head appeared from the door of the hutchy and asked "can I help you"? I explained that I had landed a big fish and my scales were not big enough and that I was on the scrounge. Another head suddenly appeared at the bivvy door " its not a Catfish is it"? Yes I replied, " I will be right over". I headed back thinking that I may have interrupted them but he had seemed quite excited at the prospect of seeing a Cat on the bank and she'd probably get over it. Before long he was in my swim brandishing a set of Avon's and the fish was re-weighed and after deduction of the sling the Cat was exactly 30lb. He was gobs smacked at the site of the Cat and was returning to his swim to make some bait adjustments in the light of what he had seen. I thanked him for his assistance and wished him good luck for the rest of the night and as he disappeared from view I began planning the photography of the fish. I rung my wife on the mobile and she was pleased for me and asked if I was coming home now I had caught a new best, women just don't get this fishing game do they? I then called up a fishing friend of mine, big Will who lived not too far away at Bodmin, he would love to see this fish and was a dam good photography to boot. He answered the phone like a man who had drunk far too



**Steve's P.B Wels Catfish
weighing 30lb – 00ozs
from Whiteacres**

much beer and explained that he had in fact drunk far too much beer. But Will being Will was not going to let a little thing like drunkenness ruin he's chance of seeing a big fish, decided to come out by Taxi at first light. This plan had two benefits a, it would be light enough to take pictures and b, Will could carry on drinking for a few more hours, I agreed.

I placed the Cat in the tube in front of the bivvy and decided not to fish for the rest of the night, I sat up all night spasmodically checking the fish until dawn arrived closely followed by Will. He looked a little worse for wear but was there ready to take the pictures none the less; first priority though was a coffee to add caffeine to his alcohol stream. The photo shoot was carried out with a rather reluctant ugly whisker covered monster a drunken photographer and a Catfish. Will was impressed with the Catfish having landed several thirty pound Carp from Cornish waters this was quite a compliment, he decided to get his kit and stay for a few days. The decision was taken to move to the arm and I would once again be in the Mitchell's swim. I carried out the move in the early hours and Will was back with his kit by 07.00am and set up by quarter past. I decided to scale down my rigs to enable more Eels to take, as I felt they were not keen on the heavier Catfish rigs, it is however difficult to accommodate both species simultaneously to good effect. The day was hot as on previous years and Will landed countless Carp whereas I lay basting as motionless as my indicators until tea time. I had been up to the take away and returned with Southern Fried Chicken and Chips for us, re-cast the rods and was sat back enjoying the pleasures of junk food when the middle rod shot off. I grabbed the rod and struck meeting resistance

immediately as the fish kicked in the deep water, I struggled to hold the rod with grease covering my hands from my healthy tea. The fish surfaced and I could see instantly it was a good Eel my refinements had paid off and my meal was disturbed for good reason. Will netted the fish and it was quickly weighed, photographed and slipped back and at 3lb 12oz was a wonderful Eel.



- **A good looking Eel of 3lb – 12ozs, once again from Whiteacres.**

I polished off the rest of my meal and reeled in to go and have a chat with the bloke who had assisted me the previous night despite being otherwise engaged. As I approached I could see he was chatting to another angler now bivvied next to him. “ Evening “ I stated, we chatted for a few minutes and as the other angler butted in I could then see it was a well tanned Weasel. “ I hear you think you’re a bit of a Catfish expert,” he snorted, he then continued not awaiting a reply “one jammy catfish doesn’t mean you can do it again”. “I have some mates from Okehampton who hooked every Catfish in here last year that’s what I call angling”. My gast was flabbered this Billy no mates even lied about other peoples catches and classed his enemies as friends, I decided to put him out of my misery. “I come from Okehampton, and I was here with my friend this time last year and we hooked ten Catfish and landed six but the only difference is you are not and never have been a mate of mine”. Weasel was visibly shocked and embarrassed and decided to leave the swim not before saying “I was only making conversation”, with a sad spaniel face on. The other angler enquired what was that all about and I filled him in on all the sordid details.

I returned to the swim and re-cast the baits, the night was a cold one with the moon full, darkness never came and neither did the fish, as it was strangely silent night, apart from Weasels sobbing. As sunlight replaced moonlight the left hand rod was off and I managed another Eel of 2lb 8oz. The next day and night were uneventful save for another Eel of 1lb 12oz and with the boiling hot days and freezing cold nights set to continue I decided to call it a day at Whiteacres and return to Lower Tamar in the hope of some increased Eel action, which there was in the shape of twenty runs on the first night but that’s another story. My last ever Whiteacres trip produced a new personal best Catfish for me, a lake and County record plus a specimen size Eel, I feel now that its time to move on as the word is out on the Whiteacres Cats, and over the next few years they will be subjected to increasing pressure. My holiday this year May 2000 is to be a week on my favourite Eel water Upper Tamar, fishing the areas not reachable during a one nighter.

I would like to thank the N.A.C. and the C.C.G. as information supplied by these two Clubs contributed to the captures of all my Eels and Cats on these trips. I would also like to thank Ken Ward who’s excellent Web site assisted me in the joining of both of these clubs.

A VERY DIFFICULT SWIM TO FISH

By

Barry McConnell a.k.a Only The Lonely

Big eels like to seek refuge. Due to its shape and manoeuvrability the eel can slip through a small gap to enter a lair that other fish and predators can't gain access to. It will be able to rest here safely. Sometimes, eels bury themselves beneath the silt or in a weed bed, other times they can be found in a crevice amongst boulders or debris on the bottom. One of the most consistent places to locate eels is amongst piles of sunken branches, particularly, big old branches which have the most established eel lairs, fit for the biggest and oldest of eels.

A few years ago I came across a typical eel holding area, in a shallow bay full of sunken branches. The bay lies in a quiet sheltered corner of a large, natural mere that has existed since the ice age. This scenic water is fringed by ancient woodlands which have, over the years, deposited many old trees and branches into the water. An angling club has removed a lot of snags to clear some swims for fishing but many parts of the lake remain too choked with fallen trees. The main body of the lake is open to the wind, which pushes any fallen timbers towards the bowl of the shallow bay at one end, where they gather, become waterlogged, then sink. The bed of this bay is an intermesh of sunken branches lying in, on and under the silt. Two or three huge trees have fallen into the marginal lily pads on one side of the bay. Out in the middle, many yards from either shore, some branches rise from the water to cast a reflection on the surface, adding to the picturesque setting which seems so extremely eely. This is more than a gut feeling or a hunch. There is no third sense needed here - this swim absolutely screams out 'big eels'. Unfortunately the log strewn shallows of the bay look so absolutely impossible to fish that I didn't try there - initially.

I first fished this lake in 1996, with Pete Drabble. We didn't know if it held any eels but the water has 'that look' about it so we just had to give it a go. This paid off in a big way as we found the water held some massive eels. The first night was spent fishing some relatively snag free swims in open water. By a stroke of luck, we had set up on a hot spot where Pete caught two massive eels at dawn - 6:12 and 5:04. Local anglers told us that it is a very hard water for eels and reckoned that our catch had been a lucky one. They told of others that had tried here for eels before us and fished hard all season for one big blank. However, our luck in this swim continued as I went on to add eels of 3:00, 3:00 and 4:07 and do 11 blanks. Pete caught 3 more eels - two 4's and a 3 - and blanked 9 more times that season. We caught all these eels from the same hot spot.

Explorations of the lake with a plummet revealed the hot spot to be a shallower area that runs out in to the middle of the lake. This shallow bar is flanked either side by deeper water and a very soft layer of decaying leaves and silt which is several feet thick. The silt is so soft that even a small leger sinks deep down into it. It was here, right amongst the silt, that we caught all the eels by pulling a big bunch of worms back to the bottom of the shelf coming off the side of the bar. It seemed that the eels were going under the silt for the baits, which must surely have been buried beneath. Furthermore, all the eels taken from this swim came between dawn and sunrise. I've got two different lines of thought on this. Firstly, the eels were there to feed - bubbling amongst the silt bed for bloodworms and other food items. Secondly, the eels were there to hide away and rest - and they stumbled on the baits as they made their way to the silt beds where they intended to bury themselves away from the increasing daylight. Anyway that's another topic for another time.

We fished the hot spot a lot the following season and caught quite a few more eels. This put the swim under heavy fishing pressure which started to tell as catches became less and less frequent. In 1997 I caught eels of 5:01, 4:12, 4:05, 4:02, and 3:14 from the hot spot and did nineteen blanks. Pete managed eels of 4:02, 3:10, 3:00, 2:08 and did 13 blanks. In 1998 Pete caught a 5:00 on the first night and hasn't fished there since. I also caught on the first night - a 4:09 - then went on to do twelve blanks in that same swim. In 1999, once again the hot spot produced an eel on the first night - 5:06 - then nothing but blank after blank.

As catches from the swim gradually decreased, it became very hard going, so hard that Pete, who couldn't spare enough fishing time, gave up on the water. Then there was one - Only The Lonely (a name given to me by Dale Robson, a leading zander angler from the fens). I tried different swims around the lake. Nothing, nothing, nothing, the pattern became predictable, I couldn't locate any eels despite fishing every cleared area where it is possible to fish. Even the hot spot cooled off. Between us we caught 20 eels and spent over 70 nights on the swim. This had fished it out until, eventually, no matter how many days and nights were spent fishing there, it didn't seem possible to catch another eel. It seemed that my luck had run out and now, like others that had tried before me, I was to suffer the big blank. Perhaps I would never catch another eel from this water. Eventually desperation and dreams of monster eels drove me to try and fish amongst the log strewn bay. Impossible? Or just a difficult swim to fish?

I set the bivvy up in a clearing amongst some large trees that overlook the bay at the lakes' end. From here, it is nearly one hundred yards across to the far bank, where angling is not permitted. From

the branch of a tree it could be seen that the depth increases gradually, from less than a foot under the rod tip to no more than three feet, seventy yards across the lake. At this point, the water deepens into a darker area where a deep trough runs roughly twenty yards along and about ten yards across before it shallows off again just short of the far bank some ninety yards away.

Several exploratory casts, with a three ounce bomb, were bounced back through the swim to help get a feel of the layout. The right hand side of the deeper area is full of snags. Towards the other side there are two branches protruding from the water. These appear to be attached to a large tree lying embedded into one side of the deep hole. There is just one small patch on the lake's bed where it is possible to bounce the leger on the bottom without getting snagged amongst sunken logs. Long range plumbing revealed the depth of this 'clear zone' to be around seven feet.

I was later to learn that the hole had been created by a diving club which used chains and winches to remove some massive tree stumps. This attempt at opening up the swim to angling wasn't too successful and eventually they gave up when many of the stumps proved impossible to move.

The 'clear zone' to which the cast must be aimed is a very small area of about ten square yards. Even here the occasional rig gets hooked up on pieces of rotting logs and branches that litter the bottom. All casts going off target result in disaster. Even plumbing the swim often results in the leger snagging up and the line pulling against a sunken branch. Then, the more you pull, the more the line cuts a groove through the branches' softened exterior until it comes against the harder inner wood, which damages the line. The problem increases when you add a hook because its sharp point so easily pricks into and becomes embedded into the wood. What we are up against here is a lake bed predominately made up of wood. When pulling into a snag, a mass of bubbles will spread over quite an area as you become connected to an intermesh of petrified wood. With strong tackle it is possible to rip some of the thinner branches out and I went on to collect quite a pile of these as I gradually dug my way into the swim using 3lb Armalites, 15lb Berkeley Big Game, 25lb wire trace and 3oz Arlesey bombs.

The first night on the swim was a nightmare. It isn't easy trying to accurately taper the cast down and get it on target at this range. Things are even more difficult in the dark when the rod must be aligned with silhouettes on the far skyline, after which it is down to guesswork and luck or bad luck as the case often was. Most casts became snagged solid and I spent nearly all my time tying rigs rather than fishing. This incidence being increased by the way that I often use more rods than there seems to be room for. To add to the stress, nuisance fish soon whittled down any baits that were successfully cast to a snag free patch, this increased the frequency of recasting and stretched the patience. During the first day and night I managed to catch bream, perch, pike, tench, lots of pieces of wood and absolutely no eels. The second night proceeded to be just as torturous until dawn, when suddenly, in the middle of the nightmare, I managed to hook a big eel. During the fight I could feel some scary twangs and bumps being transmitted up the line as the eel writhed backwards and managed to bump its snaking tail amongst snags. Somehow I managed to win the tussle and get a superb 5:13 into the net.

The following night I caught no eels and ran short of terminal tackle after getting hooked up on snags a trillion times. Spirits ran low until it was easy to put the previous nights' capture down as a fluke and decide that it just wouldn't be possible to land another big eel in such a ridiculously snaggy swim. I went home after the second night and declared the swim impossible.

Next season, on a spur of the moment, I braved the swim again and hooked something heavy at dusk. It managed to kite off to the right and snag round an emerging branch but the line was heavy enough to apply brute force. The branch snapped with a loud crack after which I wound in a 7lb bream with the tip of a waterlogged branch attached to the line. Eels don't kite to one side so readily and are usually easier to steer. Although eels can pull harder than other species, they tend to swim backwards and fight out their tug of war in straighter lines, making it easier to choose a line of play with no snags. After this bream it took me ages to get a line back in. Every cast went solid as soon as I moved the lead in order to check that the rig was on a clean bottom. I lost so many rigs that I got quite fed up and decided to give up at dawn.

Just as it was coming light I hooked a big eel. It fought the same as the eel I caught from this swim the year before. The weight was exactly the same too - 5:13. Last year's eel measured 42 inches by 9, this time 41.5 by 9. How accurate are my measurements of length? Was it the same fish? I've got photographs of each but they aren't close ups and it is difficult to tell.

While I was weighing the eel I got a screaming run on the other rod. I struck into another big eel which I managed to raise to the surface and haul rapidly across the lake, then, in a careless moment, I lost it when I eased off slightly in order to stoop for the landing net. I had misjudged the position of a large branch that lies just below the surface only a few yards away to the right of the net. I was demoralised by the loss of this eel, even more so, when, a few minutes later, I lost what felt like another eel as something powerful got around a snag within seconds of being hooked. I moved swim that

morning and vowed never to fish there again. This time it had taken just the one night before I lost the plot, as once again the swim proved too hard for me.

The following season I, once again, targeted this water but this time I intended to fish more manageable snag free swims. A lucky 5:06 on the first night was followed by many blanks on snag free swims. Twelve consecutive blank days and nights on the old hot spot had my thoughts straying to the 5:13 swim. Impossible seemed too strong a word for the swim since I had caught there. Instead, I started to think of it as a swim requiring extreme patience, a real bastard or just a very difficult swim to fish. I thought about the best approach when playing an eel there - it's 'simply' a matter of raising a hooked eel on to the surface then keeping it there and hauling it in hell for leather on a tight line without pausing to give it an inch. Of course this isn't entirely possible in practice but so far I had somehow managed to land two big eels and get another one close to the net. I decided that a more determined assault, requiring extreme patience, on the real bastard swim seemed a better prospect than totting up endless blanks on other swims.

This time I was better prepared with stacks of home made legers. I tried some sea anglers' lead lift vanes which fit just above the leger and speed up its ascent to the surface on retrieval. These lift vanes work, but, they are better employed in deeper water and I often found myself attached to a snag before I could raise the leger to the surface. Since first fishing this swim I had been experimenting with different leger rigs to use amongst the snags. I normally use a link leger with a long link but in this swim the line link tends to cut into the wooden snags and get trapped or damaged. I tried an inline leger with no link but I wasn't happy with this as I kept thinking of it lying amongst the silt and wooden debris which would restrict free movement of line through the centre hole of the leger. This time I opted for a very short link, just long enough to fit a plastic leger lift vane on before tying a large run ring on the end of the link. Later in the season I dispensed with the leger lift vane and replaced it with a lift leger - a flat bottomed vaned leger. This did away with the need to put a plastic vane on the line and meant I could replace the line link with a sturdy snap swivel link which doesn't cut into the wooden snags when the rig is ripped back through the swim.

During the first night I caught a 1:00 - the smallest eel I have ever seen from this water - followed, a couple of hours later, by a 5:00. This was a good result but it was very hard going, in fact it was positively torturous at times. A string of big tench up to 6:12 kept me on my toes, caused a few false eel alerts and generally caused havoc as I brought them through the shallows. The pile of wood beside my bivvy got bigger and bigger as I continued to extract bits of log from the 'clear zone' that I was casting to.

The following day I was visited by Eric Brown - a fanatical carp angler with an interest in eels that had led to him recently joining the NAC. The five pounder I had in the sack was the biggest eel he had ever seen so he thoroughly enjoyed taking some photos for me. Later, after he had gone, a strong breeze chilled the waters and activity from nuisance fish ceased as they went right off the feed.

I only got one run that night at 11.45pm when I hooked into what was obviously an even bigger eel. The extra weight told on the rod which arched fiercely round as I struggled to control the eel for a few minutes, before getting the upper hand and managing to raise it to the surface, over deeper water, in the middle of the 'clear zone'. Now comes the tricky bit - the eel has to be brought across the lake for seventy yards through shallow water full of snags. I've been here before - its shit or bust time. Maximum pressure has to be applied in order to keep the eel on the surface and keep it moving. If it is brought in fast enough it will never be able to gain its composure enough to start backing off and bumping amongst the snags. My familiarity with the swim, enabled me to pinpoint the snags and form a pretty good idea which route to negotiate with the big eel. Its hard to recall exactly how I did it. The adrenaline kicked in and I brutalised the tackle - New Zealand style. In other words, I held my breath and applied more pressure than the rod is really built to take. Somehow the tackle held up and I ended up with a personal best in the net.

I weighed it in at 7:04, sacked it up, then made a quick phone call to Eric. It didn't seem long till dawn when he came to photo the eel on his way to work. We weighed it again to find that it had lost an ounce and a half but we agreed on the original weight after noticing the sack was full of pale yellow coloured excrement, which was oozing from the eel even as we photographed it. The eel was very fat and it had obviously been gorging on something that comes out of the other end a kind of yellow colour. We measured it - forty three inches long with a girth of eleven and one eighth of an inch. One big chunk of eel making me happy, very happy.

A week later I was back again for a six day session. This time I was using lift legers rather than plastic vanes. I also threaded a hollow wine makers cork on to the line above the leger where it could pop up to the surface and help to raise the line above the snags. These additions, though far from perfect, definitely assisted me but only when the cast was landed within the 'clear zone'. As usual many casts went astray and I lost a lot of tackle amongst snags. Once again all the hardship seemed

worthwhile when I landed a 4:14 first night. The following five nights produced no eels, only stacks of nuisance bream.

I had now sorted out the leger as best I could but the point of the hook was still catching in the wooden snags far too often to make for enjoyable fishing. The next step was an obvious progression - the point of the hook must be masked. A quick phone call to the anguilla guerrilla had his inventive mind rising to the quest for a hook guard. Within a few days he had made progress. Trying various household objects that were to hand he had found one that does the job satisfactorily. A washing up liquid bottle top with the stopper bit cut off is threaded on the line, then a small bead is threaded on before tying the hook on (See figure 1). He reeled off a list of other objects he intends to try, such as half a plastic kinder egg or anything cone shaped. However, he reckoned on being happy enough with this prototype bottle top because a size eight hook, matched to the appropriate size of bead, will retract in to the hollow inner until the bead butts up against the small hole at the top and the point of the hook is shielded within. He told me the best bit at the end of the phone call - to put the rig through a proper test he had gone into the back garden to engage guerrilla warfare. A cast right over the top of a fully grown sycamore tree had been successfully retrieved through the branches. His last words were "Is that good enough for you, Baz?"

The next session of five days saw me trying a new snag beater rig with a cut down washing bottle top and a bead threaded up the line where they can slide down over the hook to shield the point (I don't know where I get these ideas from). I tested it in the margins and found that I could bounce the lead and hook guard against underwater branches then scrape the whole rig over the top of a sunken log without catching the hook or losing the bait. Hence the name - sunken log rig (See figure 1).

The first night saw the swim full of skimmers which were constantly attacking my massive bunch of worms. Generally, they moved my bobbin between an inch and a couple of feet before finding the bait too big and dropping it. I didn't mind this activity for two reasons: firstly, it provided a good test for the rig which definitely didn't deter the skimmers; and secondly, once the bobbin has moved a couple of feet I knew that

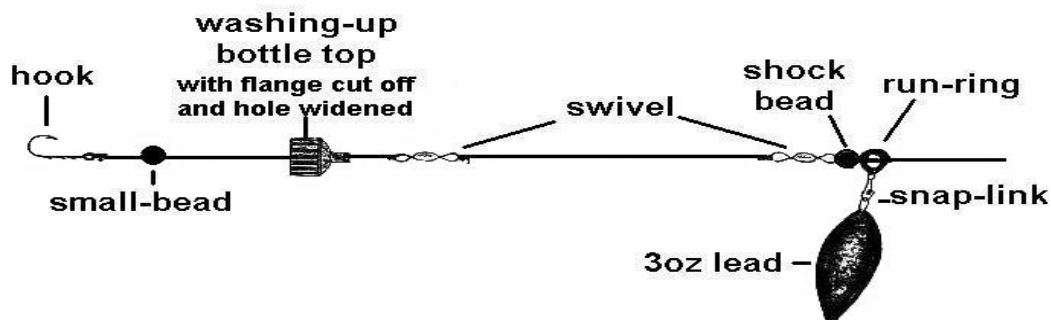
both swivels of my JS rig had been pulled clear through the small hole in the centre of the hook guard. I hadn't been too sure about this part of the rig - would the swivels catch on the hole and provide resistance causing the eel to drop the bait?

If the bobbin activity ceased this was a sign that nuisance fish had managed to pinch all the bait off the hook. This is not a problem as the hook will retract into the guard and the rig can be retrieved without snagging up. So long as the bobbin keeps dancing, there must be some worms still attached to the hook and it can be left there until an eel happens along. This is exactly how it went on the second night when eels of 5:07 and 3:08 were caught along with countless bream. I felt quite smug after that. I had scored. The rig worked.

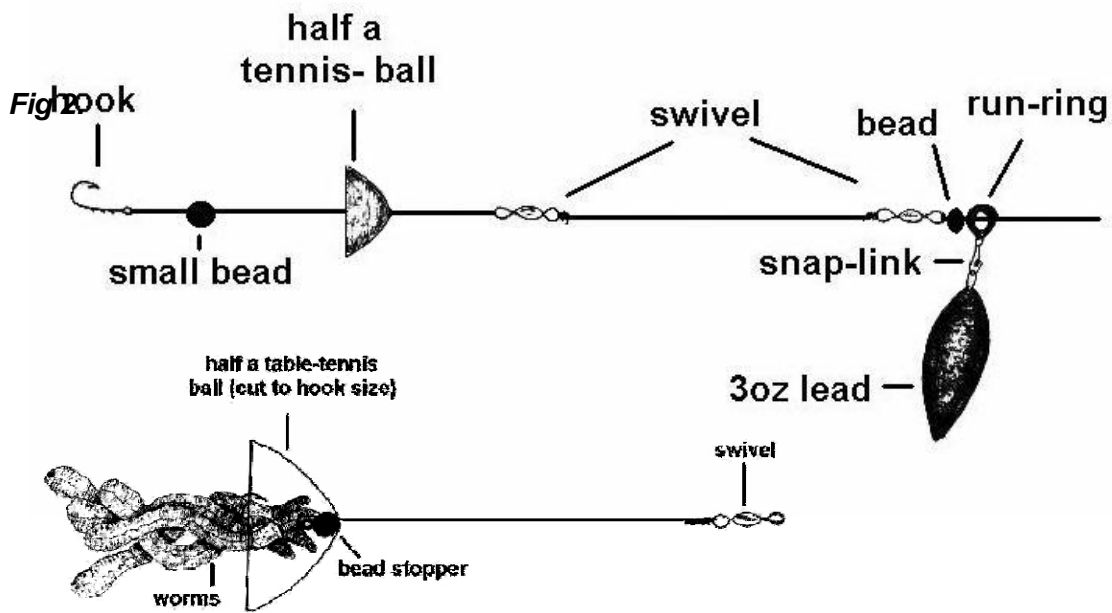
The following day I got hold of two whole large king prawns and tried them as a bait to avoid the bream. I never found out if the bream would eat them because the first one was picked up off the bottom by a 9lb pike within minutes of casting and the other one, first cast went astray only to be taken by a pike as it was dragged back across the surface. A miracle pike bait?

I ran out of washing up bottle tops on the third day so I improvised with pop bottle tops punched through the centre. These did help guard the hook but were less effective. The following day, a visit to a sports shop armed me with some table tennis balls which I cut down to suit the preferred hook size - 2's and 4's (See figure 2).

Fig 1.



I developed sufficient confidence with the rig to be better able to carry out and enjoy my fishing so I spent a few more nights fishing the swim during which time I was able to put my favourite improvement - the cut down table tennis ball - through a lengthy test. It passed the test as I caught pike, perch, bream, tench and roach but no more eels came from this swim, not even during perfect weather conditions on nights with no moon.



Since first fishing the swim I have amassed a total of nineteen night sessions there (thirteen blanks) and caught eight eels of 7:04, 5:13, 5:13, 5:07, 5:00, 4:14, 3:08 and 1:00. As I write this during the depths of winter I wonder if I have caught the biggest, if not all the eels from this area. Yet there is still this gut feeling that something even bigger is lurking there. This gut feeling makes me think I will fish there again, probably as soon as the water is warm enough next spring. One thing is for sure - this swim was conquered the hard way. The exercise was a learning curve from which I developed a rig for fishing over a wooden bottom. This rig has helped turn an impossible nightmare swim into just a very difficult swim to fish.



**Top Left: Barry's "Very Difficult Swim to Fish" Top Right: What a result, a superb Eel of 7lb – 04ozs.
Bottom Left: Another great Eel of 5lb – 07ozs. Bottom Right: Yet another result, this time a 5lb – 00oz Eel.**

below we have reproduced a couple of quotes from the article that give some insight into how tackle dealers view anglers and might just make you smile.

“Carp anglers are good for business and we should encourage them in their madness.”

“I think we should be grateful to the late Richard Walker and Clarissa, they started all of this off. I just thank God he didn't catch a record eel, 'cos eel fishermen really are barmy and they spend bugger all!!!”

THE BIG DEBAIT

Can bait influence size ?

by Lewis Clark

Size of bait:

In theory, big baits mean big fish, as the smaller Eels find it harder to tackle the larger sizes. But, Eels are often greedy and will attempt to take larger baits. This can result in many negative movements of the indicators, such as taps or even the line being pulled from the indicator, but with no line movement after that causing questions to be asked from the angler as to whether to strike or not. The immediate answer has to be ..yes.. as none of us want to risk a deep hooked fish. Nevertheless this can be incredibly frustrating if this occurs frequently.

Another problem with using larger baits is that they can often mask the hook, again causing false runs. An option is to use a larger hook, but this does not rule it out. I experienced this problem last summer, especially when I was fishing in the Dorset Stour, in the eddy of a very large weir and had a pick up on a six inch whole Roach, with a large size 2 hook threaded through it. I quickly clamped down & brought it up & over heavy weed. When I drew it up I saw it in the ;Clearwater and to me it was a monster, about 4.8, but to my horror I saw the Eel hadn't thrown the hook bait and was not clearly hooked, eventually letting go as it managed to use the whole & heavy hook bait, to lever the bait and it's light hook hold, out of it's mouth.

Another disadvantage with large hook baits is the problem of Pike, which is a big problem on many of the rivers & canals I fish. This can be incredibly frustrating on a perfectly positioned bait in the middle of the night in a snag infested swim. This can also be the case with smaller baits and perch and Chubb. Smaller baits are not a solution either as they tend to pick up any size of Eel that comes across it. This can be great fun, but if you are fishing to unobvious features, it can be a big hassle.,

Smaller bait, i.e.: half bait / 2 - 4 inches / chopped lobs often lose all their flavour more quickly which can be useful if you are fishing within known feeding spells, as they are either chopped in half or they do not hold so much flavour in the first place, due to their actual mass. Baits can of course be artificially flavoured but I personally prefer to use bait which the large & experienced Eels do not find suspicious in any way.

The debate involving the size of bait is therefore very much an open one as there are advantages & disadvantages to either the larger or smaller sizes of bait and so the decision is very much a personal one and the all important confidence factor that goes with it.

Types of bait:

Lobworms

These pick up Eels of all sizes, but no one can doubt their record, as a large percentage of the big Eels have been caught on these. They tend to work best though on the smaller headed Eels.

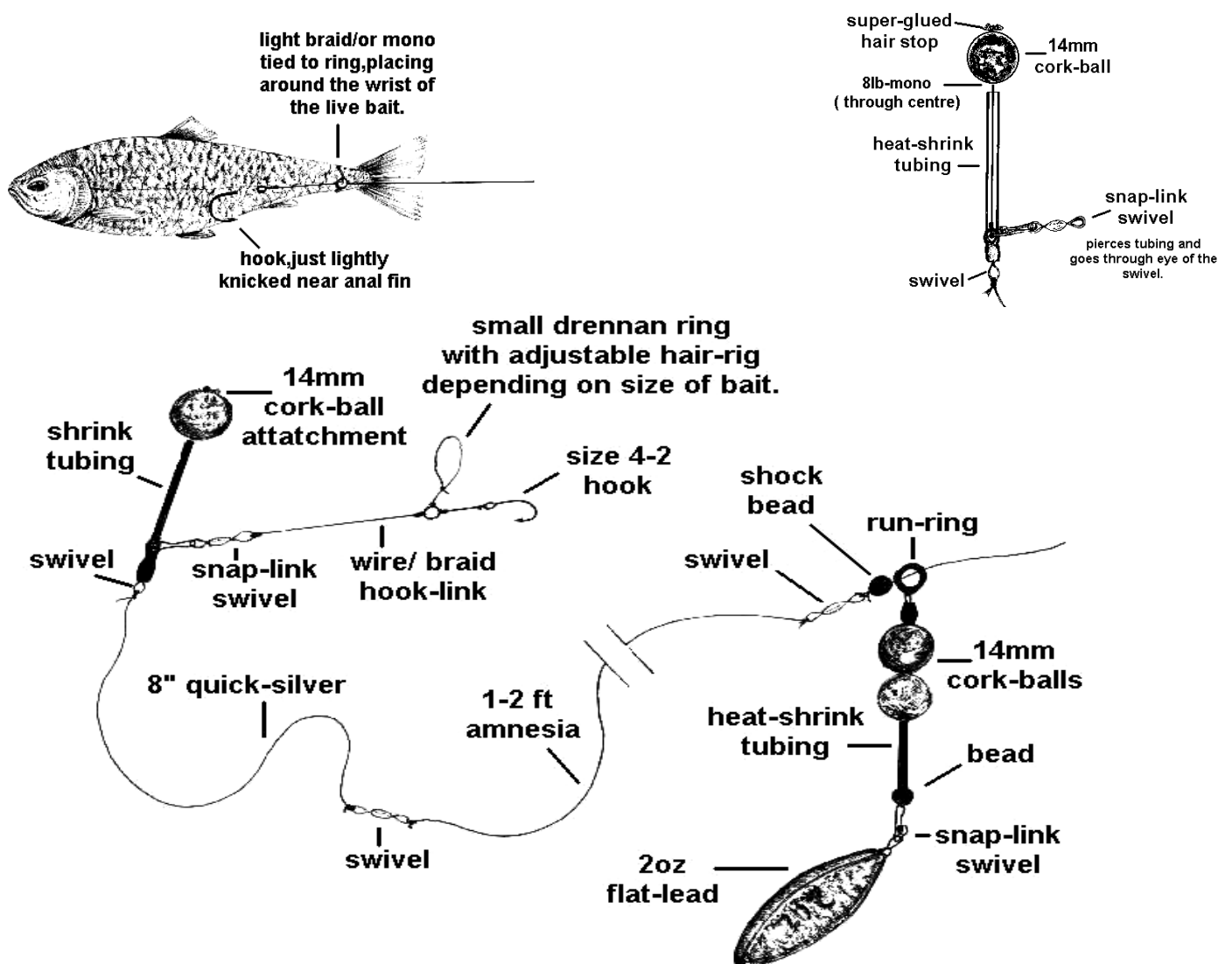
Dead baits

Arguably these have to be the perfect bait for the large & lazy Eels as they allow the maximum source of protein etc, for the minimum expenditure of energy. I doubt if there are many, if any large Eels who do not feed very regularly on deadbait.

Live bait

I reckon these have to be the most exclusive big Eel bait of them all. It requires both patience & confidence to fish with live bait rigs, but I believe they most certainly warrant one rod. The reason why they are the most exclusive is possibly because the smaller Eels tend to find it harder to deal with the live baits, possibly due to less experience. Maybe the fine tuned senses of the larger Eels also tends to alert them to the food source more rapidly, and can also send it into a frenzy as the bait fish panics. These are my own beliefs and are in no way a certainty. But, what most certainly is, is the love of live baits by the large Eels.

The major problem with presenting live baits is the terminal tackle side, as it is quite hard to present a hook in the anal fin region of the live bait, where most of the Eels tend to hit first. Here is my rig, mostly adapted from past & present contributors to the Anguilla magazine. MY own touch is my own cork attachment. This is used to keep the live bait agitated and therefore keeps it working, this allows location by the Eels to be made easier. I'm very proud of this as my results have dramatically improved with it, and not only with Eels. With Chubb, Perch , Pike as well, and it reduces my waiting time.



If you decide to use the rig as shown , or have found anything about the baits to be conclusive or exclusive, please contact me at.

Lewis Clark, 8 Wonersh Court, Guildford, Surrey. GU5 OPG.

NEW PREDATOR GROUPS / S.A.C.G

Press Release wording regarding livebaiting issues with the public, media or E.A.

"The law already states that fish cannot be moved from one water to another without a section 30 consent from the E.A. This is a perfectly reasonable dictate designed to prevent the spread of disease and also to prevent the introduction of non indigenous species to waters. Although there are no proven cases of livebaiting causing the spread of disease in British Fisheries, 'The National Anguilla Club' / The Specialist Anglers Conservation Group fully supports the E.A. in this regard and urges all anglers to heed these points.

'The National Anguilla Club' and The SACG believes that the illegal translocation of fish has rightly been identified by the Review Group as a matter for concern. Whilst the introduction of a blanket ban on livebaiting might appear to be a convenient solution, it is suggested that such a ban would not necessarily deter the thoughtless minority who disregard the existing byelaw by moving fish from one water to another.

Whilst 'The National Anguilla Club' / SACG condemns the illegal translocation of fish, we would suggest that such behaviour is not implicitly a part of livebaiting, indeed livebaiting should be regarded as an entirely separate issue. Anglers should not be deprived of an effective and legitimate method. There are situations in angling when the use of livebaits might offer the only real chance of success. Whilst both deadbaits and artificial lures have an important role to play in predator angling, they do not always represent a realistic alternative to livebaits, the predators natural prey.

On potentially sensitive waters such as trout fisheries, which provide a valuable opportunity for pike angling, an option presently exists whereby livebaits which have either been reared at, or have been netted from the water in question, may be supplied on site. In such circumstances the risk of any unauthorised introduction of fish to the water may be eliminated.

'The National Anguilla Club' / The SACG does not consider a ban on livebaiting to be an appropriate solution to the real issue at stake, the illegal translocation of fish from one water to another, rather we support the principle of sufficient resources being made available to enable the E.A. to effectively enforce appropriate legislation designed to eliminate the irresponsible practice of illegal translocation. This enforcement action should be directed at both anglers and unscrupulous fishery owners/fish dealers who move fish illegally."

THE GUNGE PAGES.

This snippet comes courtesy of the female section of the General Secretaries household....(The male section having taken up D.I.Y. and gardening as his new hobby!!!!!!!)

FOR SALE.

Specialist fishing tackle for sale. Rods...4 Eel, 2 Carp, 2 Tench, 1 Barbel Avon, 1 Quiver/Avon, 1 13ft Diawa Match, 1 pole.

6 reels... 4 Baitrunners, 1 Shimano Match, 1 ABU Closed faced.

Fox Bedchair, Fox Lowback chair.

1 one-man and 1 two-man Hutchy Bivvy's.

4 Delkims and lots of assorted and associated specialist tackle including nets, sacks and camera's. ***Will not split.

The reasons for this huge sell-off is to raise finance for payment of very expensive kitchen re-fit.

This collection of specialist tackle would suit professional type, preferably ELECTRICIAN from around the Emmerdale area. (Apparently, this is the only type of professional capable of affording this 'one lot' sale.)

WANTED.

Second-hand screwdriver, lump-hammer and 'robbery licence'.

At a recent committee meeting, just prior to the AGM, it was discussed how the club could reduce the number of members it currently had. After serious debate it was decided to allow S/R to attend in his guise as 'Dances' rather than the General Secretary of the club and let him loose on various sections of the membership.

Another successful move by the committee and one that has seen the membership fall by 25%. Now WE ARE getting nearer to 'The Clique' syndrome.

Recent phone calls and E-Mails to 54 William Street, L/E, Nottm have resulted in those contacting 'Dances' to come off the line with serious bouts of depression. Poor old 'Dances' is suffering from PMT. This could be deciphered in a number of ways....

Pretentious Mardy Tantrum....Profiteering Milking Tyke....Petty Membership Trauma....Pissed-off Man Thing....Personal Manhunt Tyrant.... Fit as you see best or send in your thoughts to the editor. Don't send them to 'Dances' because he has gone to sharpen his knife and buy a rope.

Interesting remark from Jason 'Eric' Morgan on the phone the other day. He phoned to inform 'Dances' on how the Trentham Gardens fish-in had gone and after saying who had caught what, and the fact that he had blanked, he went on to say "During the cold, wet and blanking Saturday night, I was starting to wonder why I bother doing this eel fishing thing. However, when Sunday morning came round and there were two eels of 3.09 and 3.11 in the hands of their captors I remembered why it is. I can't catch eels..... and this is the only way I can get to see some live specimens."

Still with 'Eric'. He fishes the local canal on Friday nights and gets there by taxi. (Mind you he gets everywhere by taxi, doesn't he 'Spike'?) He then fishes until 2.00am and then phones for another taxi home....stinky eel slime, wet nets and all. Unfortunately, there are only twelve taxi's in the town 'Eric' lives in, so he can only managed twelve sessions per year, unless he walks there and back home again from the extra sessions. Apparently, the taxi rank drivers will put up with puke, kebab juice and other 'late night juices' on their seats but they won't put up with 'Eric' talking to them in a session built-up state about eel fishing on the way there. Nor will they put up with a depressed, wet and still talkative 'Eric' on the way home. (They WILL take his gear home, so long as he walks back himself)

I am not sure which IS the Gunge here, but 'The Hedgehog' said to me, after I told him of this state of affairs, that "He sided with the taxi rank drivers on this one". Mind you, 'The Hedgehog' has given some very strange people a taxi ride or two, in recent months!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Talking of 'The Hedgehog'. He and 'Dances' went to Blackpool to see if they could get some rock with Blackpool all the way through it. As it happens, they discovered that each end was OK, but that all the way through the middle it was full of BULLSHIT. Worse than that realisation, was the fact that they both found out that they had lost more than just their respect for the rock but that 'Billy' wasn't the first name of Mr. Bullshit.....it was K.K.K.K. ...B.B. Brrr, the sea wind was cold as well.

Gunge has already reached me from only the first fish-in of the year so far, God knows what Gunge will arrive at my mailbox as the year progresses. You will have to bear with me because I am trusting others

(Watch who you fish next to on any club trip) to get the truth correct, as I shall be absent from these gatherings due to buying a ticket (an expensive one at that) for another water with no eel history attached. Still, there are some very big Stillwater Chub present, so some cider may come my way during the season.

Anyway, it appears that a new 'moniker' has been attached to one of our more respected members, this being Chris Siddall. From now onwards he is to be known as 'Sad'. (A brummie name if ever I heard one.)

Now 'Sad' has gone and bought himself..quote.."a big, acey pacey JEEP". After arriving at the Tretham Gardens fish-in JEEP-LESS, his session partner 'The Hedgehog' asked him where the new toy was. 'Sad' admitted that his wife had the use of it because he couldn't afford to put the petrol in it, to bring it to the fish-in.

'The Hedgehog' found this very amusing and pointed out that he had just spent £170.00 in order for him to get his van to the fish-in and suggested that perhaps cleaning windows and carpets was more profitable than being a CAD expert. (Catfish, Anguilla and Drinker.)

'Sad' spent most of last year driving 'The Hedgehog' mad by his non stop appraisal of his new bite alarms and thinking that this should now be over 'The Hedgehog' decided to fish alongside 'Sad' at the fish-in. (The sentence added to this Gunge was that "they were also far away from the rest of the rabble")

Once they were both settled in and comfortable, 'Sad' opened up on a new line of patter. Apparently, 'Sad' has acquired four new rods for this year's fishing and spent the whole night detailing the merits of the much mentioned tools. 'Sad' even managed to show 'The Hedgehog' just how well they coped with a 3.09 eel attached to the other end. 'The Eeling Hedgehog' was so impressed by this, that he took himself off to the pub the following day. (As if an excuse was ever needed in the past!!)

At the end of the fish-in, when it was time to say the goodbyes to everyone, Barry McConnell and Peter Drabble dropped by and 'Sad' decided to inform them of his new rods. Barry then stunned 'The Hedgehog' by informing 'Sad' that he had also got one of those rods. This led them both into going into over-drive appraisal (JEEP-TALK THERE) of the rods, at which point 'The Hedgehog' gave up and went off to watch a dog-fight.

Things didn't get much better after this for 'The Hedgehog' as he had agreed to taxi 'Eric' home after the fish-in and he had to listen to twelve accounts of 'Tales of memorable taxi rides home from eel sessions in Stafford'.

Talking of Jason 'Eric' Morgan. He and his girlfriend Dawn are soon to be wedded. In September, if my information is correct. It was suggested to 'Eric' that he perhaps hold the ceremony on a club fish-in but he declined saying "I love Dawn to bits but how could I concentrate on my bobbins during the night sessions, especially if 'The Burglar' was on the water. We all know what he's like after the Elvington fish-in, don't we!!". He added "Anyway, Nick couldn't get Andrew, Dawn, me and all the tackle in the van".

Dawn must be a seriously keen lass to make the bond between her and 'Eric' legal, although rumours abound that she actually pays the taxi fare TO the canal in Stafford but never gives 'Eric' enough for the RETURN fare. I am sure there's a message there somewhere. (My thanks to Nick for this information)

Read into this whatever you like but I have it on good authority that on the night before the Trentham Gardens fish-in, 'Sad' Siddall was at Billingsgate Market. Apparently 'Sad's catch total at the fish-in was a 3.09 Eel and a 3.00 Perch. It has been pointed out to me by 'Spike', that you can get a very large water tank in the back of an 'acey pacey JEEP'.

Just about everyone on the T/G fish-in heard 'Eric' screaming his head off for some assistance from 'The Hedgehog' at around mid-night on the Saturday. "Help, Help, I need the net, Nick mate. Come quickly,.... wake up you drunken excuse for an eel angler...quick, quick".

On hearing the cry for help, 'Spike' fell off his bedchair and stumbled over to 'Eric's swim.....feeling for the landing net in the drizzle and dark, only to see a perch livebait come over the drawstring after much playing of said fish.

As 'Spike' made his way back to his bivvy, covered in mud, wet and still half asleep, he heard an apologetic "Jesus Nick, these perch fight hard in here, don't they". (Rumour has it Nick started the meter running on the taxi clock'o'meter just after this occurrence.)

Best bit of Gunge so far from 'The Hedgehog' was this sentence. I shall say no more other than perhaps the word your looking for Nick, is 'immaculate'.

"Mark Smethurst is not the most articulate dresser usually, but this time he turned up in a shirt and tie. Mark said it was for his new job, apparently he is a self employed rep for strap on tools". (Having re-read the sentence, perhaps there is two lots of Gunge in that wording.????)

Malc 'lucky' Law found out that he had left his landing net spreader block at Elvington. He realised this whilst trying to set up his net on the T/G fish-in. The Gunge part is that he has been fishing since Elvington but has never had to set his net up since then. Remarkably, it was last September when 'Lucky' was at Elvington.

Jimmy 'it's the viewer's votes that count' Jolley (Must find this chap a 'moniker' soon) actually owned up to being a bass player in a group that auditioned on 'Opportunity Knocks' way back in the 50's. Unfortunately, his band were beaten (I cannot write this without crying) by a 'one legged clog dancer' from Cleethorpes. Whilst obviously under the influence of the dreaded alcohol and in the pub with 'The Hedgehog' as well, he also admitted to playing and singing 'tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree' SIX TIMES A NIGHT at their gig's. (God help Mrs. Jean Jolley at Christmas time)

Considering that 'The Burglar' and Jimmy are very good mates and both musical, I am not quite sure where that leaves 'The Burglar' or 'B.T.' for that matter.

Jimmy and 'The Burglar' 'The north west canal kings' were using their new reels on the T/G fish-in. These reels are the biggest you can buy and hold up to a mile of 10lb line on them (with backing added). Apparently, they need these in order to reach the far bank of the Leeds and Liverpool canal.

Young Billy Law, son of 'Lucky', doesn't know what hit him on the T/G fish-in. he spent the whole weekend silent due to 'The Hedgehog' having taken his dog 'Billy' on the fish-in as well. After the first hour all young Billy Law heard for the rest of the weekend was Nick shouting "NO Billy, SHUT UP Billy, FETCH Billy and SIT Billy". (Another junior lost from the cause!!!!)

Billy, the dog... not young master Law, disgraced himself by beating up Peter Drabble's dog. Unfortunately, Billy bit her nipple and drew blood. (Some would say that Nick shouldn't let his dog watch when he gets into foreplay. Others would say that Nick does this on purpose so that Billy knows what to do when he and Nick are on a session together.....Ooops, sorry Nick.)

Jason Tyndall's fishing gear went on the T/G fish-in but Jason didn't. Andrew wishes he had thought of that and gone to the pub as well.

Stuart 'Spac-e-man' Dean was desperate to go on a fishing session with 'The Hedgehog' so after an SACG meeting they snook off, without informing 'Dances', to a stretch of the G.U. canal that Nick does well on. (I have the directions to the exact spot Mr. Pitts, if you want it?)

'The Hedgehog' advised 'Spac-e-man' where to fish and come the end of the session he had caught a couple of nice two's. (The footnote to this Gunge reads...I wonder why 'Dances' cannot manage to catch on Nick's advise.)

'Dances' reply is this..."Correct me if I am wrong Nick, but are there any nice two's out there"???????????????? (That MAY come back to haunt me)

Ken 'Cousin it' Ward has started working for himself as a courier for TNT. The rest of the lad's in the club think that the TNT must have blown him up because they don't hear from him anymore.

'Dances' is getting as paranoid as the Jolley brothers because no one is ringing him up or E-Mailing him anymore. Who can blame them for cutting him off, because the man's about as subtle as a pissed off rhino and MARDY to boot. !!!!!

'Spac-e-man', 'The Hedgehog', 'Taff', 'B.T.' and 'Dances' have attended one or all three of the last three SACG meetings on behalf of our beloved NAC. After meeting number one, 'B.T.' was banned for questioning the SACG committee's decisions. Meeting number two brought about 'Taff's' non re-invitation to the proceedings due to his desire to keep the meeting going for twice the normal length due to the use of an interpreter and him eating the whole buffet which was set out for 22 people. The SACG have since been heard to say "that if 'Taff' was on the SACG committee they couldn't afford to exist".

Meeting number three brought about the first 'yellow card' situation in the SACG's history. Tim Marks deemed it appropriate to show 'Spac-e-man' and 'The Hedgehog' the cards for arranging a secret eeling session, without 'Dances' knowledge I might add, whilst the room was discussing the MAFF review details. Such was their intent and deviousness in the planned session that they needed to be spoken to twice before coming to order. Asked why they had bothered to attend the meeting if they were only interested in organising a session of eel fishing, **without 'Dances' KNOWLEDGE I might add**, they replied "We are going for a full house of banned NAC members from SACG meetings, and rather than wait for meeting number four to ban 'Dances' you might as well ban him now for being MARDY and ARGUMENTATIVE".

Unfortunately, all three have been called back for the fourth meeting, much to 'Taff's' anger. Having spent years guiding them on how to unsettle the opposition, he is well miffed at them letting his teachings down. Rumour on the grapevine is that he and 'B.T.' are now firmly bonded...so long as Jimmy stays away.

'Taff' cannot abide 'Tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree' !!!!! (Now we know why Jimmy was asking us if we were taking a yellow rope to Blackpool, and if not, would we like to buy one?)

The points that 'Dances' could not use in these pages of the Gunge were 'Spikes' brag about beating all comers at pool on the T/G fish-in, 'The Hedgehogs' surreal ability to size eels before they are weighed, the fact that even though Villa got beaten in the FA cup final 'The Hedgehog' admitted to being a B'ham City fan at all. (How loud did you cheer in the play-offs???) and lastly, trying to get 'Dances' to start a war between good friends Barry McConnell and Pete Drabble over Pete's lovely 3.11 T/G fish-in eel. (The quote sent being "Pete HAMMERED Barry 'it's a seven' McConnell on the fish-in with his 3.11")

As you can see, most of the Gunge material received was post-marked Birmingham again. In case any of you reading this doesn't know, any references to 'Spike' or 'The Hedgehog' is attributed to Nick Rose. He now finds himself, along with 'Dances', with a new 'moniker'. These new versions of 'Pet names' have been sent from somewhere deep in the West Midlands, a land where Trolls and nasty Elves still live on. This land is known as 'The Barony of Council-li-arse'. (The two new 'monikers' are N/R = 'Hog' and S/R = 'Kermit'.) However, they won't be found in print within these pages because we don't know the reason for their use as yet. Maybe, just like in those far off ages, news will filter back and we can kiss the frog to get the Princess back....However, at this juncture there is no way we are kissing this Toad's lips, never mind his BUTT.