

# "Anguilla"



**THE BULLETIN OF  
THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.**



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AUTUMN / WINTER.**



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\*\*\*\*\*Inside Back Cover Cartoon.....Courtesy of Jason Morgan.

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## Team Talk

By Stuart Dean

Here it is the Winter/Christmas issue of "Anguilla". You should notice that we have used some different layouts for the articles than we have used in previous mags, and we hope that you will approve of the changes.

I will apologise now for the mistakes that were more than apparent in the last issue of "Anguilla". This was due to a number of reasons that I will not go into, but I assure you that every effort is and will be made to keep these mistakes down to a minimum in this and future issues.

We still **DESPERATELY** need more articles, items and photographs for the mag, and it would help enormously if they were sent in as soon as possible. This will help the production team avoid the mad rush that always seems to happen in the couple of weeks before "Anguilla" is due to be sent out. So if you have an article in you (and I'm sure you all have something to say) write it now and send it to us. You only have to look at Dominic Pecheurs letter/article to realise that it really is not that difficult to put something down on paper, that is of good use for the magazine.

I have decided that while I am involved in the putting together of the mag, I will not write any articles, well at least I will not publish them unless we are absolutely desperate for content. To be honest I find this a little frustrating especially when an article is published and it gets me thinking. I would love to write and publish an article in response to it. I am tempted to use this Team Talk section to have my say but I don't feel that I would be able to go into any great detail and as a result my few brief words could be misinterpreted and may have the result of upsetting our contributors. In every issue that I have been involved with so far, there has been at least one article that is more than worthy of a response from someone in the club. In the last issue for example, Damian and Jimmy's article "Pressurising Eels - Part 2" was sure to have provoked some thoughts. Now you will either agree or disagree with what they wrote and I would like to know what the members think. I am not quite sure that they are on the right tracks, but thank God for thinking anglers, especially the ones who are prepared to put their thoughts in writing. Without them angling methods and techniques wouldn't have and never will improve and there certainly wouldn't be any angling literature. As well as contributions to this mag from the consistent sources, this issue contains articles from a number of new ones. Peter Drabble, Andy Atkins, Graham Wilkes, Steve Rickets and Bob Homegold. Most are new members of the club and it is good to see they are contributing. Their articles tell us about their eel angling exploits and show some of the difficulties anglers who are new to the pursuit of Anguilla anguilla experience. There are a lot of members who have been in the club for a number of years and through experience have found ways of overcoming these difficulties, or at least, come to terms with the fact that there is no way of overcoming them. It would be nice to read their opinions on the subjects of why we do blank so much? Why do eels drop our baits so often and is there anything we can do about it? Etc, Etc. (By the way, if anyone has any solutions to these problems, which seem to be the ones that haunt every angler that has ever spent any amount of time fishing for eels, especially anglers that are new to eel fishing, I for one would like to know the answers and I am 100% sure I am not the only member of this club that wants to know the answers too).

The winter social meeting turned out to be eventful, as well as its usual day of entertainment. Our Vice-President Brian Crawford attended the meeting and there was a departure from the usual format the winter social meeting. Some rather serious matters were discussed in length and detail. This has left the committee with a few problems that will need to be resolved at the next AGM. Thankfully I am sure the present committee will not shirk their responsibilities and do a sterling job.

Probably the most important thing to happen at the meeting was Kevin Huish's announcement of his intention to stand down as Chairman of the club at the next AGM. This announcement took everyone in the room by surprise, even the members of the club that know him better than most. Kevin has been a stalwart member of the club and committee for many years and his service to the club is surpassed by few. This announcement will bring about the end of another chapter in the club's history, a chapter that has seen Kevin play a pivotal part in the rebuilding of the club from its low points in the eighties. I will make no apologies for stating that the National Anguilla Club and its members has a lot to thank Kevin for, not least the sorting out along with his wife Pat, the club's financial position so that now we are at a point where the club is in a financially stable position. Without him and other like him this club may well have become extinct many years ago. I, for one, will be sorry to see Kevin relinquish his position on the committee but am glad to see that he intends to remain as a member of the club.

I was disappointed with the turn out for the supposedly social gathering and I think that it was the worst attended winter meeting we have had, since the club moved to the new format a couple of years ago. Damian Wood and Jimmy Jolley gave an interesting slide show about their last two seasons eel fishing on the Leeds/Liverpool canal. There were plenty of slides of huge canal eels and they both gave an interesting insight

into the methods they used to reap the rewards from what I consider one of the top eel waters in the country. Considering that I live only two or three miles from the Leeds/Liverpool canal, you may be surprised that I have only ever fished the water a couple of times in the six years that I have been fishing for eels. This might seem a little strange giving the statement I have just made about it a being top eel water, maybe even a big mistake. When you read 'Dances with eels' article in this magazine you will realise just how important selection of the "right" water is. I'll be honest and say that I don't think that my choice of waters over the past few years has been too bad and I have been lucky enough to catch a couple of decent eels which I think justify my decision to stay away from the canal. It would be easy for me to follow in Damian's, Jimmy and Tony Jolley's footsteps but I won't be. I will stay with the waters that I have been fishing and leave the three musketeers to reap the rewards of all their hard work. Canal fishing just ain't my thing! We all must remember that the most important thing is that we enjoy our eel fishing. Captures and results must be a secondary consideration.

Finally, well almost, I had an interesting telephone conversation with one of our members, who I shall not name, but they will know who they are. The conversation got around to fishing for pike and he made a very interesting statement, which I will quote here. He said "You don't need all the paraphernalia to catch pike, you just need to understand pike". Well, this statement got me thinking. If you substitute the word eels for pike in the last statement we just might come up with some of the answers to some of our problems, when it comes to catching eels. It might also give you some idea as to the way that I have started to think over the last season. If you do bump into me on the bank somewhere next summer, I hope you notice that I will be minus all the "paraphernalia".

This Team Talk has ended up far longer than I first intended and I will sign off now and wish you all a Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year and the Coming Season.

## Dear Steve.....

By Dominic "Pecs" Pecheur

Dear Steve,

It's been a long time since I've put pen to paper, but I'm in the process of redoing my house, so my fishing has taken a back seat.

The spring 2000 mag is excellent! There is a lot of info to get your teeth into; so here goes

### 1) PARTNERS IN SLIME: -

In the first paragraph it says that the eels will be on "a specific patrol route". If this was the case, then surely our job would be made a lot easier as we could just cast to where we know the eels will be and our bait will be picked up at some point during the session.

Surely during the colder months when the roach/rudd and perch head for deeper water instead of the warmer shallows as during the summer the eels will follow. I do not believe that they have a "patrol route" but head for where the small fish are present and then feed at random, picking off the small fish and heading for the nearest patch of weed or deeper water in which to digest said item of food.

### 2) PRESSURIZING EELS. PART 2: -

"John Sidley..... never took records of any markings"  
Yet in his book on eels he says that he **DID** take notice of any strange markings such as one eye; split fins; scars etc. Maybe he did not record it, but he did take notice.

On the subject of "indicator pull outs" and "Aborted runs". Could it be that the eels are taking the baits just for the sake of it??

A 14lb pike in my local pit had a nasty habit of attacking 2lb tench (I had the misfortune of having this happen)! Various other tench have been caught with the same battle scars on them. I don't think it was feeding as such, but just "having a go", the same as they attack plugs and spinners which look nothing like fish but trigger the "attack" instinct. So could the eels be attacking lives just for the sake of it?

I've just tried livebaiting in my local lake and had lumps taken out of 4" lives, from eels which judging by the size of the lumps missing had **NO** chance of getting the whole fish in it's mouth.

The **HAVE A GO INSTICT** perhaps?

### 3) EEL SIGHTINGS: -

My brother and a friend of his were standing either side of a lock on my local river when a barge came through. They watched as the barge went down the lock and drained the water away.

"Look at that. I've got the tail of an eel over here" says Peter my brother's mate.

"Where?"

"On the lock gate cross member"

"You can't have"

"Why not?"

"Cos I've got its head over here"

Yes the fish was the length of a single lock gate. Both of them just stood there staring at this huge fish for 10 minutes just to make sure it was what they thought.

My brother says it was definitely an eel " 'cos its fin was swaying and he's not blind!"

#### 4) THE DR. COULSON ARTICLE: -

Fascinating. I'm going to have to go over it another half a dozen times.

The bit about the colour of his eels is interesting. The only "silver" eel I've seen from my local pit was a 1/2 pound bootlace. All the others have been olive green. I have also seen one jet-black fish of 2lb. Whilst on this subject, last year I had three fish on an overnight session. One was a deep brown and the other two olive green. I sacked them for a photo in the morning. Well what kind of fish are we really dealing with? I opened the sack in the morning and there was two brown and one olive green/brown fish in my sack!!!!

Chameleon eels?? What next!

#### 5) A VERY DIFFICULT SWIM TO FISH: -

'Only the lonely' has my full admiration for his persistence. This is what eel fishing is about. How many of us have this fellows persistence (there's that word again) in getting the best from our eeling? The idea with the table tennis ball is superb.

I take my hat off to a man who in my opinion is becoming another John Sidley. He deserves all the big eels he is catching. Tight lines to you Barry, you are doing us proud.

Again an excellent read which has fuelled my enthusiasm once again to above all **"THINK"** about what I am doing.

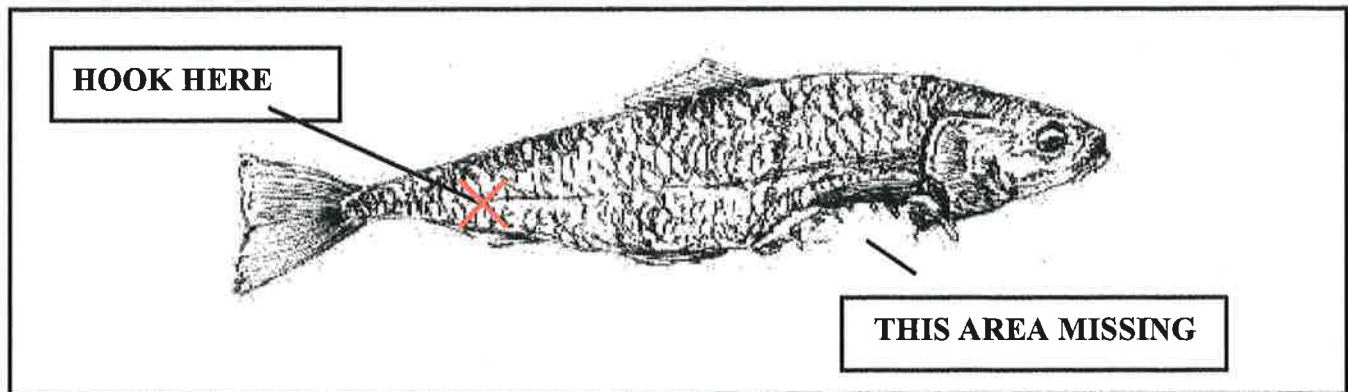
Now I need help!

I'm confused!

I was lead to believe that eels attack a livey from behind/underneath.

So I've been hooking them in the tail root: - It made sense at the time. Not any more.

I had 3 roach mauled by eels on Wednesday evening and not one fish on the bank. The eels are hitting my lives **AT THE FRONT**.



As you can see this is what happened to my first roach. The second and third came back with the whole head **SQUASHED FLAT**.

These lives were 4" long. I tried a smaller 2" bait but could not tempt another bite. I am going to try a new rig tonight (Friday), I'll let you know how I get on.

Yours

'Pecs' Pecheur.

PS I hope they don't put a blanket ban on livebaiting, I'm only just getting to grips with it!

TYPICAL

PPS Sorry about my handwriting. I had a tiny splinter of metal removed from my right eye and only have good vision in my left at the moment!!! It's on the mend and should be back to normal soon.

## Fun & Frustration – The Eel

By Andy Atkins

I felt it was time I offered something hopefully of interest to some of the people that seem to never endingly spare the time to write articles, which are of great interest and use to me! However as my knowledge is quite limited in comparison to many of the other anglers and I'm still to experiment with off bottom rigs and live baiting I thought I'd write something about my first night session in search exclusively for eels.

Most of my eel fishing takes place in a small Stillwater in Surrey within easy driving distance of my home. Although slightly on the expensive side for a student at £15 for 24 hours it holds some amazing fish with a real chance of success with catfish to 30lb, carp to 28lb and more importantly eels to over 6lb.

My first night session on the water was at the start of June last year, I had persuaded my slightly over protective mother that it was a good idea to leave me on the bankside water with my brother and a friend, for an experimental overnight session. I had spent the previous weeks talking to the wardens and numerous catfish anglers and was able to ascertain that the best spot to fish was at the near end of the lake where a deep hole dropped off from around 8ft to nearly 25ft. The other angler's that I spoke to suggested to me that a size 8 with a single lobworm would produce a good chance of one of the eels that average nearly 2lb. I duly took the advice that was offered and set my two 2 ¼ LB T.C rods up with standard J. S Rigs, one with a size 8 and a single lob and the other with a half a roach, in the hope that I would be able to find the dominant type of eel.

With my hopes sky high I sat back on what must have been the best night for eel fishing I could have possibly hoped for. The weather was thundery and close, with the midges and mosquitoes having a field day on any part of my body, which hadn't been, soaked in jungle formulae and the sun completely obscured by heavy clouds that suggested a very stormy night ahead.

As time went on my hopes of what might be to come grew and when the bobbin on my left-hand rod baited with a roach head started to rise and line slowly started to peel off the spool I was really unsure what to expect. I left the bait a couple of seconds longer and struck into absolutely no resistance. The words that followed were unrepeatable but I duly wound in and the bait showed a broad set of teeth marks that suggested one of the large head of pike present in the water had taken the bait and not the desperately hoped for eel.

As sods law predicts my other rod decided that it no longer liked the location of the lake and made a very rapid beeline towards a very snaggy looking tree. As with before I wound done to have the gut turning experience of connecting with absolutely nothing. It was about 10:30 p. m now and the light was fading so my stylish new head lamp came into play for the first time as I immediately blinded myself trying to turn it on and then all those around as I turned to admire the strength of the beam. I re-baited and cast both rods to the edge of the hole once more and settled back. The action wasn't long coming with a run on my worm rod once again leading to nothing, apart from some rather annoyed carp fishermen on the other bank, who had to endure my continual resetting of alarms and swingers. This process continued for the next hour or so, with 5 unsuccessful runs until about 11:30 when the runs ceased and the whole lake was allowed to relax and catch some sleep. I think I to, must have nodded off slightly, as when I awoke I noticed that my worm rod had not been set on the alarm. The bobbin had risen off of the needle and the line on my reel was rapidly diminishing, I wound down expecting another missed run and more frustration, only to be met by the easily recognizable pull of a half decent eel. Two minutes of fumbling around with the landing net and I managed to net my prize at the first attempt. Much to my disappointment my younger compatriot's appeared to have called it a night, so after some frantic attempts to wake them. I weighed and photographed her before releasing what was the best evidence I could hope for that the eels that were only rarely spoken of, were in fact present and as marvelous as I had hoped. I didn't sleep for the rest of the night and at around 3:00 the heavens opened and we were suddenly engulfed in a torrential downpour

These are obviously not the kind of amazing fish that I often see and hear about in the press and NAC newsletters, but fish that proved to me how enjoyable eel fishing really is, and how amazing it is that we are able to have a steady and very interesting set of newsletters and opportunities for like minded people to share in what they enjoy!

## Trentham Gardens Fish-in

May 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>

By Damian Wood

**Members present: - Damain Wood, Jimmy Jolley, Mark Smethurst, Malcolm Law, Billy Law (junior), Barry McConnell, Peter Drabble, Chris Siddall, Robert Siddall, Nick Rose, Andrew Rose & Jason Morgan.**

Trentham gardens is probably the most picturesque day ticket water I have seen in a long time, surrounded by ever-green forests, an estate mansion, with wild deer drinking from the water's edge, not to mention the varied wild life that inhabit this vast amount of land owned by a lord or a member of royalty in days gone by.

The lake was originally excavated around the late 1600's and made much larger in a later period. At some point in its life there must have been a river that passed around the original lake? But now the water is about 50+ acres, with two islands in the middle. The old riverbed runs around one side of the island and here it is slightly deeper than the rest of the lake, which averages around 5ft.

### Friday (1<sup>st</sup>) night:

This time we had more leniency from last year on where we could fish, when we were only allocated the far side. Trees, marginal sedges and rushes surround the other side, and on this ideal looking side there was myself, Jimmy Jolley, Mark Smethurst, Malcolm and Billy Law, fishing the shallower end of the lake, in open water. It is nice to see juniors on fish-ins again, he totally enjoyed himself, even though he didn't catch anything, but neither did any of us on this side. Farther up, near the island were Andrew Rose and Robert Siddall, who also blanked for the whole weekend.

The weather turned for the worst Friday night with considerable cloud cover at first, and the wind blowing into the shallows. About 10 p.m. the wind stopped, and with a still air and clear skies, combined with a fast rising full moon, the temperature plummeted to just 5 degrees above, but this didn't deter a few eels from feeding.

On the other side Barry McConnell and the "Anguilla Gorilla" Peter Drabble fished opposite to us, with Peter having a small eel of a 1lb., using a J.S. presentation, with lobworms as bait. Chris Siddall, on the other hand, fished in front of the island and Nick Rose fished twenty yards or so to the left of him. Just before dark Chris had a very good eel of 3lb 9oz to a roach head presented on a J.S. rig, fished at mid range.

### Saturday (2<sup>nd</sup>) night:

Barry and Peter had a walk around the lake in the afternoon and moved further down towards Nick. Later on in the evening Jason Morgan arrived and fished near Barry and Peter. Jason was getting runs almost immediately while chatting to Mark Smethurst on the mobile phone, only to stop in mid sentence to attend another screaming run. The wind changed around again for at least the third time in the night, blowing in a N.E. direction, up the lake. The rain had been non-stop from 12 noon till 2 a.m. but Peter Drabble came out on top producing a good eel of 3lb 10oz on a J.S. rig at range, with worms being the winning bait.

On the Sunday morning Chris also had a perch, an absolute monster of 3lb 2oz to fish baits, Jason also managed to get a big perch around the 2lb mark, while Barry lost a good pike, estimated at around 15lb, which snaffled his worms on a sink and draw method. Unfortunately there isn't much else to report on the eel front, only that when Mark Smethurst was setting up, he opened his bed chair while talking to some passers by, and load a "Swank Continentals" magazines fell out of his bedchair. Mark made a mad dash in embarrassment to his bivvy and didn't emerge until they left. Trying to convince us that they weren't his, he then spent the next hour blaming Peter Waterfield who he had borrowed the chair off. Then he disappeared again for another 2 hrs? (Earlier in the week Peter phoned me and told me what he was doing and asked me to make sure there were plenty of people around when he opened the chair).

I would recommend this fish-in to everyone. If you like picturesque waters, Trentham wins hand down, but the fishing isn't easy as you can see from the results of the last two trips combined it has only produced three good 3lb+ eels. Trentham Gardens has the potential to throw up some really big eels due to the lack of eels caught, compared to the combined rod hours by those members present. Only time will tell what real potential Trentham may hold in its depths.

## Rickmansworth Fish-in

30<sup>th</sup> June – 2<sup>nd</sup> July

By Nick Rose

We arrived at the lakes around teatime and I started off well and followed what looked like a road around to the first lake. A little old lady then told me that I shouldn't be driving on the footpath, Oops!

After we had parked up in the car park, Andrew and myself walked round to Batchworth Lake, this is the one with a ski jump in it. Opposite the ski jump we found Chris Siddall and his youngest son and NAC member Alex. I suspect that 'Sad Sid' was using him as an excuse to use extra rods, but he totally denied the allegation. Being a sociable person I set up near to him (he had some cider) and Andrew went down to the corner swim. Further around 150 yards was the organiser, Paul Smith, in a double swim with his mate Robert Haig.

All rods were set and I settled down for a chat with Chris, then at 10 o'clock Paul's mate Robert came round and told us that Paul had just caught an eel of 5LB 03oz, on a deadbait. It was 38½ inches long with an 8½ inch girth. We were all well pleased, apart from a promising weekend ahead it was a new PB for Paul and just rewards for organising the trip. Then 15 minutes later, Chris had a run on a roach head and a 3lb 02oz eel graced the net. This was the fourth 3lber on the trot that I have netted for Chris, I will knock the next bugger off!

The next day came around and it was spent photoing Paul's eel and dodging the bailiffs. It was a strange situation, where the day permits were paid to the council and the night permits to the syndicate?? If I had paid for all our rods, including Andrew's, the cost would have been over £80. Needless to say I moved a few rods around during the day.

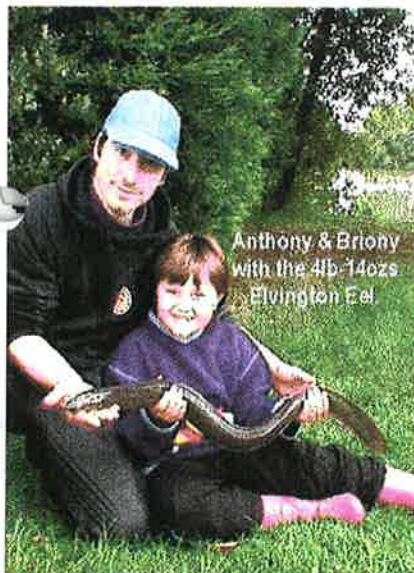
Les Corsie turned up to fish the second night and he had a long chat to us, before disappearing to the far side of the lake (dodging the bailiff I suspect).

That night no eels were caught which is generally the norm on most fish-ins. We all had a good time, many thanks to Paul for organising the trip and congratulations on a new PB.

## ELVINGTON REVISITED.

4<sup>TH</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> – 6<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST

By Anthony "B.T" Jolley.



Anthony & Briony  
with the 4lb. 14ozs  
Elvington Eel

I'd had 5 days of Briony asking, "when am I going fishing all night?" and the longest week in working history just dragged out. Friday was booked as a days holiday from work and Briony and I set off to pick up Phil Lukins, then we would be on our way over the dales, out of Red Rose county into that White Rose area of the country.

We made good time until the car started to play up but we still managed to arrive at around 4:00p.m. Most of the other members were already there, these being (as I remember): - Steve Ormrod, Malcolm Law, Billy Law, Jimmy Jolley, James Angeletta, Barry McConnell, with Phil Lukins, Briony Jolley, my self and the last to arrive was Pete Drabble.

I decided to take my 7 year old daughter, and N.A.C member Briony to Elvington, as I knew the lake would be an ideal introduction to night fishing, being safe from the road with flat banking on the side we were pegged and with other children around to alleviate the boredom that I thought she was going to experience. What I wasn't expecting was for her to be so interested in the fishing. What with little fluffy rabbits and colourful birds to go and look at, she really did take to it, catching the baiters and enjoying the company of fellow junior member, Billy Law.

We had been drawn in peg No4 but when Barry had asked Malcolm which was peg No2, he inadvertently put him in mine, so we settled in his. As the night drew in we could hear the sound of bite alarms intermittently breaking the silence, especially in Barry's peg, however, most of the takes were from carp. I think I had a one run, with the live bait being expertly removed from the hook without a strike contacting any resistance, and lots of takes on worm on the off bottom rigs.

Morning arrived and I had to go and try to get the car fixed, Malcolm kept an eye on Briony as she and Billy played together. 1½ hours later and I was back, more bait snatching and our Briony was into it again. She saw Barry catch

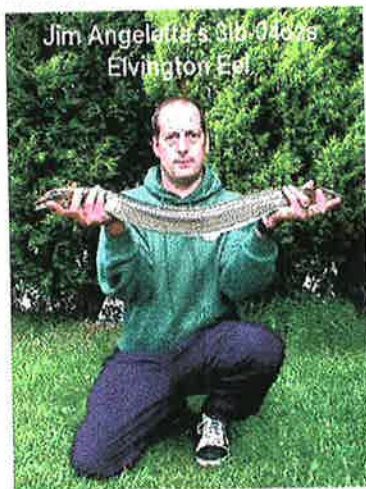


a carp and was happy to go round and have a look at all the carp he caught that weekend, as well as go around to the other end of the lake to see the two eels that her uncle Jimmy had caught on the first night.

There was the usual socialising and chat over the weekend and as the light faded I had explained to Briony that she should have an early night. We both turned in at about 11.00p.m trying to be quiet as we were in a corner of the lake. I felt a bit paranoid about any noise from me walking around the swim, so I made a conscious decision to keep all movement to a minimum. At 1:30a.m I had a take on the off bottom worm which resembled some of the takes I'd had on the first night, all of which I missed. Then at 2:30a.m I had a take on the Dyson rigged live bait Roach, which was once again missed. I began to think that it was my missed chance, as I wasn't convinced that the takes to the worms were eels. I recast a fresh "livey" and at 2:45a.m had a take, I met the take with a solid strike and soon played an eel over the net which weighed in at 3lb-03ozs. I was pleased as most of the other members had caught and Briony had said "never mind dad! it doesn't matter if you don't catch an eel". I was happy knowing that I could show her an eel that I'd caught when she woke up.

I lay back down on the floor of "Moon Base Alpha" and dozed off, to be woken at 4:45a.m by a short, fast take on the same rod. I wasted no time and was met by the "see-saw" fight of a good eel. The fish went under the other rods and just as I saw Barry move as though he was going to come around to help out I heaved the fish over the waiting net. I weighed her with Malc's scales at 4lb-14ozs, I was in shock again, my biggest stillwater eel and my 4<sup>th</sup> 4lb plus of the season, one I'll never forget.

We all met up for photos in the morning, the catch list was as follows: -



Jim Angeletta, 3lb-03ozs  
Elvington Ed.

### Seniors

Jimmy Jolley. = 3lb-02ozs and 2lb-09ozs.  
Jim Angeletta. = 3lb-04ozs and 1lb.  
Pete Drabble. = 3lb-01ozs and 1lb.  
Malcolm Law. No eels.  
Steve Ormrod. No eels.  
Barry McConnell. = 2lb-01ozs.  
Anthony Jolley. = 4lb-14ozs and 3lb-03ozs.  
Phil Lukins. No eels

### Juniors

Billy Law. No eels.  
Briony Jolley. No eels.

We returned the eels and left as though we hadn't even been there.

I would like to thank all the members who fished with me over the weekend, a special thanks to Malcolm for "Baby Sitting", and to Barry for not minding Briony and Billy constantly going to look at all those carp he loves to catch when eel fishing (plus not wanting his swim back). Also, thanks to Steve Ormrod for the pic's.

Nice one lads, and we'll fish together soon. B.T.

## **Elvington Fish-in. Week 2**

August 11<sup>th</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> 13<sup>th</sup>

By Chris "Sad Sid" Siddall

The fish-in for the second week at Elvington this year, was due to be attended by 10 members and we were all expecting a good session after a 4lb 14oz eel had been taken the previous week.

I arrived at the lake along with my son Robert, having taken almost 5 hrs to travel the 211 miles from Milton Keynes via Lincoln. When we arrived, Nick and Andrew Rose, Stuart Dean, Mark Handley-wood and Jason Tyndall were already at the lake.

After a brief chat (and minor mutually agreed swim swapping) we all set up ready for the night. As darkness fell and the pleasure anglers around the lake vacated the swims we were still 3 members short.

Several baits were cast into position & it wasn't long before Stuart hooked and lost a big fish on livebait but this was to prove the only action before Damian Wood and Mark Smethurst turned up at 11.00pm, having been to most areas of Yorkshire whilst lost. Around midnight Ken Ward finally arrived to complete the expected party.

As dawn broke it had been a quite night with only one eel being caught of 2lb 2oz falling to one of my rods on worm. Mark Handley-Wood was forced to leave due to work commitments and the rest of Saturday was spent killing time waiting for darkness to fall. Mark Smethurst caught an eel of 2lb (ish) during the day again on worm and all the young lads had some fun catching several carp including a few doubles on bread from the lily pads.

The second night arrived and apart from Stuart we were all in the same swims, Stuart was on the previously unfished far bank. Before long Stuart was again into a fish on livebait which was the best fish so far at 3lb 10oz. This was followed by an eel of 2lb 10oz to one of my rods again on worm. Andrew then caught a boot on one of Jason's rods, Jason had an eel of 2lb+ on one of Roberts rods & Andrew finally caught one of about 2lb on his own rod. All these fish were on worm.

So that was it 6 eels to 3lb 10oz (+ the boot) & all but one caught on worm. Now to look forward to the Milton Keynes Fish-in in September.

## Milton Keynes (Beacon Lake) Fish-in

15<sup>th</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> August

By Chris Siddall

As the week leading up to this fish-in was the one when most of Britain was queuing up for petrol, it was amazing that anyone managed to attend.

I had received a phone call from Graham Wilkes, who lives fairly close by, to say that he would be coming. So at least there would be two of us.

I arrived at the water about 5pm to find Nick Rose just unloading his van. He had been there a short while and had looked around the lake and Damian Wood and Malc Law were already in place, having arrived some time earlier. Graham was also set up. So for the first night that was the total. Not great but given the circumstances it could have been a lot worse.

The weather was good and the lake looked perfect, so we were all quite hopeful as darkness fell. Due to the layout of the lake, it was not advisable to leave you tackle unattended, as you could not keep an eye on your kit. This hampered socialising somewhat.

As is often the case on waters around Milton Keynes no eels were caught on the first night

On the Saturday we were joined by Dominic Pecheur (and partner) and Wayne Staddon. Quite a crowd considering.

Some of the crew gave the adjacent pub an inspection during the afternoon. The second night was also a blank eel wise, but Dominic had a net full of bream and perch on worm. The big plus point about the weekend was that nobody came around to collect any money, so we all had free fishing.

Next year we will hold a fish-in on a different lake, close to Milton Keynes, where Graham Wilkes has had eels to 5lb 2oz this year. Hopefully it will be third time lucky.

# Archive Articles

## Introduction

The following article has been in the hands of the production team for a couple of years. We have been waiting for the right moment to include it in the magazine and now it seems that the moment has arrived. Because this article is about winter eel fishing, we thought that it might give some encouragement to the members who are already out there suffering the winter weather in pursuit of an eel or two. We also thought that it might even give a few members who haven't tried to catch a cold water eel some impetus and ideas to go out and give it a go. Kevin Richmond was a member of the National Anguilla Club from 1974 until 1979 and during this time he served as Records Officer for one year and for a time was Public Relations Officer for the club. Kevin was rated by many members as "One of the best" up there with John Sidley and Dave Holman etc. Unfortunately Kevin left the club after some disagreements with the Committee and subsequently went on to be one of the founder members of the Eel Study Group.

# Cold Water Eeling

By Kevin Richmond

Back in the 'good old days', when carp fishing was still shrouded with mystery and specialist anglers were far and few between, the only anglers who ventured out into the winter wastelands fished either for chub, pike or roach. Eel anglers belonged to that race of fishermen who, as soon as the first frosts arrived, packed up their equipment and retired until spring. During those dark, dreary winters they would wax lyrical about humid, still nights; about the sounds of bite alarms breaking the inky-black silence of some mist-shrouded lake, and relived the memories of enormous eels thrashing the surface of the water in their attempts to escape. This was all accepted with a certain degree of resigned satisfaction, as they were safe in the knowledge that six months hence the whole cycle would start once again.

Times change. Now, sharing the bank with an ever-increasing number of winter specialists are a small, yet growing, number of big eel anglers who are convinced that the best chance of a real 'monster' is between the months of October through to March.

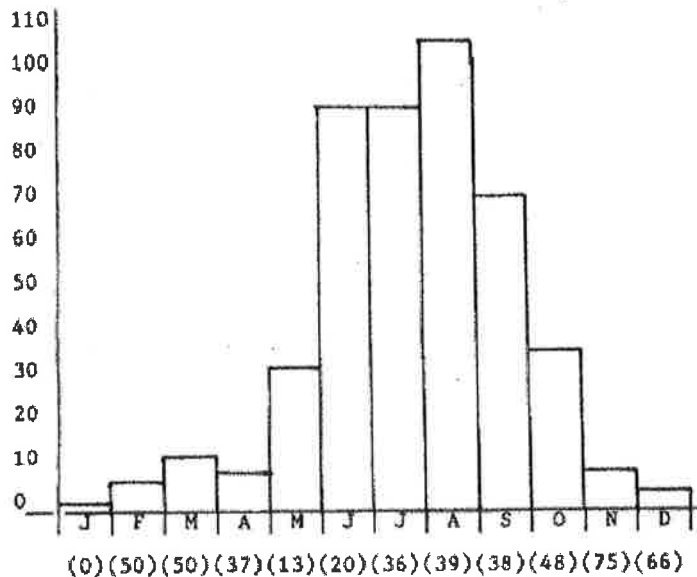
Every winter the pages of the angling weeklies are graced with the photographs of very large eels taken by pike anglers, usually during the day. Invariably, these fish are a total accident and have picked up a ledgered sea fish bait intended for their larger, more toothy brethren. Yet even today a large percentage of eel anglers still look upon the months of October through to March as some sort of eel angler's 'no man's land'.

It is still generally accepted (wrongly I must add) that the magic water temperature to start fishing for eels is 50 degrees F. Anything below this, so we are told, and the eel hardly ever feeds. There is some basis of truth in this – up to a point. Being cold blooded, all fish, even pike and chub, will tend to 'slow down' during periods of low water temperatures. Eels are no exception. They simply do not require as much food to sustain themselves due to the fact that they will take longer to digest an item that they have eaten. The trap to fall into is to equate low metabolic rate with no feeding whatsoever. This is not the case. What will happen is that the eel population will feed in greatly shortened feeding cycles? It may last a couple of hours during a 15-hour winter night; it may only last a couple of minutes!

"Ah yes," you might say, "but what **PROOF** have you that it is worth winter fishing for eels?" Table 1 shows a breakdown of the reported 4lb plus eels for the years 1985 – 1990. From a total of 453 4LB plus eels that I have records of, 61 eels were taken between October and March, the best two weighing 9LB 13oz and 8LB 01oz. This represents around 13% of the total. Interestingly, if we consider 5LB plus eels, taken as a percentage of each month's total catch, then the winter months produce a much higher ratio of bigger fish.

It is one thing to know large eels are taken during the winter, it is another to know what baits are most effective. Table 2 details the baits used to catch the 61 winter eels mentioned above. As can be seen, worms and

**Table 1. 4lb+ eels by month 1985-1990**



**Table 2. Successful winter eel baits. 4lb+ eels 1985 - 1990**

Freshwater deadbaits	13 eels	(46%)
Freshwater livebaits	7 eels	(43%)
Worms	18 eels	(50%)
Sea fish deadbaits	15 eels	(70%)
Casters	1 eel	(---)
Paste bait	1 eel	(---)
Meat	1 eel	(---)
Maggots	3 eels	(66%)
Boily	1 eel	(---)
Water snail	1 eel	(---)

**Figures in brackets indicate % of 5LB+ eels on each bait**

freshwater dead baits account for half the captures. Live baits also accounted for some very big eels, all taken by pike anglers during the day. However, 15 eels were taken on sea fish baits and on some of my waters a bait such as sprats will out-fish a freshwater bait several times over. It is even more noteworthy that over half of these 15 fish weighed over 6lb.

Since I started to seriously winter eel fish I have become aware of a significant change in the eel's feeding habit. There seems to be a definite switch from night to day feeding during the months of October/November, reverting back to night feeding during December to February before once again experiencing a short burst of daylight activity in March. During these daylight feeding periods sea fish are undoubtedly the most effective baits to use.

That it can be slow is undeniable; sitting it out in the teeth of a storm for maybe one run does take a certain amount of perseverance. Yet there are a number of factors that can swing the balance in the eel angler's favour. Water choice is the most important. Generally, the higher the overall population of eels the more likely the chances of success. There is no denying that the slow, hard waters of summer can produce fish but it can be a mind numbing experience. I know of an eel angler who fished a gravel pit famous for its large eels for a complete winter. He had TWO runs. One produced a 4LB plus, the other he missed!

Rivers and drains, especially those in flood, can be almost guaranteed to produce eels. Slacks and slow, deep areas, off the main flow, are the hot spots on the waters that I fish.

It is also worth thinking about whose winter we are considering – ours or the eels. We have much more adverse weather conditions to tolerate than the fish. It takes a special kind of masochist to sit it out all night, night after night with clear skies, sub-zero air temperatures, bivvies frosting over white and with no guarantee that you are going to catch. However, I and my eeling companions have taken eels in water temperatures as low as 38 degrees F. whilst we have had multiple catches of big eels in water temperatures of 40 – 45 degrees F.

Similarly, there is always the chance of a bonanza whenever a deep depression rushes in from the south-west. My heaviest winter eel came during such an appalling night. The rain came down in sheets, the wind constantly threatened to carry the broly and myself away, the drain was heavily flooded and running through like a train. Yet when over 40in. of winter eel lay in the folds of my landing net I could not of cared less....!

One of the most important things to remember is that winter eels are far more aware of resistance than during the summer. No longer will they pull the rods of the rests if allowed to! Instead the fish will take the bait and slowly back away. Any form of check on this movement and invariably the bait will be dropped. Fishing for small mouthed eels with a single lobworm during the winter has been one of the most frustrating experiences that I have ever come across. I would get short sharp 6in. pulls – nothing else. Eventually, I solved the problem by using a small piece of air-injected lobworm on a size 10 hook and 15LB silkworm trace material. Six eels between 2 - 3½LB made it all worthwhile.

A major headache when using deadbaits has been the number of dropped runs when fishing off-bottom baits, which still produces eels in even the most adverse conditions. The problem was isolated as the wire traces being used. The eels must have felt the stiffness of the wire on their body when mouthing the baits. As soon as we changed over to high abrasion resistant Dacron/Kryston the catch rates increased dramatically. This has lead me to stop using wire as a trace material in all my eel fishing.

No doubt this will infuriate pike anglers, and I will receive the usual rush of letters saying that I will constantly get bite-offs from jack pike taking my eel baits. However, since using two particular materials (multi-strand and far cheaper Kevlar bowstring) I have not been bitten off **ONCE**. My last two pike, weighed 13LB 06oz and 10LB 02oz, leapt about all over the place and were hooked inside the jaw. The trace material was undamaged.

As an afterthought, whilst I have made an effort to find a very abrasive resistant trace material in case pike come along, what about carp anglers? I would love to know just how many pike pick up fish meal based boilies during the course of a year and are hooked and bitten off. Who in their right minds would suggest that carp anglers use wire traces with their fish based baits just in case a pike turned up?

When I go out for a winter eel fishing session I am, first and foremost, fishing for eels. Not eel fishing with the hope that a 20LB pike may come along, or eel fishing with an extra carp rig out 'just in case'. If I hook into a pike I will either land it or lose it. Whether it is 5LB or 50LB is irrelevant to me, as I am eel angling, not pike fishing. This may strike some as a rather single-minded attitude but it is the only way to experience regular success.

Eel angling is not the easiest occupation at the best of times. We fish for a species that cannot be spotted in a water. We cannot realistically have more than a wild guess at the maximum ceiling weight they might obtain and, as yet, are still a long way from finding a method and/or bait that will regularly put 7LB plus fish on the bank. Despite this there is a magic in our quest that seems to have disappeared in some other branches of our sport.

There are no closely guarded secrets with baits or rigs, everything is shared amongst friends. There are no mad stampedes to fish the 'in waters' – who is to say if a water holds an 8oz or 8LB eel? Luckily for us the

very act of trying to subdue 3ft of writhing slime and muscle on the bank side, in order to take a photograph, is enough to put off 90 percent of anglers!

As a result, progress has been painfully slow. We have through trial and error, found that cold moths of the year will paradoxically offer the best chance of catching the largest of what has always been looked upon as a summer species, simply because they seem to 'switch' onto sea fish baits.

Should you ever be out winter fishing for pike, carp, or whatever and happen to stumble across a lone figure huddled up in some God forsaken corner of a freezing lake or river, take pity on him. If he is sat there smelling of chopped sprats and mackerel with a far-away gleam in his eyes it is likely that you have found a winter eel angler. Be kind to him as it can be a heart breaking experience fishing for that most difficult of captures – a large, a very large, cold water eel.

## ENGLISH ROSE

By Anthony "B.T" Jolley.

Have you ever had THAT feeling? One that tells you that there's something special waiting to happen. Or have you ever noticed a strange change in the atmosphere around you, or smelt that strong unmistakable smell of fish in the air around a particular swim on a lake that you may have fished lots of times but never smelt that smell before?

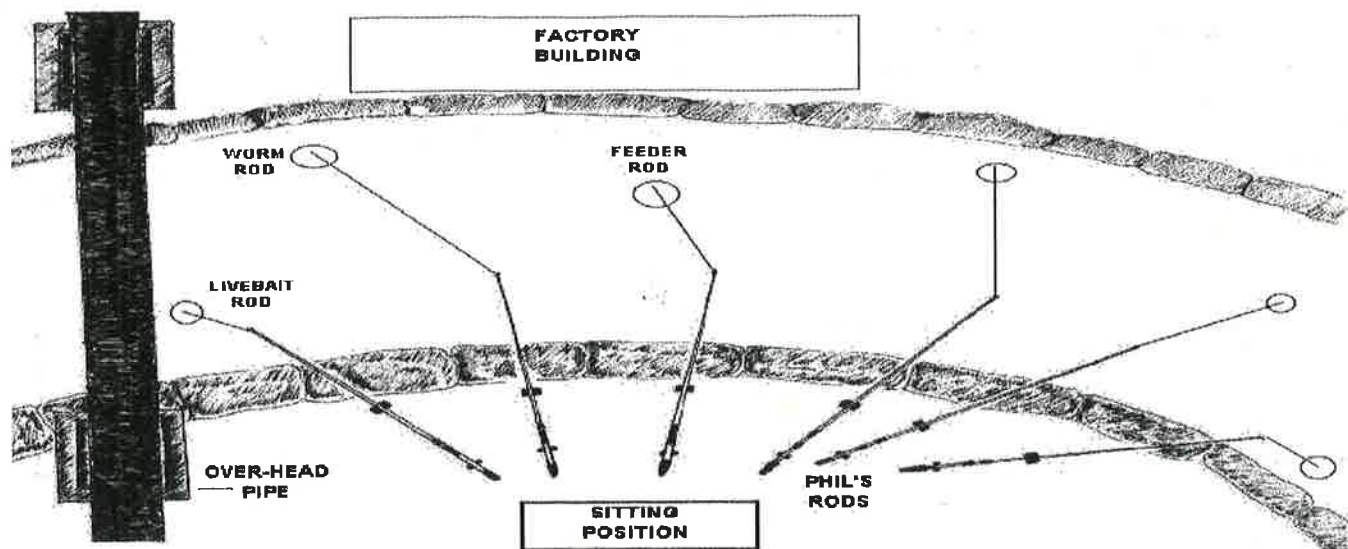
I've smelt, and had that special feeling a few times and something special nearly always happens. I know that Jimmy won't mind me mentioning that he too has experienced the same as me, and at the same time. When we used to Tench fish we could often smell the Tench before they started feeding, and similar to when we used to Carp fish together. We would often say it at the same time, "Can you smell um", "Ya! any time now then", and one of us would be away.

You may think that this is a strange start to an article (or maybe that I'm just strange, full stop! Must be our up bringing, eh Jim?) but I would like to take your minds back 12 months to an article called "Hills Have Eyes", Part two. In the article I mention that Phil Lukins and I looked at a few stretches of canal on this particular trip. One I said could produce a very big Eel. There was nothing special about the look of the place, just a feeling I had at the time and had bugged me for the following year. Now you may ask me why we didn't fish it then. If I gave you a honest answer it would be that I was scared of what the feeling meant to me and that I didn't feel ready to catch, or worse still, loose a fish of a life time through inexperience on my part. Pathetic you may think, but if you know me, you would understand how I have purposely kept away from the "Big" eel areas around me, so I could work my way up until I felt I was worthy of a special eel. I don't seem to sound arrogant and I'm fully aware that there are far better anglers who have fished for decades going all-out to catch that fish of a lifetime. So I hope I've not lost any friends amongst you?

Back to my story or should it be the start. I had looked upon my fishing as a sort of "apprenticeship" were I would learn as much as I could, without rushing ahead until I felt that I deserved to catch, and hold a very good Eel. Phil and I had spoken about this on a number of occasions. The end of last season saw us make a conscious decision to target the "bigger" Eels in our canal. We decided that we would do five or six sessions up until May and then go all-out (I actually did sixteen session through out the winter with Phil not too far behind for no fish to either of our rods).

May found us looking back over the likely areas that I had filed in my memory, the places that we had looked at and given the thumbs up to, (every time Phil and I go fishing we do a "recky" of other areas we think we should look at). So we decided that we should fish the "English Rose" stretch of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal (I named it that after the Jam song, where they sing, "No matter where I roam, I will return to my English Rose"). I had that "feeling" so strongly, so we fished there first.

We arrived at 8p.m and found baitfish hard to get. We set up three rods each, I baited with a live roach on a Dyson rig to my left margin, worm also on a Dyson rig to the centre-channel on my left and ledger fished worm to the centre-far shelf directly in front of me. Phil fished a similar set up, but I couldn't be exact as to what bait was fished where, although I



**Fig 1**

know the positions he fished (See fig 1 for how we set-up). 9:15p.m saw a fast take on the feeder fished worm with a missed strike. So I recast and 5 minutes later had a 1½lb Hybrid on the bank. I didn't want the activity of the Roach/Bream so I replaced the worm with a dead gudgeon.

All went quiet as we settled down in the darkness, the breeze dropped and that feeling came back to me again. I was buzzing by now and I told Phil that there was something special around for one of us. 10:45 and the live roach was away. I hit it straight away and I knew instantly that I had only ever hooked one other eel that felt this way. Phil did an excellent job, as he always does with the net and I was relieved to have the hook length unclipped and the fish clear of the canal. Back in front of our swim I laid the net on the floor while I put my rod back on the rests, when I crouched down and turned my head torch beam on to the net. I moved the mesh to one side and caught the sight that I will never ever forget, that of the side of my eel purple and metallic looking and very thick. She didn't look very long in the net but when I saw the thickness I just couldn't stop saying "Oh my God! Oh my God!" and lip-hooked as well. I just told Phil to weigh it 'cos I couldn't look. He did this and told me 4lb-03ozs. I was made up and kept on saying "Yes! Yes!" then he said, "I better lift it off the ground now". I was absolutely gob-smacked when Phil said "5lb-03ozs". I was still in shock when we sacked the eel up and I had to sit down for a moment only, as the off bottom worm rod was away. I was stunned and thought it was Phil's

rod but when he moved towards my net, I knew it was mine again. I made contact and the rod buckled and arced over right through to the butt. I couldn't stop it as it went absolutely crazy. I went to pieces as I'd just had a 5lb-03oz. This fish felt like a monster, then all went solid. I couldn't believe it, then as Phil said "Have you lost it, or is it snagged?" I felt the slightest movement through the rod and braided line, I put all the pressure I could manage on the rod. We could hear the rod creaking under the stress, as Phil hid behind me waiting for something to go, rod, line or fish. Then there was a mass of bubbles as I felt a very heavy weight move slowly, inch by inch towards me. I tried to keep the weight off the bottom and moving, then suddenly all hell broke loose as the eel smashed the surface with its tail along with a large branch. Phil netted everything at once, eel and snag. We removed the tree branch plus a length of barbed wire from the net and carried the eel away from the waters edge, it looked very long in the net. However, I could tell that it was not as big as the first, but I didn't care. Once again Phil weighed her this time 4lb-02ozs, I



**Tony's Hat-Trick of canal Eels  
5lb-03ozs, 4lb-02ozs and 2lb-12ozs**

was doing the Conga and Mexican Wave up and down the canal bank while Phil put her in the sack with her big sister. As I turned around Phil tried to throw me in, but all in good fun. An hour later I recast after my tongue was sore from all the Motor Mouth talking I was doing. Phil had a couple of runs during the night, but as for my rods, they were silent. Ask me if I cared.

4:15a.m and the dead Gudgeon was away, a few minutes later a 2lb-12ozs eel was safely in the net and I'd had a hat trick. At first light we photographed them and returned them all strong and healthy.

Two weeks later saw us back at English Rose with no action until 00:45a.m when I had a run on a live Roach that was the same size as the other, 1½ inches. I made contact and instantly had to follow it up the canal with my Dyson float just braking the surface from time to time. I put pressure on to stop the fight in its tracks, Phil netted her first time and we had her, ours at last, and she weighed 4lb-07ozs, she was long at 43¾ inches and had a girth of 8½ inches, very impressive.

I would like to say that I really would like to thank Phil Lukins, because I know that I wouldn't have caught these eels and many others without his help and commitment to the cause. We have always said that we are a team and that if either one of us catches then we have both caught. You see we've always worked together and never against each other, thanks Phil. I must also thank Damian and my brother Jimmy for proving my suspicions and all the rumours right the year before.

## NO ONE SAID IT'S GOING TO BE EASY

By Graham Wilkes

Having just begun eel fishing seriously, It didn't take me too long to appreciate just how hard it really was. At first I instantly thought that it was going to be easy, let me explain.

I decided to fish for eels at the start of July (as my work slackens off at that time of year). The 1<sup>st</sup> July saw me on the bank at a 30 acre lake, which I decided to fish, for 4 reasons.

1. It was on part of a complex which I am a member.
2. It offers a whole variety of features.
3. I did a little bit of research of this specific lake, which resulted in reports of eels to 4lb being caught by pleasure anglers.
4. The complex has a clubhouse, which I could spend many a daylight hours in, drinking until the evening arrived (lovely).

So, 1st July saw me doing a weekend session. I arrived at the lake at 4.30pm on Friday afternoon. I decided to fish on a little spit, which splits the top part of the lake into two bays. I took some maggots to enable me to catch some lives, which I did and some lobworms. As evening approached, I cast my 3 rods out, one with a bunch of lobworms and the other two with live roach of about 4" in length.

The baits were spread over a big area and all were in 6ft of water. I sat back and waited as darkness fell



Graham with his eel of 2lb 12oz

and began to feel tired. I had thought earlier that I would sit up by my rods all night, but after a few cans and a smoke I'm sure I heard my bag calling me. I was about to turn in when Bleeeeeep! The middle rod using live bait screamed into life. I stumbled to the rod, but before I struck I remembered reading that you should always wait for the second run before striking. I waited, waited and waited. This baby just wasn't going to stop the first run, let alone think about a second one. I struck and was met with a solid resistance. Then the nodding and thumping began 'Bingo' I thought. A quick look at my watch told me it was 10:45pm and a good scrap was well underway. I managed to get the better of the eel and was about to net it, when the right hand rod with the lobworms ripped off. S\*\*t, I knew the eel about to go in the landing net was a good one so I quickly netted it, unhooked it and safely put it in a sack.

All this time the eel on the other rod is still running and running. I struck and again resistance resulted in a good fight, second run and eventually a nice eel on the bank. I weighed it and the scales read 2lb 12ozs.

As well as being chuffed with this eel a fresh bout of excitement settled in, as I knew that the first eel was much bigger. I pulled out the sack, unzipped it, switched on the torch and a vision of beauty, second only to Pamela Anderson confronted me. The scales were zeroed, the sling and eel placed below, the torch put in my mouth and the needle rested at 5lb 2oz. I weighed it again to convince myself and again 5lb-2oz.

I was most happy. With both eels put back into the sack in deep water I recast and treated myself to another can. It was just midnight on my first session and 2 eels, both of good sizes were already sacked up. I thought about all the articles that I had read, stating the amount of blank sessions. I've struck gold, or so I thought!

The night continued into dawn and I woke to bright sunshine. No more action, the indicators stayed motionless. I soon remembered the sacked eels, I gave them a quick check then went off to find someone to take some photos. An angler obliged to my request and followed me back to my swim. As soon as I pulled the sack out of the water Terry, the angler who agreed to do the David Bailey bit, made a comment on the girth of the eel. When I unzipped the sack all hell broke loose. I took the smallest first which took about 5 minutes to get a good photo, then returned it and watched as it gracefully meandered back to its lair. The biggest one at 5lb 2oz was also photo'd and admired, before that to was put back to either return to its original place of hiding, or to pastures new.

Terry who I had not met before told me of eels up to 3lb 8oz that he had caught on this lake and of others that he had heard about. All this sounded very promising. He left to return to his swim, but before he went, he did mention that he would put an eel rod out in future.

I fished for eels that morning, but got abused by small perch, so I did the next best thing and went to the clubhouse and had one or four pints. I went back to my swim and began fishing in the evening. Again 3 rods were used using lobworms and live baits. I cast to the same areas as the previous night and sat back in anticipation. 10:45pm came and nothing. Midnight and nothing. I stayed awake until 2-30am then I turned in, 6-30am and I was woken up by a perch of 4ozs on lobworms.

I fished until 10-00am then packed up and went home. I kept wondering why I caught two eels on my first night in 10 minutes, but then blanked on the second. I went back to the lake on the 6<sup>th</sup> July, but because I arrived late I fished a swim where I could park behind for ease and to save time. Three baits were placed by dark and I relaxed and dozed off. As dawn broke and the birds began to sing I packed up and left for work with a dry net. No eels, no action.

Two blanks on and a phone call was made to Jimmy Jolley explaining that I had caught on my first session, then blanked twice. His reply was sympathetic, but also one that suggested to me that eel fishing is not easy and to expect lots of blanks.

The 14<sup>th</sup> July saw me blank, along with the 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> July. By now the realism of eel fishing was setting in. I contacted Chris Siddall, who lives close to the lake I was fishing. I told him about the two eels that I had caught and the blanks that had followed, he agreed to join me on a session. So on the 28<sup>th</sup> July we both fished the lake. We fished a good distance apart so as to cover a big area.



**First Night beauty**  
5lb 02 oz

The night began with drizzle, which we both knew would be ideal conditions, but as the night got older the rain stopped and the skies cleared. Dawn arrived and again no action. Chris was packed up by 6:30am and gone by 7:00am. Just as he was leaving, I asked about what he thought of the lake and the eeling potential. He thought that I should look for another lake in not so many words. He thought that it was possible for the lake to throw up a big eel, but when or where who's to say. We said our goodbyes and I thanked him for his company, from which I learned a thing or two.

Session 8, 29<sup>th</sup> July, another night approached as the rods were again placed in what I thought just had to conceal an eel. This time I just fished the margins, under trees and a bush. I only used lobworms on this session, as a late stay in the clubhouse saw me struggling well into dark to catch some lives.

The night was again wet, rain lashed down well into the night, thunder rumbled and a fabulous lightning display took place. Even though it would have been blinding to have caught an eel that night, I was somewhat dreading having to strike and wave a carbon rod about in those conditions. My prayers were answered. A perch woke me up at 5:30am. It was a lovely sunny morning, but still not an eel. Now I was really frustrated, I packed



up and returned home. While driving down the M1 I kept thinking about what Chris had said about finding new water. Should I sit it out or move on?

That evening I rang Jimmy again, told him that both Chris and myself had blanked and also what Chris had said. Jimmy again enthusiastically said, at the end of the day it's obviously up to myself, but having already had a five-pounder, stick at it. He referred to Barry McConnell's article and mentioned the amount of blanks experienced, but also of the size of eels caught. That made up my mind - Stick at it.

August 2nd session 9, back to the lake. I returned to the swim where I first caught, live baits were the chosen bait. I took plenty of time in making sure of the presentation, with all three rods in place I sat back feeling really confident. I managed to stay awake until 3:00am. Arriving sooner than any eel was dawn, I had now experienced 8 blanks on the bounce.

Because of a holiday booked by my girlfriend, bless her (who is one in a million so I'm told), by letting me go fishing whenever I like. Mind you it hasn't escaped my attention that I have never paid a milk bill and also we seem to have more yoghurt than I know what to do with - that's another story! Since coming back I have fished two more sessions, which have produced no eels.

However, on the 2nd of September I did manage to bank an eel of 3lb on lobworm at long range at 2:15p.m. but the venue was Emberton.

So that was my introduction to eel fishing, very hard and slow to say the least. I have learnt a lot mind you. 11 sessions and two eels, a personal best, and a wealth of knowledge which is only achieved by learning and finding out for yourself. Having said all that, I realise that I have still got a lot to learn, which should be made a little bit easier by knowing anglers such as Jimmy and Chris.

One thing worth mentioning is the determination and the enthusiasm that I experienced while talking to both Jimmy and Chris. Which I presume goes for the majority of the members of the National Anguilla Club. I know that the eel is by no means an easy species to understand, but with everybody helping each other out, it can only make it somewhat easier for anglers such as myself who finds the eel one hell of a challenge.

## THE WINTER SOCIAL AND PRESENTATION MEETING 2000.

As General Secretary for the club I know that I can speak for many of the committee members when I say that this meeting, since its re-formatted agenda, is looked forward to much more than the AGM. I say this, not as a slight on the formal meeting of the year, but because it gives us all the ideal platform to relax and enjoy the days events.

The AGM is always a long day and one in which every committee member has to give his or hers report and then decide whether to put up for re-election again for the coming year. Strangely as it may seem, many of the committee wish for someone to stick their hand up and say, "I fancy a crack at that position". However, it is very rare that this happens and so the individual has to decide in a few minutes if they have enjoyed the past year enough to go through it all over again for the next twelve months.

The other downside to the AGM for my position, is that the day passes you by without the time to soak up the points raised and unlike first thing in the morning, when I am really revved up for the day, generally I go away thinking 'that was hard work'. To be truthful, the meeting's enjoyment comes for me when I write up the minutes because then is the time that I 'attend' it, so to speak.

So this year, as in the recent past, I was really looking forward to going to the meeting with the thoughts of relaxing and chatting to friends whom I don't normally have contact with other than at the end of the phone or my mouse. I was doubly happy because I knew that 'Frenchie' Crawford was able to make the meeting due to the fact that he was in England for the best part of November and I made sure the meeting was within his travelling arrangement's schedule. Brian had asked me to keep his attendance confidential because he wanted to surprise the members on the day with his presence. I don't know if he surprised anyone else but he certainly surprised me, in more ways than one.

I rolled into the car park of the Queens Hotel at 10.40am to be greeted by several members waiting around in the cold, apparently locked out. I immediately thought "bloody hell, I hope this is not a sign for the coming day". Well you can call me 'mystic moaner' from now on because unbeknown to me, I was spot with my worries.

Nick Rose, Barry McConnell, Jason Morgan and his guest, Graham Wilkes, Andrew Rose, Chris Siddall, Mark Handley-Wood and Brian Crawford were looking at me to get them in, and fast. Just before I wobbled round to the front of the pub, 'Frenchie' made a beeline for Erica and gave her a traditional French welcome on both cheeks, to the expected catcalling from the assembled crowd. After beating the hell out of the front door, two slightly worse for wear faces appeared at the window gesturing the 'sshhhh' sign on their lips. I mentioned

that we had the room above the pub hired out for a meeting and the faces turned to crimson. Apologies accepted, we made our way up the stairs and set about arranging the tables, putting the club stand up and collecting the senior and junior raffle prizes into two separate areas.

but Whilst this was going on, the usual trickle of members turned up for the days events. By 11.00am we had been joined by Stuart dean, Damian Wood, Anthony Jolley, Jimmy Jolley, Phil Lukins, John Davis, Jared Huish and Kevin Huish.

Before the meeting started, Kevin hauled me outside to have a few quiet words with me. This is not unusual for the pair of us, we have acted like a team for all the time I have been a member of the club...and that seems like quite a while now I can tell you. Kevin told me that he had something to tell the membership but wanted me to know beforehand, so that I could compose myself for the meeting. He then informed me that he intended to step down as Chairman of the club at the next AGM in 2001. This, he said, was to be the core of his Chairman's report and he wanted me to know of his decision face to face, rather than on the phone, and certainly before the rest of the members present at the meeting. (However, I know this man too well and I believed in my mind that he would have told, or intimated that this was what he was thinking of doing, to one other person in the club. This person is also held by Kevin as more than a friend and I knew that this would have to be a face to face job as well because that is the sort of man Kevin is. When I wrote up the Gunge, I twigged that there had been such an opportunity for 'Taff' to lay the seed.)

Anyway, when he told me, I became numb. I told him that he was integral to my thoughts on the club and that he should reconsider his decision, if only to make me happy. Typically, he smiled and said that he had decided to step down due to his ill health, which has been dogging him for at least the past year, if not longer. He also informed me that Patricia would probably also step down at the same AGM due to becoming a target by not being able to attend meetings due to family commitments and the fact that she suffers with hip trouble and that this is getting no better. Now one of them stepping down is not good news but both...well that IS a big dent, especially when one of them has managed to get the club in a very healthy position financially, over the years.

We came back inside to commence the meeting and all I could think of was 'wait until this lot hears what Kevin has to say'!!!!!!! Anyway, Kevin opened the meeting and we had a minute's silence in recognition of Remembrance Sunday. This was carried out in complete silence and then the meeting began. All the members introduced themselves in the regular fashion. This always makes me smile because there are always some who feel embarrassed by stating their name. It was at this juncture that Andrew Rose announced his name and the title 'Super eel angler' and Nick quickly retorted "he learnt everything from me". Whilst Kevin explained how the day was going to pan out, Steve Ricketts joined the meeting. I was pleased to see Steve had managed to attend because he is an old BEAC member and it was good to meet him again after all the years.

It had been decided by general consensus at the committee meeting earlier in the year that we would dispense with the reading of the AGM minutes until the AGM 2001. This was decided upon in order to make the meeting less formal, however, this had not been minuted as such and therefore Brian made the point of saying we had to do it, because of that fact. This was a great start for me because I had not brought a draft copy of the minutes to be read out and ratified. I was very aware that all eyes were on me and although Kevin tried to save me from the situation, with why we hadn't planned for this part of the meeting but Brian insisted it be done. Fortunately, Brian had the one copy that I had printed off, because two weeks earlier he had asked me for a copy to look at. I was now conscious that I had been somewhat naive to do this, considering that no one else in the club had received a copy. I had unwittingly dug myself another hole to fall into and did so with great aplomb.

Brian read out his minutes, picking from them carefully, so as not to bore to death the members present. We then found out why he had insisted on having them aired. Obviously, after the minutes, comes 'Matters Arising' and Brian had four pages of those to share with us. I shall not go into them now because you have copies of the above enclosed with this Bulletin. I shall say though that I felt like I had gone back to school....and God had I been naughty. Thank goodness I wasn't the only one. The committee as a whole received a 'not how to do it' sermon during the time it took to get Brian's points read out. Due to the issues involved, it was decided that we would hold a discussion on some of them. Kevin called for a drink's break and thankfully Erica went and got me a cold cider to steady my nerves. (If this was a social meeting then I ain't going to attend anything stronger.)

When everyone had fetched a drink or two, (Erica was on double brandy) I firstly apologised for the minutes fiasco and I think that it was accepted. We then went through Brian's points and clarified some of the issues raised. We also explained why some things had been done but saying it and writing it down, are two different things, as we found out.

This section of the meeting took about two hours and it gave Brian the chance to inform everyone of his past time in the club and the things that went off in that time. Some of these issues having never been minuted by past Secretaries of the club, including Brian himself. This made me feel a little better as some of the issues were huge in relation to my omissions. It always does the heart good to know your in good company.

It is safe to say, that by this time I was considering stepping down at the next AGM, after explaining to the members who attend that meeting, all the points I had been highlighted for. I am not one for quitting on the spot but I did feel like getting up and walking out. I don't think that what happened at the meeting was right. I

feel that I was let down by Brian when he decided to force the minutes and give his matters arising report/story. A lot of what he had to say was incorrect, unjustified or way too old to bother with now. These points will be discussed at committee and then reported on at the next AGM. However, my opinions count here, as it is my perception of how the meeting went that I am writing about. Brian did have one thing right in amongst some strong stuff and that was that he intended to nominate Kevin Huish for Honorary life membership at the next AGM. His thoughts echoed my own on this score.

A break for lunch followed and raffle tickets were sold on behalf of the junior and senior section. Nearly £150.00 pounds was raised between the two sections, with the juniors stealing the points by one pound. I am never amazed at the generosity of the members of the club and it went a long way to taking the sour taste from my mouth after the mornings events.

Unfortunately, Arthur J. Sutton was not present and as such couldn't give Presidents report. (I did receive a letter from Arthur two days later giving his apologies and stating that he had taken ill again and was not feeling up to attending. In fact he had been in hospital for some time as well, just previous to the meeting.)

The Chairman gave a report that shocked the room. I never bothered to say anything at the meeting mainly because I would have shown my intense fondness of Kevin. Brian said that he was pleased that he had made his remarks about Kevin when he did considering what Kevin had just said and wished to thank him on behalf of the membership for everything he had done for the club over the years.

The members present then started a round of applause that did credit to the man and his services and sacrifices to the club. Well done that man.

I make no apology for the following few lines. These are dedicated to Kevin for all his hard, unselfish work for the NAC, for his loyal support to all the committee people he has served with and quite simply for the honesty, strength and integrity he brought to the club, when it most needed something special to keep it afloat.

(I shall exclude Brian from the following, mainly because his workload for the club has been documented by others, and himself, in the recent past.)

Kevin, Nick, and myself (to a lesser degree) have been through a ton of stuff for the NAC over the years and it is only when information like this hits you that you look back with any degree of focus on past events and troubles. It is usual for all three of us to reminisce about 'the old day's' when we find ourselves either on a fish-in together, fishing together for other species (usually Chub) or at a fishing meeting, show or conference. We are, you could say, true friends. None of us knew each other before eels came into our fishing lives and this happened to all of us at different times. However, we all knew of each other before I joined the NAC. Even though we hadn't met, we were all members of the British Eel Anglers Club.

Most of our thoughts are happy ones but there is the odd moment when we find ourselves talking about certain problems that we faced as one. Problems that were not very savoury and ones we could have done without. Regardless of the state of play, so to speak, Kevin was always there at the front, pushing to get things sorted out.

Kevin is a sensitive creature under all that 'Wenglish' and I know that he has been hurt a few times by comments that have been levelled at the committee. Some of these comments had nothing to do with Kevin personally but he always took them that way because he liked to protect the committee members he sat with. He has stood toe to toe with other angling activists, when the policies they wanted pushing through were detrimental to the NAC. He has actively fought the eel netsmen scenario, when they were a real pain in the eighties. The list is too long to make here and would probably embarrass him anyway. I know that he won't be overjoyed at this small mention of his past activities, but I am his friend and so know that he will forgive me in time.

Kevin deserves every good word said about him. He has never acted within the club for himself. He has set a standard that most people will not achieve within their time in the club. Filling his boots will be a tall order but there is one out there who could do it and I am sure that he will be nominated. More so than this, I bet I know who will second the proposal. (That person will be 'Taff', and he will be smiling when he does it.)

Kevin has made the odd mistakes, like we all have. But for everyone he made there are one hundred good things he did. Thank God he isn't leaving the club altogether. I can only say that it has been a complete pleasure standing alongside him over the years. I know that Nick and the rest of this present committee would endorse that. Thanks mate.

I never gave the Secretaries report I brought with me. To be honest, I just wanted the meeting to get to the social part so that I could relax.

Kevin then gave the Treasurer's report. This consisted of informing the members that Patricia would probably be standing down as well at the next AGM. More shock for the members. Quite a few members said what they thought to this and these opinions are noted in the minutes of that meeting.

I won't say too much about Patricia's potential decision, mainly because I suspect that she must still be seething from the last AGM. Pat is very much her own woman and I only hope that, during the winter break from club activities, she decides to re-think her position. I say this because she must be the best treasurer the club has ever known. Her account's report has always been spot on and we, the committee, have never been able to spend money without a bloody good reason and a firm debate. I believe that she should be considered an asset to the

club, regardless of whether she can attend meetings or not. I would sooner have Patricia as treasurer and not see her at meetings than see someone else HAVE to take over and then not get the job done to the high standards she has set. If, one day, someone whom the club is 100% happy with, volunteers to do the treasurer's job then maybe that is the time to consider Patricia stepping down if she wants to. Patricia has my vote everytime.

After this run of reports Kevin handed over to Chris Siddall to explain the rest of the days running order.

Mark Smethurst was absent due to his wife having to go into hospital in order to give birth to the next member of the Smethurst family. I just hope that, be it a boy or a girl, they had a better sense of direction than Mark.

The presentations of trophies came next and everyone got into enjoying themselves. Then came the slide show from Damian Wood and Jimmy Jolley. The subject being the Leeds and Liverpool canal. There were some super eels on show and it was good that they broke the talk into two parts. After part one we held the two raffles. Brian managed 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the junior raffle and I was lucky enough to get 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the senior. I got the signed poem book on fishing and then got Damian to sign the poem that he did the drawing for. The drawing was also deemed good enough to take the front cover. With a limited edition run of 300 this will be a nice book to add to my collection of fishing books.

Part two of the slide show was as entertaining as the first with the added injection of Tony debating the hooking arrangements of their livebait rig. I must say that I thought it was far too sophisticated for me but that probably sums up Damian and Jimmy's approach to they're eeling compared to mine. I'd much rather get less detailed about my methods in the future.

I was pleased that they both gave the talk, as I believe they have grown because of it. They both appear to be right up for the cup now, especially Damian who didn't sleep for the week prior to giving the talk but who could have talked for the rest of the night afterwards. Jimmy, I think, is used to this kind of thing. For a first effort together in front of an experienced crowd they gelled well and came across as a bonded fishing team. Neither is an individual, they work for the team result. Quite a refreshing attitude.

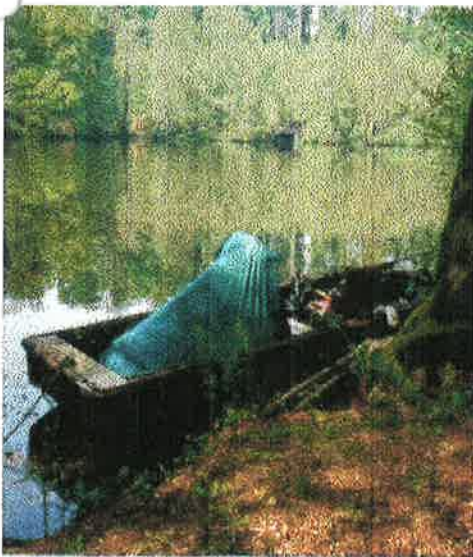
All that was left was to tidy the room and make our way home. It was good to see old friends and make new ones. I just wish that some of the other members could get more with it and try to attend these hard to organise meetings.

My thanks to Mark for organising the meeting and to Chris for holding it together in his absence. I shall look forward to next years bash without the formal issues this time.

## FOLLOWING THE THERMALS

By Barry McConnell

### Noah's Ark

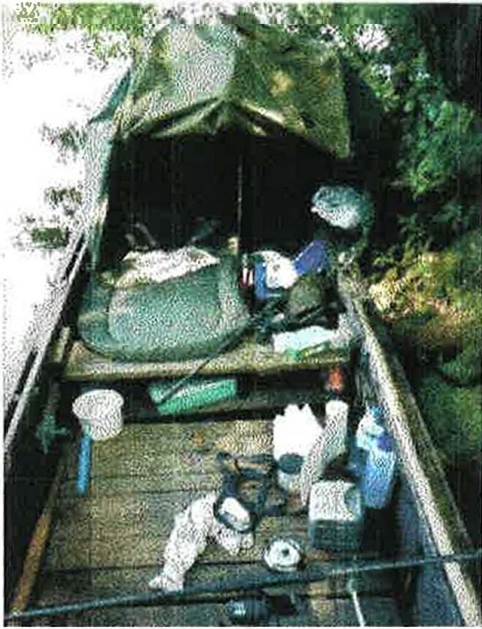


Eel fishing at the usual mere got off to a slow start this year. Fishing in swims that have previously produced big eels during spring and the early season, I totted up 14 blank nights before I got my first eel run. I was fishing a snaggy log ridden swim that had produced the goods last year and it was just getting light when the bobbin shot up to the rod and dropped off as line was ripped through the rings causing the alarm to sound a one toner - a screaming run. I was on it in a flash, knowing it was an eel run and soon had the rod bent as I moved a large eel towards me. As it got closer, the alarm on one of my other rods sounded off and everything went solid. I had misjudged my casting in the night and crossed one of my other lines which was now solidly snagged up leaving me attached to an eel with 11lb mono which was in turn attached to eighteen pound braid on the other rod. For a couple of minutes the eel was writhing on the surface just out of netting range then my line broke and the eel was gone.

It was time to move on. A new water; a new challenge. I decided to target one of the smallest of the Shropshire, Cheshire group of meres, which I shall call the difficult mere. One of the difficulties being that it is boat fishing only, there is no bank fishing permitted, in fact you are not allowed on the bank at all and regular checks by the gamekeeper, both day and night, ensure that this rule is kept to. The

difficult mere lies in a hollow where its 4 acres are sheltered by the surrounding hillsides and enclosed by tall, dense woodlands which largely reduce its exposure to the wind. The water lies over a kettle hole - a steep-sided, deep hollow formed by a melting block of ice as the last ice age retreated. This results in most of the water being

10 - 23ft deep, there is little shallow water. Few other anglers fish here, they aren't prepared to overcome the difficulties and discomforts of boat fishing, especially at night. So I have the place to myself each time. It's full on 'Only the Lonely'.



### Home from Home

cut in to shape then sewn permanently on to the bivvy so that it fitted snugly around the base of the bedchair, half of which was protruding from the doorless bivvy. Many cord ties were then knotted roughly into place so that the bivvy could be tied down to the boat instead of pegging. The central umbrella pole was secured to a hollow plastic umbrella/sunshade stand that can be filled with water to provide a stable base. The resulting shelter was named by an angling mate the first time he saw it when he said 'That's not a bivvy its a divvy', so the Divvy Bivvy was named. Another amusing comment came from the gamekeeper when he spotted me rowing across the mere with the shelter aboard - 'Bloody hell its Noah's Ark.'

I caught two eels of 5:06 and 3:00 the very first time I fished this water in 1997 but have blanked here every year since. Sometimes I wonder if I will ever catch another eel here. Yet there is something about the place that keeps drawing me back. Something about the setting seems sort of historical almost mystical. A natural mere, protected from the advances of mankind by the surrounding old, mixed woodlands such as once covered most of the land. The trees are mainly oak and beech, standing tall above the encroaching rhododendrons. On one hillside a few big old scots pine trees are reaching the end of their lifespan. As they hang on to life in their old age, the upper branches have died off leaving their skeleton-like silhouettes towering over one shore. During the early morning mist, as a scraggy heron with its neck feathers missing perches on the bare treetop, it reminds me of a setting in the dinosaur film Jurassic Park. Perhaps there is even a woolly mammoth lying preserved in the silt deep down in the kettle hole. It is easy for the imagination to wander as you are lulled by the quietness of its sheltered waters, especially when you consider the potential for a monster eel. Branches from huge trees that have long ago crashed into the water lie embedded in the marginal silt to create safe havens for the biggest, oldest, most elusive of eels to hole up, unknown to man. It is this big eel aura hanging over the place that keeps me coming back, even before I heard about the incident that once occurred here.

There had been a de-oxygenation incident here a few years ago. The National Rivers Authority and angling club committee members were called out to find thousands of fish dying. Three members that had attended the fish rescue told me that the silt had risen from the bottom until it was floating on top of the water. This had cut the supply of oxygen off and thousands of fish were dying in the remaining small patch of open water. Thousands of specimen bream were stranded, along with perch, roach, carp, pike, tench and many eels, which were all huge. Aerators were brought in and a fish rescue operation was set up. Some fish died. Many bream and some of the eels were put into an adjoining water but many of the eels including one or two particularly large ones were saved by the aerators which got there just in time. The silt situation settled back to normal a few days later. Apparently this incident has happened before and is just a time bomb waiting to go off again. Meanwhile some massive eels continue to live in its waters having survived more than one of these de-oxygenation incidents. One of the members pointed out that he has caught plenty of double figure conger which qualifies his estimate that three big eels they handled during the rescue weighed about 10lb, with one, which went

The boat is an old, creaking, tar-lined wooden punt, which you have to skull out of the boathouse and onto the mere. At first, there were a few teething problems with the boat fishing. Fishing from the anchor, even with an anchor at either end, results in too much boat sway, which creates problems with bait presentation and bite indication. Also, the boat slowly fills with water, which has to be bailed out every 24 hours or so. The sound of water trickling slowly into the boat leads to a feeling of insecurity when floating all alone over 20ft of water for a whole night. No - it seemed safer and easier to tie up to a bankside tree where the boat could be moored hard against the bank, thus reducing boat sway and bringing the bank within jumping distance should the boat sink.

Some form of shelter and sleeping arrangements were required. This started with a small ridge tent that fitted neatly on one half of the boat. It was suitable to retire to but difficult to get out of without creating a lot of disturbance - far from ideal should a run occur. I needed a shelter that would fit a bedchair. I went on to make my own bivvy from a 45" nylon fishing umbrella and an old wrap around bivvy that someone once gave to me saying it

was of no use without a door. I made a door out of a large flap of Gore-Tex taken from an old, damaged, army bivvy bag. This was

back alive, very much larger than the others. Apparently, there were many other eels looking to weigh between 5 and 10lb - all huge - and no one knew they were there.

My desire to learn what processes could cause such an incident led to me reading an interesting book of scientific papers published by the field studies council *The Limnology of the Eutrophic Meres of the Shropshire Cheshire Plain* and then another book *Life in Lakes and Rivers* by T.T. Macan and E.B. Worthington. Here are some extracts of what I learnt.

Investigations revealed that all the meres exceeding 5-8 metres depth become thermally stratified in spring and remain so until late summer/ late autumn depending on their depth and exposure to the wind. Thermal stratification doesn't occur in every pond and lake. It normally only occurs in large waters and deep waters, especially waters such as meres which have a large proportion of deep water with very little shallow water and no inflow (meres are fed and maintained by groundwater). Shallower and smaller waters will have no marked point where the temperature falls considerably.

Stratification results in the separation of waters into a warm upper layer epilimnium and a lower cold hypolimnium with the thin layer of rapidly dropping temperature in between known as the thermocline.

Falls in the concentration of oxygen in the hypolimnium are detectable within a few days of stratification. The effect is most pronounced near the bottom of the lake but depletion eventually extends through almost all of the hypolimnetic volume, in many cases to virtual exhaustion. This restricts the volume of water in which the fish can forage.

Following de-oxygenation, hypolimnetic anoxia occurs within weeks in smaller meres, months in larger ones. The hypolimnium then undergoes chemical transformations, nitrate rapidly disappears, and soluble phosphate increases. The system proceeds quickly to a sulphide system wherein free hydrogen sulphide is released. If there is still some organic matter left when all the oxygen has been used up, decomposition still goes on but now it is caused by a different set of bacteria, which do not require free oxygen. Typical end products are methane or marsh gas (CH<sub>4</sub>), ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>), and sulphuretted hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>S). Some of these compounds are poisonous.

When considering conditions at the difficult mere it must be noted that they are exacerbated by its sheltered, windless state, small surface area and deep waters. Furthermore, the surrounding woodlands deposit leaves which have settled down the steep sides of the mere to gradually fill the kettle hole. The lack of oxygen in the hypolimnium results in very slow breakdown of these leaves which have formed a plug several metres deep lying in the recess of the kettle hole. The incident when the silt rose to the surface and deoxygenated the water occurred in spring. This is when the water temperature balances out. Let me explain. Firstly, warm water floats on cold water. If two layers differ markedly in temperature, the difference in density is such that even considerable disturbance will not mix them. However, the first statement is true only down to 4 degrees C. At lower temperatures, cold water floats on warm water. The result of this peculiar property of water is that lakes become stratified in winter and in summer. Yet at some point in spring the water will be a uniform 4 degrees C from top to bottom. It was at this time of year that the silt rose up from the bottom. I suspect that the seasonal temperature inversion was a major contributing factor helping to cause the incident.

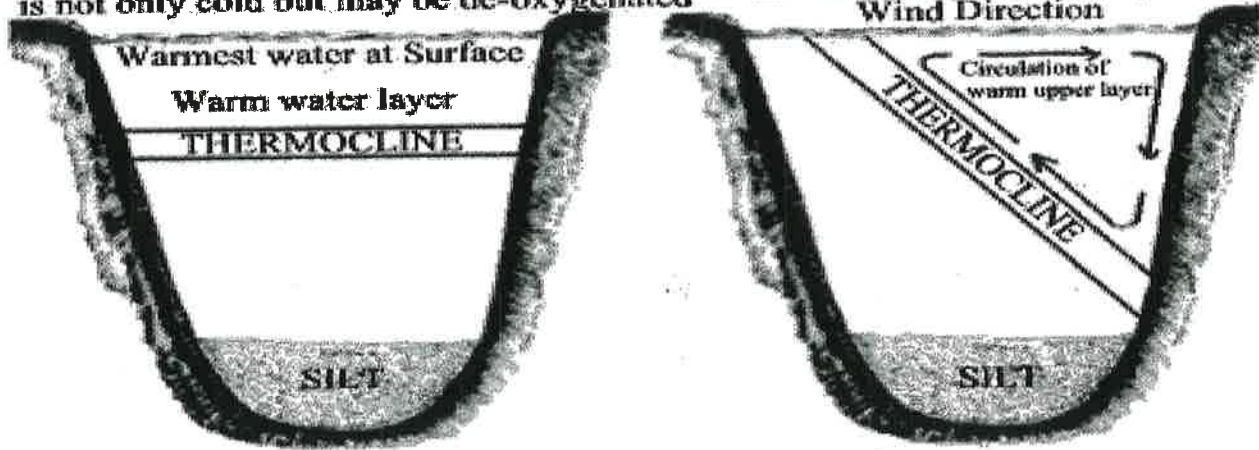
After considering what I had read about the thermal layers of water, I thought that if I were an eel I would avoid the cold, de-oxygenated water with all its gaseous chemical transformations. I remembered the bunch of lobworms coming back in smelling of a strong, silt-like smell - was this hydrogen sulphide? Or marsh gas? One thing becomes clear - present the bait in the warmer, upper layer where there will be enough oxygen for the eels. Yet I have done this each time I have fished here and still not located any eels. The appearance of the deep soft silt and the smell of a bunch of worms that had been among it for any length of time, had always turned my preferences towards off-bottom baits which I have tried at various depths over the deeper water. It occurred to me that the colder layer must cover most of the lakebed and that the warmer layer above must only come in to contact with the bottom where the water is shallow - the margins. This is where the eels will be able to forage on the bottom and still be among the warmer oxygenated waters that they prefer.

I then considered the effects of wind. On this water there is only one shore that benefits from the effects of wind. Would the wind push the warmer upper waters on to one shore? Would this cause the thermocline to tilt and, if so, would the colder, lower waters then be drawn up into the opposite margins to compensate. I found the answer to all of these was yes. Firstly when reading Macan then finding the same theories applied to angling by Walker.

There is not enough room here to elaborate. You will have to read the books if you want to know more. For now I will simply illustrate it with a diagram taken from Dick Walker's *Stillwater Angling*. SEE DIAGRAMS 1 and 2.

### Diag 1 Lake in Summer

The water below the Thermocline is not only cold but may be de-oxygenated



**Diag 2. Showing the effect of Wind in circulating the Warm Upper Layer and tilting the Thermocline.**

Off-bottom baits had been tried extensively and unsuccessfully. Now, in the natural progression of what had been learnt, it was time to try placing the bait where the warm, well-oxygenated water comes in to contact with the bed of the lake. A fish finder was used to search the bottom for any irregularities in gradient of this uniformly shaped water and a pole was used to feel round the margins for a hard bottom. It didn't take long to find that only one area shows any variation. This is the only shore exposed too much wind action. Here, instead of the usual log strewn margins, there is a shallow wave platform, with water less than 6ft deep and a hard bottom kept free from silt by wave action on the shoreline. Lilies grow here up to a depth of 4 feet where they can be used as depth markers. A bait placed just off the bed of lilies would be in water between 4 and 6 feet over a hard bottom, which should almost certainly be covered by the upper layer of water, especially with the usual onshore wind.

One of the limiting factors at this water is the lack of suitable moorings for the boat. This reduces the available fishing area, especially since, due to difficulty of terrain, the rods must be cast outwards away from the boat. It is not possible to cast along the margins due to fallen and overhanging trees. Now, in order to present my bait near that particular shore, the boat had to be manoeuvred around the lake looking for a tree to tie up to. I wanted to be far enough away to reduce the effects of any disturbance from movements in the boat. I had to tie some branches back in order to open up a suitable mooring from where it is possible to cast across a corner of the lake and present a bait in the other margin, hard against the lilies.

The boat was tied securely to the tree and three rods were soon on the pod, which was raised to clear the side of the boat, then pointed off the end towards the other shore. A brisk wind was being funnelled between two hills on the other side of the lake, it was whistling over the tree tops then picking up speed as it crossed the open water to produce a nice chop and onshore wind. The wind had certainly brought fish in to this margin as I took three carp and a bream during the first couple of hours. But no eels. It went quiet as darkness set in. No eels in the night. No eels at dawn. At 4.30am, I'm sitting amongst the early morning mists, sipping a hot brew and wondering whether there are actually any eels left in the mere, when I get my first run of the morning. It's a slow run that has the line creeping gradually through the rod rings. I remember thinking 'The bream are coming on as the sun gets up.'

I struck, expecting the dull weight of yet another dumb, gaping, bronze slab. Imagine my surprise at finding myself connected to a big eel that was trying to back-paddle down into the silt. I



**Mere Success.  
5lb 13oz**

bent my rod through to the butt at which point the eel moved and I was able to draw it across the lake towards the boat. More than once it managed to reach the bottom silt but each time I was able to raise it again. When I eventually had it in the net and everything had calmed down, the surface of the mere was streaked with large frothy patches of bubbles that had been disturbed when the eel reached the silt.

'Yes' I was ever so chuffed. At last I'd finally cracked it and caught another eel from the difficult mere, so proving that they are still in there. I wasn't in my usual hurry to weigh the eel. I paused to admire the fish which was perfectly proportioned and in fine condition. It weighed 5:13 but that didn't seem to matter. It was one of my most satisfying captures, whatever the weight. I then paced up and down, letting the odd 'yes' slip out. I was as pleased as punch.

A week or two later during a phone call to Chris Siddall I mention my thoughts on thermal stratification. He says 'Oh you mean the Dick Walker theory.' I then read Walkers' Stillwater Angling and there it was, exactly as I had just learnt it. I noticed a footnote where Walker recommends reading Macan. It seems that each of us had got the idea from the same source - T.T. Macan.

And finally, just to prove that these textbook theories should not be rigidly adhered to, I shall tell you that I have caught plenty of eels from another mere at the height of summer when fishing my baits out in the deepest part and the worms are coming back in stinking of silt. It just goes to show that each water has to be weighed up under its own merits. In this latter case I suspect that the answer may be something to do with water inflow from underground springs coming through the lakebed to provide pockets of freshly charged water beneath the hypolimnium.

## NOT THE BEST OF SEASONS

By Steve Ricketts

I was due to start the 2000 season off by fishing a small gravel pit in Hertfordshire well known for producing large tench, and carp to 30lbs, but to my knowledge has never produced any eels but then they were not to be my target on this trip.

On arrival at the water at 7am, the three swims I had earmarked for the start of my weeks session had already been occupied, one by a carper and the other two by tench fishermen, so I had to resort to fishing an unknown corner swim. After setting up camp, and having a quick brew, I set about the task of plumbing the depths and searching for any gravel bars within easy casting range. Two nice bars were found, one about 60yds straight out, and the other 30yds out and to the right of the swim. This one I particularly liked as the near side dropped off to a depth of 14ft with a lot of silt at the bottom.

Groundbait, consisting of brown crumb, green giant corn, cooked hemp and lots of molasses was spodded to the far gravel bar, and the near bar was treated to a barrage of cannon balls of the same stuff. This was left to settle, while I went to do the social bit and see who was about. I always tend to do this after settling into a swim as I've been caught out socialising before I have set up, ending up in a panic trying to get everything done before the sun goes down, and anything sweaty in the evenings on this lake attracts mossies in their hundreds which have a distinct liking for my blood.

In the swim to my left, Paul, one of the regulars was bivvied up and that was my first stop. Tea and chat followed while we watched fish roll and crash over his baited area and his bobbins twitch as fish moved about. He informed me he had a couple of fish to 6lb but it looked like the fish were still actively spawning, as his mate in the next swim was having the same sort of activity with lots of liners, but not many fish picking up the baits. My next port of call was the car park swim, my favourite swim on the lake, not because of its proximity to the car park, but it's one of the only swims on the lake with large lily beds adjacent to it, and it always seems to produce good fish. This also makes it attractive to the carp anglers who seem to occupy it day in, day out, so the tench don't really get pressured there, and they can be caught fairly easily using old fashioned laying on tactics with a float rod and sweetcorn or worm hookbaits.

Anyway back to the subject and the corner swim. It was occupied by a carper (what a surprise). The young lad fishing there was a new member and this was his first trip so he was ripe pickings for fags and tea, while I slowly gave him info on the lake and tried to convince him he might be better off fishing the far bank, where some carp had been showing, and not letting on I had designs on his swim myself. Sadly he wouldn't be coerced into moving, as he'd baited up the swim and said he would wait for the fish to come to him. I wished him well and went back to my own swim.

Back at camp, I set up two rods, both with groundbait filled feeders with maggot and corn hookbaits and cast them to the respective gravel bars. A third rod was baited with lobworms and cast to the silty area at the end of one of the bars, in the hope of a stray *Anguilla*. Just because one has never been caught doesn't mean that



they're not there, or that's what I told myself, then set the bobbins and sat back to await the action I was sure would materialise

Mid-day came and went turning into evening all too quickly. Flying things started buzzing around so I retreated to my bivvie for chilli and bread and a quick snooze. At 4 30am I woke. Some snooze! I looked out of the door, the bobbins hung motionless, dew covering everything and mist curling across the lake but no signs of fish, not in my swim anyway. I slowly came awake and started rebaiting the rods. The baits had not been touched, unusual this as small tench can sometimes be a problem here. I then cast them back into position. The morning came and went, promising to turn into another very hot day and still my rods had not twitched, yet further along the bank optonics had been screaming on and off since first light and the sound of fish slapping the water along the margins was frustratingly close but not visible due to tree growth along the edges. Yet my swim remained quiet, no bubbles, nothing on the surface except pond skaters and nothing in the rushes, weird. Sometime around mid-day I walked round to where Paul was fishing and to see if he was having the same problems. It seemed he wasn't. He had fish all night, ranging from the small bars of soap (tiny tench) to fish of 8lbs plus and his fishing partner had several larger fish the best being 10lb 9ozs so what was I doing wrong. I guess I was just fishing a duff swim, better to blame the swim rather than my tactics. So a change of swims was in order, this posed another problem. Where to go? All the main swims on the lake were occupied but there was a swim between the car park swim and where Paul's mate was fishing. It was an old swim heavily overgrown with small trees and reeds but with some hard work it could be cleared and I would be fishing between two places that were producing fish.

Several hours later I had cleared an area and set up my bivvie and tackle when Neil arrived in my new swim. Neil is a very well known and connected carp angler in the areas I fish and has given me in the past some valuable information that has helped put some nice fish on the bank, plus he's always ready to stop for a chat if the kettles on.

After a cuppa he told me about a lake in Kent he was fishing for carp that had thrown up some huge eels on an electro fishing trip and that the people doing it had never come across eels of this size and in the quantity they had turned up. We've all heard stories like this before but he assured me his information was sound and that if I was after something a bit special, I should try and get on there. Appetite duly wetted he gave me a contact number and we chatted for a while longer before he left to fish another water as there were no swims left on this lake, even the one I had vacated was now taken.

Rods in position in the new swim I hoped the coming night would prove better than the previous night as I now had fish moving in front of me. Dinner over, I sat outside reading a Shaun Hutson novel until dark, a few single bleeps from liners the only distraction from the book.

At 11pm I retired, to be awake at 7am, not buy my bite alarms but by the carper in the next swim. He'd caught several good fish over night including a low thirty and wanted me to take some photos (jeeze I wanted a fish, any fish). So photo shot over I congratulated him and went back to my swim to sulk. I spent the rest of the day trying different rigs and methods all to no avail, I had fish in front of me this time but for neither love nor money I couldn't induce a bite and spent my third night fishless as well. Three days fishless is enough for me on one trip so in the morning I packed up and went home.

One week later I was back, this time to fish the top lake for eels. The top lake Broadwater has now become quite well known due to the very large bream that inhabit its 160 acres of water, but for me the large eels that occupy its depths are the main attraction. This is a heartbreak water but the chance of big fish and the solitude of this place make blanks worthwhile. A swim was chosen that had produced fish in the past and camp was made. The float rod was erected and bait snatching commenced on the river behind my bivvie. Several hours later, enough small roach and bleak had been collected to fulfil my needs for bait, so the eel rods were baited and cast to various locations from margins to deeps and the wait began.

At 7 30pm I was successfully extracting chub from the river on the feeder rod when a slow run came out of the blue on off bottom bleak deadbait. That had me dashing back to my swim, line was slowly being taken so I picked up the rod, wound down and struck. A disappointing curve on the rod told me this was no eel, and a perch just over the 2lb mark came easily to the bank on the three-pound test curve rods.

Evening wore on and night settled in, the night was warm with light clouds covering the half moon and not the slightest breeze to ruffle the water. Ideal conditions for me but evidently not for the fish as my forth nights fishing of the season also turned into my forth blank. Night five also went the same way but you learn to expect it on this water, and to some extent the peace and quiet of the place makes up for the lack of action (who am I kidding)

Whilst packing up Dave arrived to do a couple of days on the lake after bream and we had a little chat about the place. He wanted to know if any bream had been seen and I asked if the bream lads had encountered any eels. The answer to both these questions was no. But whilst on the subject of eels he said one of his friends was a bailiff for RMC angling and had been involved on a fish removal job on a Kent lake and had come across some huge eels he guessed where low double figure fish. After further exchanges of information I put two and two together and arrived at the fact that this was the same water Neil had told me about at the start of the season. So

now this warranted some serious investigation and would be one of my first jobs on returning home (or so I thought).

On returning home I found my wife to be suffering from stomach problems which soon developed into quite a serious problem, so fishing from that point went on the backburner and along with it, the thought of tracking down that Kent lake.

It wasn't until September when I was able to go fishing again and this time I had the wife in tow. I'd convinced her a couple of days in the sun and her own bivvie would be great for recuperation, so of we went to a nice little lake where you can park the car in your swim and the only noise is the jet skiers, motor boats and the go kart track behind us, lovely. But really folks it's not all as bad as it sounds. The lake contains thousands of small rudd and roach and with this a prolific head of predators. Eels especially are very abundant and twenty runs a night is not unusual but its not often they go past three and a half pounds. The club record is somewhere around 7lb but I've never seen anything go past four yet but I'm confident that it will throw up a decent fish to my rods one day.

Two bivvies were set up on a swim some 8ft above the water level and the car parked in a position to block most of the strong wind that had sprung up, off the bivvies. Four rods were set up and placed down the slope at water level, baited with lobs and cast out at varying distances. The lake has a featureless bottom of gravel that in most places just runs out gradually from the bank to a depth of 7 to 8ft. The water is always well coloured up so fish are often taken during the day.

I didn't have long to wait before the first rod went off and a small eel was welcomed to the bank, the first one of the year. Over the next few hours runs occurred frequently enough to have me sitting by the rods, but the ones I did hit turned out to be bream. Bream can be a nuisance here but usually only at night, that's why at night I only ever fish deadbaits.

Night came on and one scoop of the net gave me enough bait for the night. Worms were swapped for deads and cast back out. Sometime around 10:30pm, one of the baits was picked up and a short stop start run resulted in a pike of about 12lbs, which played havoc in the margins before being dragged into the net. This fish couldn't have upset the swim as much as I thought, as within minutes of releasing it two runs occurred almost simultaneously. One was an eel of just over 3lbs and the other was a large bream (yes on deadbait). Runs continued through the night with several more eels to 2lb plus being landed and a lot of runs missed. As dawn arose I wound the rods in to get some sleep as the missus had decided she wanted to go home in the morning. I managed to get four more one night trips down to this lake landing three more scrapper 3s and plenty of smaller fish, but at least I'd managed to get some fish under my belt, in what was for me a lousy season time wise. Some of it wasn't wasted. In the time I had spent at home, I had tracked down the lake in Kent where the big eels had been electro fished and gained permission to fish it.

The 29th of October was my first trip to the lake and as my luck has gone this year I picked the worst storm of the decade and had to spend the night sheltering in the car. I have managed one more trip since then still in atrocious conditions but just fishable. No eels were caught, but I did get a large pike as a bonus.

I now think my eeling for the season is over, as the weather has now turned too cold for me, maybe some of the eels will still feed but they will now have to wait until next year for my baits.

This has been the story of an unsuccessful season through no fault of mine, yet I still managed to catch a few fish, submit a catch return and write an article about it to show support for the club, every little helps.

I look forward to landing some good fish next year and wish all members the same

Best of luck.

## Record Officers Report June – October 2000

By Jimmy Jolley

Well it's that time of year again, another season comes to a close and another report gets underway. Firstly I would like to thank all the N.A.C members who sent in their catch returns and also kept me informed of what was being caught, and by whom. Now on to the report itself.

It was great to receive a catch return from **Brian "Frenchie" Crawford**, our Vice-President. Brian had managed to get in 8 all night sessions on a variety of lakes and sections of the River Blavet. On the 21<sup>st</sup> July he had an eel of **2lb-02ozs** from Val Verte on ledgered worm at 11:00p.m. The 29<sup>th</sup> found Brian fishing a stretch of the River Blavet where he took an eel of **2lb-12ozs** at 4:00a.m using ledgered Roach head as bait. Then from Lake Lost er Lann on the 28<sup>th</sup> August, Brian caught an eel of **2lb-02ozs** at 1:10a.m and at 5:45a.m a small eel of **8ozs** both falling to ledgered worm baits. And lastly, on the 25<sup>th</sup> September at 10:00p.m, from Etang Flevri (I hope I've spelt all these wonderfully exotic names correctly) he took an eel of **1lb-02ozs** again the winning bait was ledgered worm. Brian closed his catch return by saying, *"I hope to do better next year, now I have more*

fishing, and I hope I can speak for the all of the membership in wishing Brian lots of tight lines and good luck for next season.

Nick Duffy has had a difficult season this year, he's fished 31 night sessions and 21 of them were blanks but still managed some very nice eels. On the 20<sup>th</sup> April, Nick fished a Midlands canal and had a fish of 2lb-02ozs on ledgered worm. Then on the 19<sup>th</sup> May fishing the G.U Canal using ledgered live-bait tactics he caught an eel of 2lb-09ozs. Back on the Midlands canal on the 1<sup>st</sup> June, Nick had eels of 1lb-10ozs and 2lb-06ozs, the first took a live-bait, and the later was taken on Roach head, both were fished on ledger rigs. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, fishing a Midlands lake he had two eels, one of 2lb-07ozs and the other was 2lb-13ozs\* both feel to ledgered Roach head. July 3<sup>rd</sup> and Nick has his best eel of the season at 4lb-10ozs, this fish again came from a Midlands lake and again the bait was ledgered Roach head. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August again from the Midlands lake Nick landed a further two eels, this time 2lb-03ozs and



Nick's 4lb-02oz

2lb-14ozs once again the winning bait was Roach head ledgered. The 17<sup>th</sup> found Nick fishing "H's" Lake, but only managed a small boot-lace eel which fell to ledger fished worm. However, on the 24<sup>th</sup> he returned to take an eel of 2lb-13ozs and on the 27<sup>th</sup>

netted an eel of 4lb-02ozs. Both eels took worm fished on a ledger rig. Nick's final eel of the season was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September and weighed 1lb-09ozs from "H's" Lake but this one, took a whole Perch again ledgered. (The fish marked with a \*, was actually a re-capture...this is what Nick had to say about it in the note he attached to his catch return....."the 2lb-13ozs fish I caught on the 24/08/00 was a re-capture. My brother caught it the week before, we could tell because of a deformed mouth. It is the first re-capture I have ever heard of, I don't know about anyone else? .... Well, if anyone else has ever had a genuine re-capture I'm sure that Nick, Steve, Stuart, Nick "the Hedgehog" and the rest of the active membership would love to hear about it ....so get your writing heads on and let us all know, through the pages of "Anguilla".



Steve's 3lb-15ozs

Steve Pitts has had a difficult season this year he's been fishing a new and hard water with nothing to show for many sessions of hard fishing, then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July he had an eel of 2lb-12ozs from a canal. Then on the 7<sup>th</sup>, whilst fishing B.P Pit Steve managed to take his first eel from the venue at 3lb-13ozs (1:45a.m) using Roach tail. However, September saw a change in fortunes when on the 17<sup>th</sup> eels of 2lb-01ozs and 2lb-08ozs were landed. Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> Steve had eels of 1lb-12ozs, 1lb-11ozs, 2lb-02ozs, 2lb-10ozs and 2lb-14ozs. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> he netted eels of 1lb-01ozs, 1lb-15ozs and 2lb-02ozs. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> he caught eels of 1lb-07ozs, 1lb-13ozs, 2lb-10ozs, 2lb-00oz, and at 3:10p.m an eel of 3lb-02ozs. Then on the 29<sup>th</sup> a 2lb-04ozs and a 2lb-01oz fell to Steve's rods. And finally on the 30<sup>th</sup> he had a 1lb-09ozs eel, then at 9:00p.m he had an eel of 4lb-09ozs, at 9:15p.m a 3lb-15ozs and at first light an eel of 2lb-01ozs. All of the above eels came from W.W. Pit and were taken on fish section, with the exception of the 1lb-09 which fell to worm.

Now to the catch return of Robert Haig. Robert has been fishing a Colne Valley gravel-pit for most of the season and as recorded some fine eel captures starting on the 10<sup>th</sup> July with an eel of 4lb-04ozs taken on a John Sidley Rig at 04:45a.m. Then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August Robert connected with eels of 3lb-11ozs using a Colin Dyson Rig at 01:30a.m. a 2lb-06ozs (J.S Rig) at 03:30a.m, then a 4lb-05ozs (C.D Rig) at 04:30a.m, at 05:00a.m. he had a 3lb-08ozs (J.S Rig), and finally at 05:30a.m a 3lb-13ozs (J.S Rig). What a morning eel fishing that was, well done Robert. Oh and by the way, all of Robert's eels were taken on good old worms.

On to the first, of only two catch returns from Junior Members that I have received this season. Master James Blackburn on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> September, at 11:45p.m had an eel of 8ozs, then on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> at 3:00a.m landed another eel of 8ozs. Both of James' eel were taken on John Sidley rig fished worm baits, and were caught from a Lancs Stillwater.

The other junior who sent me their catch return was Master Darrach Dorman who recorded a blank on the 29<sup>th</sup> July fishing a Norfolk club water with his dad Martin J Dorman. Martin fished the club water on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, and had an eel of 3lb-04ozs on running ledger with lobworms as bait at 02:00a.m. And at 03:50a.m on the 26<sup>th</sup>, again from the club water using worms and running ledger tactics had an eel of 1lb-05ozs.

John Davis has had a fairly good season this year starting on the 4<sup>th</sup> June with eels of 2lb-06ozs at 01:35a.m, and a 3lb-13ozs an hour later these eels took worm on a C.D Rig, then at 02:40a.m an eel of 3lb-06ozs fell to Roach head fished in conjunction with a J.S Rig. All three eels came from a Midlands lake. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> July John banked eels of 2lb-10ozs 00:35a.m and 2lb-06ozs at 04:40a.m both eels took worm (C.D Rig), then at 05:00 on Roach tail (J.S Rig) he had another eel of 2lb-07ozs again all the fish came from the Midlands lake. The 5<sup>th</sup> found John fishing a Staff's Gravel Pit were using worm as bait in combination with a C.D Rig he took eels of 1lb-11ozs (01:50a.m) and 2lb-04ozs (03:00a.m). On the 11<sup>th</sup>, back on the Midlands lake using C.D Riggged worm at

11:20p.m had an eel of 2lb-12ozs, then on the 13<sup>th</sup> at 01:40a.m he caught a fish of 1lb-13ozs using the same rig and bait. The 30<sup>th</sup> of August found him back on a Midlands lake where he took eels of 2lb-10ozs (11:15p.m), 1lb-15ozs (03:35a.m), 2lb-02ozs (07:05a.m) and 3lb-06ozs (08:00a.m), these four eels were caught on J.S Rig fished worm. 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, while again fishing a Midlands lake John connected with eels of 2lb-12ozs (00:40a.m) and 3lb-05ozs (04:35a.m) both took J.S Rig fished worm, then a 1lb-08ozs eel (06:30a.m) using a C.D Rig baited again with worm. On the 5<sup>th</sup> at 09:00p.m he had an eel of 2lb-07ozs that took C.D Rig fished worm. The 18<sup>th</sup> saw him take a small eel of 13ozs (02:00). and on the 26<sup>th</sup> a brace of eels weighing 1lb-14ozs (02:40a.m) and 1lb-11ozs (03:50). All the above eels took J.S rig fished worm, and once again were caught from a Midlands lake. John very nearly forgot to send in his catch return because of a "new addition to the Davis household", so I think I can pass on all of our congratulations to John & Julia on the birth of their baby girl Saffron who weighed in at 6lb-15ozs.

**Jim Angeletta** has mostly been fishing the L&L Canal this season and has had a few good sessions resulting in quite a few eels starting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April with eels of 2lb-06ozs (09:15p.m) and 1lb-04ozs (09:30p.m), both came to float fished worm. Then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May Jim took fish of 1lb-00oz (09:15p.m), 3lb-02ozs (10:00p.m) and a small bootlace eel (11:00p.m) on float fished worm, the first two came to J.S Rig fished worm. On to the 15<sup>th</sup> of August had a cracking session taking 7eels these where, 2lb-01ozs (10:15p.m), 1lb-12ozs (10:30p.m) and a bootlace (03:15a.m) taken on float fished worm, 2lb-07ozs (04:20a.m) took Bolt Rigged worm, 2lb-12ozs (04:45a.m) on float fished worm, 1lb-12ozs (04:55a.m) and 2lb-05ozs (5:15a.m) again where caught on worm presented on a Bolt Rig. On the first Elvington Fish-In on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, Jim had an eel of 3lb-04ozs, plus a bootlace eel both taken on ledgered worm bait.

**Nick "The Eeling Hedgehog" Rose**, has continued to send me his monthly catch returns (as has Steve Pitts). On 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> of August Nick had eels of 2lb-00oz (dead bait), 1lb-00oz (dead bait) and 1lb-00oz (worm) from a Shropshire Mere. Then on the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>, again from a Shropshire Mere he had an eel of 2lb-06ozs taken on a dead bait. And on the 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> of September Nick, while fishing a Midlands Canal took a fish of 2lb-07ozs.

**Jason "Eric" Morgan** hasn't done as much eeling as he would have liked, due to him getting married, so congratulations are in order I think, anyway on with Jason's catch return. On the 15<sup>th</sup> July whilst fishing the Staffs & Worcester Canal he managed to connect with an eel of 3lb-05ozs (10:30p.m) using Roach head in conjunction with a J.S Rig. The 26<sup>th</sup> of August found Jason fishing Trentham Gardens, using ledgered worm as the chosen method and bait took an eel of 3lb-10ozs (10:15p.m).

Another member who would like to have done more fishing this year is **Chris "Sad" Siddall**, but having said that, still managed to "chalk up" some very nice eels. On the 29<sup>th</sup> April fishing the Grand Union Canal Chris had eels of 3lb-06ozs (10:30p.m) on ledgered Gudgeon head and 2lb-14ozs (11:30p.m) on the same method and baited with the other end of the Gudgeon. Then on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May on the Trentham Gardens Fish-in, Chris banked an eel of 3lb-09ozs (11:00p.m) using ledgered Roach head. At the Rickmansworth Aquadrome Fish-in he took an eel of 3lb-02ozs (11:30p.m) again on ledgered Roach head. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August on the Elvington 2<sup>nd</sup> trip, Chris had eels of 2lb-02ozs (2:30a.m) and 2lb-10ozs (11:00p.m), both eels fell to worm ledgered. And finally on the 29<sup>th</sup> fishing the River Our in Luxembourg using quiver-tipped luncheon meat, Chris contacted an eel of 1lb-01ozs (3:00p.m). (Chris asks if this is The National Anguilla Club Luxembourg Record? Well, if there have been none caught bigger than Chris', then I think it is.)

Another member who's chosen a difficult water to spend most of this season on is **Steve "Dances with Eels" Richardson**, this lake as no history of eel captures



**Chris'  
Luxembourg  
"Record"**

but Steve will persist until the biggie shows up. However, Steve did manage to take some eels this season, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August fishing the Trent & Mersey Canal eels of 2lb-06ozs (10:55p.m) and 2lb-05ozs (11:10p.m), both fish where caught on ledgered Roach head and on the same session an eel of 2lb-03ozs (00:10a.m) on ledgered Rudd head. And finally on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September at a Derbyshire stillwater Steve netted an eel of 3lb-15ozs (8:00p.m) taken once again on ledgered Roach head. "Dances" closes his catch return with the words, "27 nights and days for 4 fish.....can't wait for next year !!!!!". So I'll wish Steve good luck & tight lines for the coming season.

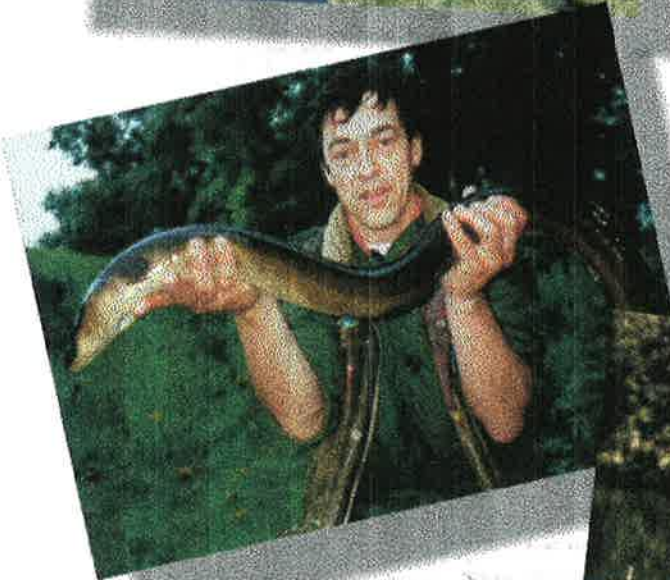
I'd like to thank **Karl Richardson** for sending me his catch return this season, although Karl didn't manage to catch any eels, he still sent a return in, this is the kind of response a Record Officer dreams of, so once again, thank you Karl.

**Anthony "BT" Jolley** has continued his great season this year, in August, on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Tony had an eel of 2lb-13ozs (11:15p.m) on a live Roach. Then on a local stillwater he recorded eels of 1lb-13ozs (10:15p.m) and 1lb-00oz (10:30p.m) both fish took live Roach. And finally on the first Elvington

# Photo Gallery



Top Left.....Graham Wilkes' 5lb - 02ozs  
Top Right.....Anthony Jolley's 5lb - 03ozs  
Centre Left.....Damian Wood's 5lb - 03ozs  
Centre Right...Barry McConnell's 5lb - 13ozs  
Bottom.....Steve Pitts' 4lb-10ozs



Top Left.....Pete Drabble's 5lb - 10ozs  
Top Right.....Nick Duffy's 4lb - 02ozs  
Centre Left.... Barry McConnell's 4lb - 07ozs  
Centre Right...Steve Richardson's 3lb - 15ozs  
Bottom.....Anthony Jolley's 4lb - 14ozs

# *Photo Gallery*

(continued from page 27)

trip Tony took eels of 3lb-03ozs (3:30a.m) and 4lb-14ozs (4:15a.m), once again the winning bait was live Roach.



The "Burglar's 4lb-15ozs

My fishing buddy Damian "The Burglar" Wood didn't get out as often as the previous year due to being "sent" on a computer course which took up most of the summer months and reduced our outing by 75%, but as usual still managed to take a few eels. His first was an eel of 2lb-00oz (11:30p.m) from the L&L Canal using Dyson Rig fished worms. Then on the 4<sup>th</sup> June Damian took eels of 1lb-02ozs (11:10p.m), 1lb-01oz (11:50p.m) and 1lb-08ozs, these fish fell to Dyson Rig fished fish section and came from a Lancs Flood Water. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July "Woody" while again fishing the L&L Canal



Tony's Hat-Trick

had a fish of 4lb-15ozs 11:20p.m), this fish took a 5" live bait fish directly under the rod on a Uni-Rig. And finally on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August he took his best eel of the season at 5lb-03ozs (6:00a.m) again from the L&L Canal on the same bait and method.

What a start to Graham Wilkes' eel fishing career, his very first fished for eel was a 5lb-02ozs (10:45a.m) from Rocla using a link ledgered live bait on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, he also took an eel of 2lb-12ozs (10:40p.m) on the same session, the bait for this eel was worms. Then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September at Emberton Lake again using link ledgered worms Graham banked an eel of 3lb-00oz (2:15p.m). A short message at the bottom of his catch return reads "A total of twenty sessions...next year more...there's on doubt about that" (I love the little notes that members add to their returns...I think it gives a small insight into their personality...so keep on doing them!!!)

Stuart "Spac-e-man" Dean on the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> of May on the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the season on a local park lake took eels of 2lb-09ozs (11:00p.m) using off bottom ledger fished lobworms and 1lb-10ozs (1:40a.m) using Roach head fished on a J.S Rig. Then on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> from the G.U Canal (5<sup>th</sup> session) Stuart had an eel of 1lb+ (11:00p.m) using a J.S Rig fished Roach head, and an eel of 2lb-12ozs (00:20a.m) on lobworms using off bottom ledger method. At Elvington on the 2<sup>nd</sup> trip on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August (12<sup>th</sup> session), he banked an eel of 3-10ozs (10:15p.m) using off bottom J.S rigged live Gudgeon. Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August on Starts 13<sup>th</sup> session at North West lake he had a fish of 3lb-04ozs again on the off bottom J.S rig with live Roach as bait.

Barry "Only-the-Lonely" McConnell has continued his great season with an eel of 5lb-01ozs (3:30a.m) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, the 17<sup>th</sup> eels of 3lb-11ozs (00:45a.m) and a small eel of under 1lb-00oz. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Barry caught fish of 2lb-06ozs (10:55p.m), 4lb-07ozs (11:05p.m) and a small eel -1lb. And on the 19<sup>th</sup> he had an eel of 3lb-12ozs (4:15p.m) plus three smaller eels of under a pound. On the 20<sup>th</sup> eels of 4lb-01oz (2:25p.m), 4lb-14½ ozs (4:45p.m), 2lb-00oz (9:50p.m), 2lb-11ozs (10:05p.m), 2lb-09ozs (10:45p.m) plus a bootlace. On the 21<sup>st</sup> Barry had two boots and a 1lb+ eel. Then on the 22<sup>nd</sup> he took two eels 1lb+ and an eel of 3lb-04ozs (10:45a.m). All the above fish came from a "Different Mere", and were taken on a J.S Rig baited with lobworms, with the exception of one of the boots on the 21<sup>st</sup> took a Roach head....(What a session!!,...22 eels in 7 nights). On the 1st July Barry had eels of



Barry's 4lb-14ozs

2lb-07ozs (10:45p.m) taken on off bottom worms, and 2lb-01oz (00:50a.m) on J.S Rigged worms. And on the 2<sup>nd</sup> he had an eel of 2lb-07ozs (1:20p.m) also on J.S Rig fished worms. Then on the 1<sup>st</sup> Elvington Trip on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, Barry had an eel of 2lb-01oz on off bottom worm. The 8<sup>th</sup>, whilst fishing the Middle Level he caught five boots using single maggot on a whip, he had a 1lb-00oz eel on a dead Gudgeon on a J.S Rig. From the Great Ouse on the 9<sup>th</sup> fishing J.S Rigged dead bait he took a boot and a 1lb-00 eel. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September from the Middle Level using J.S Rig and dead Gudgeon netted an eel of 2lb-06ozs (9:30p.m). Then on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> fishing the Relief Channel again on J.S Rigged dead baits Barry banked eels of 2lb-01oz and 1lb-04ozs.

Now on to Peter F. Drabble's catch report. On the 28<sup>th</sup> April fishing the Shropshire Union Canal, Peter took an eel of 2lb-10ozs (9:30p.m) plus four bootlace eels, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> he had six boots (9:15 - midnight) again on ledgered worms. On the 4<sup>th</sup> May from a small Warrington pond he took an eel of 1lb-08ozs (10:10p.m). Back on the S.U Canal on the 14<sup>th</sup> he banked eels of 2lb-08ozs (10:00p.m), 2lb-05ozs (10:40p.m) plus a boot. At Trentham Gardens on the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> eels of 1lb-00 (10:30p.m) and 3lb-11ozs (10:15p.m). And on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July from a Shropshire Mere,

Peter took an eel of **5lb-10ozs** (10:30a.m) plus four boots. And finally at the 1<sup>st</sup> Elvington Trip he banked an eel of **3lb+** and a boot. All of Peter's eels were taken using ledgered lobworms.

**Steve Ricketts** hasn't had many eels this season, but what eels he did manage were very nice indeed. Steve's been fishing a coastal pit and as had eels of **3lb-03ozs**, **3lb-01oz**, **3lb-03ozs** taken on ledgered Rudd, and **3lb-04ozs** taken on off bottom livebait, (no dates supplied).

And lastly, I come to my measly return. I didn't manage to get out eeling as much as I did last season for numerous reasons, so the only eels I managed were on the 1<sup>st</sup> Elvington Trip. On the 4<sup>th</sup> August using Dyson Rigged livebait I took an eel of **3lb-02ozs** (10:00p.m) and using a livebait on a Uni-Rig managed an eel of **2lb-09ozs** (10:15p.m). So, as my old school teacher used to say "Must do better Mr Jolley!!!!" and I will try to get out more next season.

So in concluding my 3<sup>rd</sup> Record Officers Report I must thank all the members how sent me their returns this year...and although the membership has dropped slightly this year... the actual number of returns is up on last year by 2, so lets see if we can make it even higher next season. If I have missed any eels or any information is incorrect, would the member concerned please contact me so that any errors can be put right. So I will wish you all a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

### FROM THE PAST.

The following extract is from the pages of the Wigan Observer, the feature is called "From the Past" and relates to what was reported 10, 25, 50, and 100 years ago, and this appeared from 100 years ago.

"On Thursday afternoon Mr Sumner, tenant of Lower Bull Hey, the house at the lower portion of the new cricket ground, captured a large silver eel not far distant from his residence. The eel seems to have made its way from the lake in the Park by means of an underground water course, which as an outlet not far from the pond at the bottom end of the cricket ground. The new wall skirting the Rectory grounds seems to have stopped further progress and the eel was making its way overland to Bull Hey Pond when it was seen and captured by Mr Sumner. On being weighed it was found to scale 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs, not a bad catch, and would tend to disprove the argument of those who maintain that eels do not attain that size in inland fresh water ponds. The weight was verified by many, including Councillor Booth, the popular local angler."

## Snickers goes Large

Chris Hodgson  
16 Simmons Way  
Okehampton  
Devon  
EX20 1PY

Dear colleagues,

Once again the time of year has passed whereby the clinically insane amongst us have sold our souls in the pursuit of a London Marathon Finishers medal. Having missed last years event due to the misfortunes of a broken leg, I have decided to "large it up" in 2001 and not only do the worlds greatest marathon, but also Europe's toughest trail race, The Adidas Grizzly. The Grizzly is reportedly 20ish miles of edge of insanity running. However, the real challenge here is not just completing the events but the fact that they are a mere 5 weeks apart!!!

There is of course a reason for me telling you all this. As they say, a friend in need is a pain in the arse and so in a fashion, which is in a way linked to any sort of super hero, I will morph into Harry the Happy Haemorrhoid. Harry is a happy, go lucky chappie, whose sole purpose in life is to be a pain in your butt, whilst pricking your conscience - Yes we're talking charity.

As before I am running to raise money for children who are visually disabled. The charity is **LOOK** and it benefits both the children and their families in order to give them a better quality of life

As a unit the N.A.C. is an organisation whose numbers are constantly on the increase. This is a credit to the group and the members. When I ran London in 1999 the members were generous beyond belief. Money was coming through the post on a daily basis.

So once again I am asking for you to **PLEASE** put your hand in your pocket. Pledge whatever it is that you can afford. If everyone sent just £1:00, yes one gold drinking credit, then between us we would amass the best part of one hundred quid. Of course if you want to send more than a pound then I would be more than happy to accept any given sum on behalf of **LOOK**.

Thank you for taking the time to read my plea and of course thanks for sending me your hard, and often very hard earned cash. For those of you wishing to send cheques please make them payable to **LOOK CHARITY**.

On behalf of myself, along with all the children your support will help, I wish you a very Happy Christmas and New Year. I also hope that you get as much pleasure from each of your runs as I get from mine.



# The Spirit of Christmas

By Arthur J. Sutton

'Twas Christmas morn in the Clubhouse  
 No anglers gathered there  
 And who can blame them from staying home  
 And supping Yuletide fare.

In the morning light the rod racks  
 Stand gleaming 'gainst the wall  
 The rods all true and just like new  
 Well cared for one and all.

Well. Almost all – one rack is bare  
 No rod adorns it now  
 The owner lost his rod last week  
 And I will tell of how.

He is our youngest member  
 One rod is all he had  
 And very little else because  
 The youngster had no DAD.

He often fished here all alone  
 In the clubs own lake  
 Last weekend he fished for pike  
 Two days without a take.

The take he DID have has, I'm sure  
 Left him broken hearted  
 For someone sneaked up – stole his rod  
 And hurriedly departed.

Outside the snow lays crisp and deep  
 And drifting, gleaming white  
 No one about – yet suddenly  
 Two figures come in sight.

Our eldest members, looking tired  
 For many miles they've trod  
 They come inside and with fingers numb  
 Unwrap – a brand new rod.

The two of them I know quite well  
 Old Tom and poor deaf Jack  
 With loving hands they place the rod  
 In what was the empty rack.

And return from whence they came  
 Into the swirling snow  
 They've brought the young lad joy anew  
 Though their names he'll never know.

And know the club house seems quite warm  
 Warmed by Christmas cheer  
 And all should know that on this day  
 The spirit of Christmas was here.

## The Pit

By Bob Hornegold

As a new member my experience of eel fishing is very limited, but as a long time specimen hunter the challenge of a big eel was my target for 1999.

In 1996 whilst night fishing for carp on a Northampton golf course lake, I had a very odd take. The indicator arm played a very merry tune, which I hit early and was lucky enough to land a 5lb 1oz eel. This was on a popped up fishmeal boilie and was fairly hooked in the mouth. As this lake is rarely fished, I can only put this capture down to luck.

Over the years I had targeted many different species and this capture really fired my enthusiasm to catch a big eel by design. The first job to do was have a look through my N.A.S.A. magazines and read everything I could find on the species. I'm sure many anglers new to eel fishing have read *Successful Eel Fishing* by John Sidley, which I found the most interesting and helpful of books.

Lots of J.S. rigs were made up and a box of bits set aside for the next year. But somehow the next two summers were spent cat fishing, which has a lot of similarities to eel fishing on a larger, stronger scale. The '99 season arrived and a water in the Lee valley well known for it's perch fishing was selected, as it has a reputation for bite-offs.

Most of my fishing in recent years has been with fishing companion Gary Newland, so when we set off we had realistic expectations for the task ahead.

Our initial rigs consisted of air-injected worms, popped up approximately 6in to 1ft off the bottom, with free running feeders packed with chopped up worms. As this pit is fairly snag free, I felt I could get away with 12ft, 1½lb. TC Harrison barbel rods and 8lb Maxima line. Gary fished light carp rods and 10lb line, which proved to be the right choice.

The first night was very memorable for the constant movement of Gary's indicator on one of his rods. This is something we noticed very often over this season. Between us we would have 6 or 7 rods out, usually in the same, but only one rod would have any action. That night Gary only had one take followed by a dogged fight, which surprised us both. The netting of the eel was a nightmare, something we never really got to grips with that year, but the end result produced a superb eel of 5lbs, far exceeding our wildest expectations.

Fired by this capture and a great deal of reading, my baits and rigs had changed. I tried deadbaits, whole and halved, small live baits, Dyson rigs etc. but after 10 blank night trips I was beginning to think that my name was not on any eel from this pit.

At the end of August I went back to my original set up, free running leads/feeders, J.S. traces and size 6 Mustad chisel point hooks.

It's 2am, I'm standing over my rods watching my drop-back arm twitching. Having tip ledgered for barbel over many years and knowing that many fish are lost waiting for a proper take, I quickly picked up the rod, clicked in the bale arm, tightened down and struck. The rod arched over into an alarming curve, but instinct told me not to let this fish have any line. Once I got the fish on the surface it was a question of constant pressure. At the net all hell broke loose. It went in, the net was lifted but there was no eel, it had flipped out. Two goes later it was in, I sat back shocked at the power of this fish. The eel was lip hooked, so it was no problem to unhook. After such a hard fight we thought it was best to allow the eel to recover. Gary put the fish in a large carp sack and placed it on a long cord in deep water.



**Garv Newland with an eel of 3lb-12ozs**



**6lb exactly**



**What a way to start!!  
7lb 2 oz**

Having spoken to Mick Bowles, I now had confidence in handling a large eel, and this was a LARGE eel. In the morning on the unhooking mat it measured 49" long with a 10½" girth and weighed in at 7lb 2oz on two sets of scales.

Another 4 or 5 trips produced one more eel for Gary at 3¾lb, and then it was autumn and time for chub, perch and barbel.

The Pit had occupied all our summer fishing trips. Between us, hundreds of rod hours had gone by for only four bites. I say bites because only one eel gave any sort of run. All the fish were returned alive and I learned a great deal about another species.

1200 rod hours = 3 eels = 3¾lb, 6lb and 7lb 2oz.

Oh! The fourth run. That came to my rod whilst on my own, lets just say I now use 2lb T.C. carp rods, 12lb line and a 50" cat net.

## Wishin'

By Barbarella

Elvington fish-in and there was me wishin'  
I'd get to see some action at last  
But all I got told was that Spaceman nearly got hold  
Of an eel that escaped pretty fast

Always the gent, Nick asked no rent  
For his caravan, a whole weekend stay  
But was it Stuart's idea to go drink some beer  
Or did Nick lead the Spaceman astray?

To York I did go with children in tow  
So fishing time would not be missed  
How could it be when we came home for tea  
Nick and Stuart were just a bit .....intoxicated

I'm not taking the micky, I know it's quite tricky  
Eeling is serious stuff  
The problem then, with all of you men  
Is you're just not getting enough

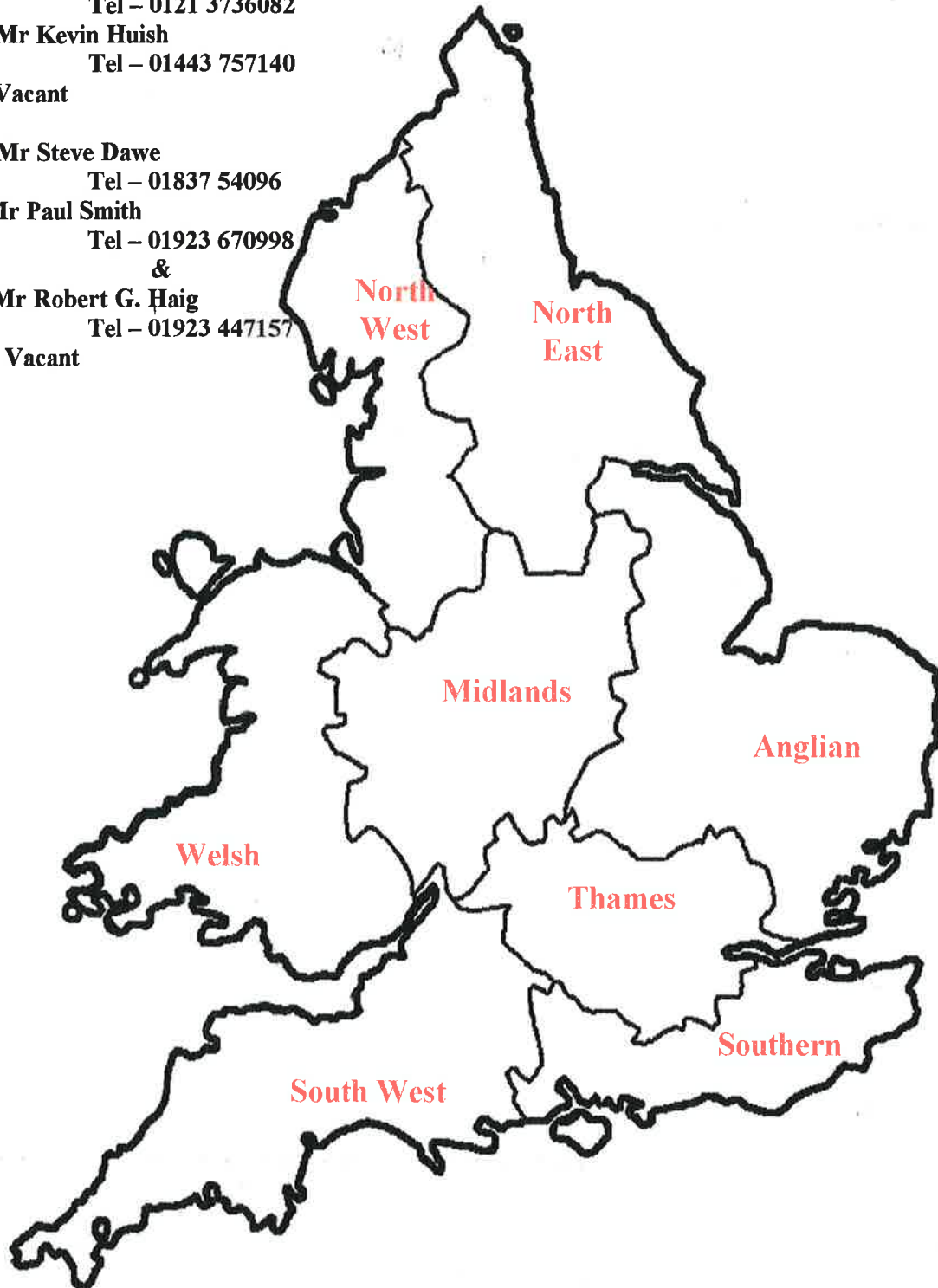
Try to entice, act kind and nice  
Pretend that you're trying to score  
Take lots of time, use your best line  
Then maybe you'll catch a lot more

I can only conclude, without being rude  
That you spend quite a lot of time wishin'  
That women wouldn't moan when you leave them at home  
But really, you'd rather be 'fishin'

At the AGM in April 2000 it was decided that each region would have a number of witnesses for eel captures. To meet the criteria for qualification for club trophies or for an eel to be included on the Top 50 Eels list, a club member should witness all eels caught over 5lbs, wherever possible and a photograph (not digital) should be sent to either The Records Officer or other committee member. To make things easier for everyone, could anyone who is prepared to act as a witness to eel captures within their region, contact your Regional Organiser so that your contact number can be put onto the Regional map and circulated to all members.

# REGIONAL MAP & ORGANISERS.

- North West:-* Mr Peter Waterfield  
Tel – 01942 746374
- North East:-* Mr Mark Handley Wood  
Tel – 0113 2581709
- Midlands:-* Mr Nick Rose  
Tel – 0121 3736082
- Welsh:-* Mr Kevin Huish  
Tel – 01443 757140
- Southern:-* Vacant
- South West:-* Mr Steve Dawe  
Tel – 01837 54096
- Thames:-* Mr Paul Smith  
Tel – 01923 670998  
&  
Mr Robert G. Haig  
Tel – 01923 447157
- Anglian:-* Vacant



## TWO SEASONS IN THE WILDERNESS OR 'BLANK CITY'.

By Steve Richardson.

It was cold outside, very cold. Inside the house, sitting in my chair in front of the fire, my mind kept dropping into eel fishing mode when it should only have been concerned with whereabouts on the river I could catch some decent Grayling, Chub or Pike. There were also three very beautiful Carp, two commons and a fully scaled mirror, hiding somewhere in the depths of a Cambridgeshire lake to think about. I had abandoned the idea of carrying on eel fishing through the winter months for several reasons. All these reasons held water and I knew that my decision to put *Anguilla anguilla* out of my head was the best thing to do, both for my sanity and my future eel fishing.

The main three reasons were.....

1. I had just endured my worst eel season to date. This had nothing to do with not having caught a decent eel because I had gone on 'B.T.'s' Yorkshire fish-in and had recorded a 4.09 and a 3.11 over the weekend. (This had been especially enjoyable because super catcher, and man of the moment, Damian 'The Burglar' Wood blanked off the swim next to me.)
2. 'The Hedgehog' and I had just completed a joint slideshow for the membership at the winter social meeting and it dawned on me afterwards that my eel fishing was in danger of becoming a desperate challenge rather than an enjoyable pastime.
3. Winter eel fishing has more to do with confidence and having a good water, or waters, than we realise. It is bloody hard going and each session is usually long, dark, cold and quiet on the buzzer front.

Considering that most of my spare time was being spent either compiling the club Bulletin or attending NASA and SACG meetings on behalf of the club, any fishing time would be better spent catching some fish rather than sitting around getting cold and potentially depressed. Mind you, if this were true, why was I always



**Eelers dawn.**

being drawn into getting the coming seasons campaign sorted out and defined. So, after trying to uncover why I kept thinking this way, in the end I put it down to being obsessed about eels and eel fishing.

Then, without reason, the penny dropped. Just before Christmas, whilst working on the club Bulletin, I suddenly realised that my so called river fishing only involved in me praying hard every Wednesday for the water levels to drop enough, so that I could try and get out there and maybe fool something with a single maggot, a lump of smelly cheese paste or, even worse, a lobworm. Typically, when I make my plans for winter river fishing, they never take into consideration the dreaded rain and ensuing floodwater. After looking at my fishing logbook since October 1<sup>st</sup> 1999, I saw to my horror that there was never a weekend when the river was in good winter condition. It was either just filling up with cold rainwater that was mixed with petrol and salt off the roads or it was just holding enough of the brown colour in it that puts the pike off feeding on the Trent and Derwent and the Grayling off feeding on the Dove and still being too cold to encourage the Chub to settling into a feeding mood on all of them.

With the weather putting a halt to serious sessions with my designated winter species, I decided to look at the eel season that had just past and then decide what to do for the coming spring campaign for the year 2000. The first thing that I realised was that

the normal early spring start would be hampered by the re-fit to the kitchen that had been planned by Erica but put off by me over the summer months.

The season of 1999 had seen me select a water for a concentrated effort into catching potentially less but, optimistically, larger eels. This had turned out to be a massive mistake. I had endured blank after blank and was struggling to come to terms with the lack of action. I had selected a water with no confirmed eel history but the place looked perfect. The water itself was quite small, was split into two main ponds connected by a small stream

and lay in a meadow alongside which the river Trent ran and had the Trent and Mersey canal passing by directly above it. I thought it had to either hold eels from the Trent or from the canal... or both.

I cannot say whether it holds any eels at all because I caught zilch from it, even though I was able to night fish it with a select few Tench anglers. None of them had accidentally caught an eel using worms and maggots as bait but this didn't deter me, as I simply felt that live and deadbaits would answer that slight problem given time.

Anyway, the results of many nights there using lives, deads and worms... and baiting up with groundbait, oils and dead maggots were Perch, Tench, Pike and a very frustrated eel angler.

Now I have written in the past that eel fishing is about confidence and accepting quite a few blanks along the way. I never wrote that it is about organising all the gear, bait and travelling which results in having a weekends camping and a nature watch. Somewhere along the lines, we all want to catch an eel or two.

I will happily fish all season for the chance of a large eel IF I know there are some eels in the place I'm fishing. Every time someone asked me what I was fishing for I replied "Perch". This was not to be secretive but to stop unwanted knowledge of my activities. I would prefer to be up front about my quest to catch eels because I like the conversations I get into when talking about eel fishing. However, I do not give the information up until I know the person better, albeit I usually keep it to myself unless the water has a known history of eels on the bank. The next line of conversation usually goes like this "Even if the Perch aren't willing to play, I'll welcome any accidental Tench or the odd pike, to a blank session. Anything but eels." This generally brings about one of two replies. Either, "I've never heard of any eels coming from here mate" or "There's some good eels in here mate, the best eel out was over seven pounds, there's plenty of fives and sixes". (Strange that all waters produce five, six and seven's, isn't it.) All my conversations with other anglers usually ended with them saying reply number one.

The other downside to the water I had chosen was it that it is owned by a Ukrainian settlement. This may not appear to be relevant at first. I certainly didn't think it was a factor to take on board when I chose the place but two separate people whom I have some time for, certainly their opinions are treated seriously when they are given, said the same thing at different points in the season to me.

This being the question... "I bet all the eels have been netted and eaten by the locals in the settlement". My reply to both was "They can't have had them all, so even if they have done some netting, it should leave me a few and, maybe large, specimens to go for".

Erica said it to me when I first took her to see the place. I disregarded her comment on the basis of her having a warped sense of humour. Nick said it to me when I told him where I was fishing for the coming season. He also said that he and Andrew had fished there before, some years ago, and even though he thought it should contain eels he never caught any. Now Nick not catching an eel is no concern for the waters potential stock of eels... but Andrew not catching, especially when he is fishing with Nick, quite seriously is. Adding the fact that he had always suspected that if eels had been in there once upon a time that they were now probably past items on the Ukrainian's menu brought about serious pangs of worry. But still I carried on....Oooopps!!!!

Now I do know there are eels in the water NOW, because I caught some from the canal and put them in. All were two pounders and if they stay in the place they should make an interesting quest for Karl when he is my age, in twenty-two years time.

So, in the spring of 1999 I had managed to catch two eels from a fish-in that went 3.11 and 4.09 and then spent the rest of the summer blanking on this horny looking water. I admit to straying onto the canal in midweek for short up to midnight sessions rather than fish the lake, just so I could be in with a chance of an eel or two. I called this my re-stocking policy, my direct action for the Eel Conservation Society. (I secretly hoped it would put me in the same league as Nick as having caught the same eel twice.)

September 30<sup>th</sup> 1999 saw me decide against blanking on the Ukrainian water for my last session of the year and instead I talked Nick into going to another lake for a last ditch three pounder each for both of us. We both fished four rods each and enjoyed a marvellous blank together. What a way to end the season....And we still had a slide show to present at the winter social meeting. The trouble was, we didn't know what to talk about and we didn't have anything to show off either. In the end we decided to talk about the years events, showing that eel fishing is difficult for everyone....including Nick.

Having recounted my misery of the season of 1999, you would have thought that I would have chosen somewhat more wisely for this year. In May of 2000 I thought I had done just that.

It was a chance thing that brought about this season's choice. My fishing partner when fishing the rivers in the summer and winter is also my fishing partner when we go Carp fishing in the winter. We had both been looking for a water that was slightly more private, had night fishing, was not too crowded and was close enough to home to travel to during the week, as well as the weekends. It also had to have the opportunity for me to fish for eels, as well as the carp. Night fishing was the number one requisite.

Dave received the nod from Shaun Harrison of Walkers of Trowell about the possibility of us getting a place on a syndicate in the local area. A phone call was made and Dave went over to view the place one afternoon. He got in touch with me and said that the place was just what we were looking for and he said I should go along for a look myself. Erica and I went over one Saturday morning and met the syndicate leader who said I could have the

last place on this year's list if I wanted it. (Dave had already bought his ticket.) The place looked just superb, clear water, a mature gravel pit dug and flooded in the 1950's, great features and it would be very quiet considering that there were only 20 anglers on the syndicate... and they were all Carp nutters.

Was there any history of eels from the place I asked? Only to be told "No one has ever caught an eel from the water or even had the slightest hint that eels might be present since fishing on the place had been granted to the syndicate, five years ago".

The place looked so right that I mis-heard the 'ding-dong' that went off in my head. I thought it sounded like 'Yee-ha!!!'

Fishing wasn't allowed until June 16<sup>th</sup> so this also gave me time to get the kitchen sorted out as well. Roll on the glorious 16<sup>th</sup> I thought. (Erica wrote out the cheque for £250.00 and I rubbed my hands with glee... and gave her a kiss.)

June 16<sup>th</sup> arrived and I decided that rather than fish the water with a load of other lines everywhere, that I would take a walk around, look at the swims and see what I could learn about them from the other members in the syndicate. When I arrived I saw that the water had undergone a massive change since my last look in early May. Instead of the odd weedbed here and there, there were now only a few small areas that were weed free. When I say it had become a very weedy water, I meant that the weed was top to bottom with Canadian pondweed. Some areas were twelve feet thick. Everyone said it was the worst that it had ever been.

Typical, no history of eels and now I had an environment that meant the eels, if there were any, didn't have to mooch very far to find food. One thing about weed and eels that I've learnt over the years, is that if the water has a very low population of eels then the more weed there is, the harder it is to find a feeding eel. Where there are lots and lots of eels in a water, weed growth makes very little difference to runs per session. A lake I fished in Bedfordshire had Canadian pond weed everywhere and when I first saw it I thought I stood no chance. However, the first night gave me four three pounders, and these were to baits placed straight in the weed. A friend of mine placed his baits in open spots and only had one missed run to show for his efforts. The second night saw me place a bait in open water and the only action I received was to the rod in the weed. This resulted in a high two and a mid three. So, from a weed situation I felt no problems but, because of the lack of history of eels being present, I felt confused and unsure of where to start.

Every session from then onwards was the same. Find a swim that looked good and try to place four rods, with different baits, in likely looking spots. The first hurdle to overcome was the fact that the water is split into two parts, separated by an island. One end of the island has a twenty-foot opening in approximately three-foot of water and the other opening is five-foot wide and about four inches deep. This area dries up in the summer and is at best one foot deep in the winter. The second hurdle is that the 'two lakes' are 19 acres and 27 acres and that there are sixteen designated swims to choose from. With 20 members on the lake I needed the Carp to play hard to get, so that I could start choosing swims from 'appeal' rather than 'last one left'. I fancied the end of the island where the four-inch deep channel was, as a good area to fish but that area didn't come free of carp boys for ages. The island had four swims on it. And the smaller 'lake' had five swims on it. The 'back lake' as it is known was more interesting than the 'main lake'. It had mini islands, gullies, small bays and fingers coming off the island. It looked the older of the 'two lakes', certainly it looked the more eely area.

The 'main lake' is square in shape and has seven swims. Two separate banks have three swims each on them, one bank has no swim on it and one bank has one swim. Casting from every swim is a 'get in the water' affair, so chest waders were purchased. (Very sexy) The water is an 'sssi' site and there was to be no tree reconstruction or bank alteration done or the fishing would cease immediately.

To top it all, I found myself in conversation with a birdwatcher on my first trip (weekend) and he asked me if I had had any luck. I replied that I hadn't so far but was hoping for better things to come. He said that the carp looked like they were ready for spawning and I said that I was fishing for eels not carp. He seemed quite interested but told me that he had not heard of any eels being found on site by English Nature over the years. I told him rather smugly that if there were eels present it didn't mean that they would know about it, unless one was caught. After a short while longer he introduced himself to me as the head warden and said that when he reported back to the committee he could foresee big problems for the continued fishing rights on the lake. I asked why that was and he said that the committee had only given permission for anglers to fish for the Carp. Jesus Christ, I had only been on the water one weekend and I looked like I was about to get the fishing taken away from the syndicate. Brilliant, I thought.

I contacted the syndicate leader and explained what had gone on to him. He came down to the lake and after a couple of hours we straightened out the warden by saying that surely they would like to know if there were any eels in the lake or not. We said we would monitor the results of my eel fishing and inform the committee of our findings at the end of the season. He went away reasonably happy with this and nothing further was heard about the situation. Thank God I didn't tell him I was using little Roach and Perch as livebaits or applying a sharp knife to them to form sections as bait.

Weekend number one and a blank was recorded. This went on for several weeks and then I had a roach head section picked up in the margin, at dawn one morning, which resulted in a dropped take. On gently winding in, I

found the bait missing. It could have been one of the big Perch, Roach or one of the Carp. I would never know. I took it as a sign though and continued on.

W. Lobworms on the bottom just produced Perch after Perch and Tench after Tench. So I decided to use off bottom rigs instead. This resulted in no action whatsoever. I had paid £250.00 to fish this place and was not about to naff off elsewhere but things were looking bleak. I wanted to catch some eels, so I went onto the canal for an early doors session (8.00pm-1.00am) in the middle of the summer. I took three two pounders in-between 10.00pm and 12.15am, so I went home in the knowledge that I could catch eels if they were about.

Over the course of the season nothing changed, I did record a blank there for the season in the end but whether there are eels in there I don't know. I don't think I could convince Erica to allow me £250.00 to try again next year and even if I could, I think I need to catch some eels this coming season.

Several things have happened, inside and outside the club, over the season to make enjoying my eel fishing rather difficult. This, coupled with a very hard water, nearly made me walk away from it all this year but, just when there is no hope left, something or someone comes along and gives you strength.

During September, purely by luck, I acquired a ticket for another water whilst fishing the killer water. Somehow I got talking to an angler who used to be on the syndicate the previous year and he recognised my name when it was offered to him. He said that he had seen it on the inter-net and knew a Carp angler who knew me. He told me about a water I might be interested in and offered to get me a ticket. I thanked him for his offer and we agreed to meet up later, when he had sorted out the ticket. Soon enough, I was in possession of the said ticket. All this came about because I knew the water he was fishing and told him all I knew about the place. It transpired that the local anglers wouldn't divulge any information to him about the place or its fish. (Well, now he knows just what the deal is and he has since taken some very nice fish from the water. Both of us are now well sorted out and friends to boot.)

I took a look at the water and did one night to see how things felt. I blanked out of course but I always felt in with a chance. This water does have a history of eels albeit few and far between... but they are in there.

My second session saw me fish the next swim down and I missed a good take to a Roach head section at 10.50pm, which stopped for some strange reason. I soon found out why, I had left the bail arm shut. Typically, that was the only action of the night.

I returned again and fished the next swim down from the last. (I was sort of covering the bank trying to learn about the water, fishing the first rod in the old area and the other three in the new spots, just like fenland drain hopping.) I placed my first rod, with a Roach head section as bait, in the same spot where the previous pick up occurred and at 8.00pm I had another take to this rod. The strike met resistance and after a good hard scrap I netted an eel of 3lb 15oz....pleased?.. I'll say I was. (35" by 8" of pure, sheer, unadulterated joy.)



**3lb 15ozs of hard earned eel**

The weather is once again cold outside, very cold. I am sitting at my computer at 6.33pm, on October 29<sup>th</sup>, having sat here since 11.20am writing these words down as a possible article for the Christmas edition of 'ANGUILLA'. The rain is pounding down and the wind is strong and very cold. I expect the rivers are rising as I write this but this time I am not being conned. (I phoned Jimmy this afternoon and we discussed the weather change and the possible state of the rivers, along with non sent in catch returns, how the Bulletin was going, the up and coming winter social meeting, the season just past, his and 'The Burglar's' slide-show and how Brian Crawford has sent in his catch return from France with eight full nights eeling included on it. This is an achievement that many of you will not have succeeded in matching, and he has been building a home and running a guesthouse with his wife Jill as well.) I shall fish for those Chub, Pike and Grayling this winter with true dedication and focus when the conditions allow me to do so, because next spring sees me start my eeling on a water that has already given me one of its most valued prizes. I have the confidence to sit there all season in anticipation of my long awaited target of a five-pound eel. This water has a history of good eels, which have a reputation for being difficult to capture. However, I am prepared to put in the blanks to see one or two of them grace my landing net, even after two dismal seasons spent chasing rainbows.

Roll on March.....



## Rigs and Things

By Nick Rose

Over the last few years there has been a number articles regarding different rigs and adaptations to existing rigs (12 articles in the last 4 mags). I thought I would put my pennies worth in on the subject.

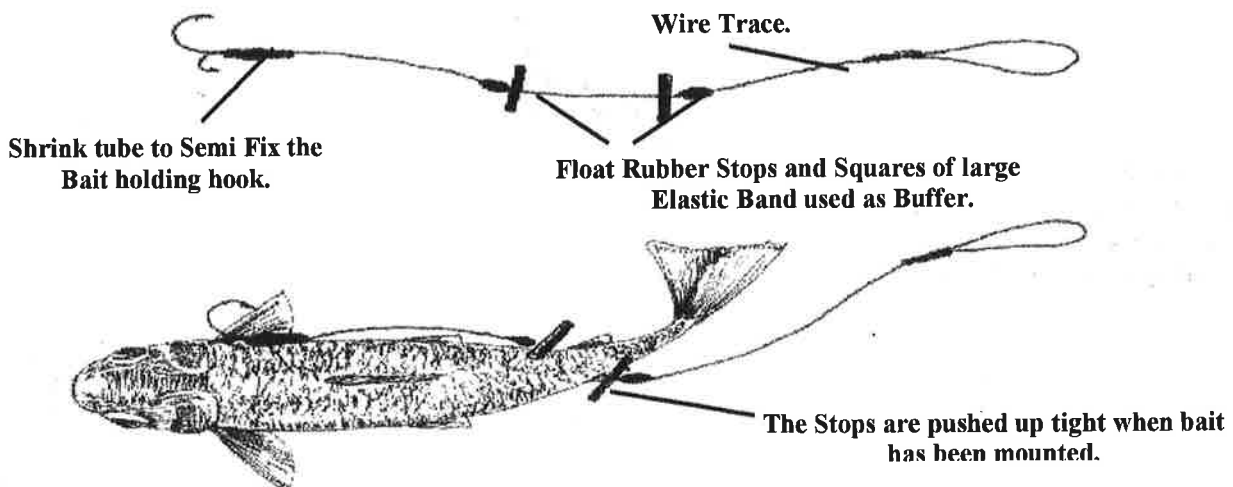
Now I have tried just about all of the rigs mentioned and pictured in these articles, with the major exception of Barry Macs Table Tennis Ball rig, and this was developed for a specific problem on, as he puts it "a difficult water". I know the type of water he fishes and if he calls it difficult, the majority of NAC members would class it as impossible. This rig was not about hooking eels, but retrieving the rig without loss in a jungle of trees. I must admit that I thought it would inhibit bite detection, but after playing with it at home it works well. As well as masking the hook point on the retrieve, thus stopping it snagging, it almost acts as a vane and lifts the rig up in the water away from any snags. Lets be honest, all those BIG eels must mean it has been a success.

Most of the other rigs revolve around one method, and that is livebaiting. Now the trouble with this method, as those who have tried it will know, is the amount of missed runs you get. In fact it is usually more than 50% of runs missed and sometimes up to 90%. No matter how soon or how long you leave the runs, you still end up disappointed. At some stage during the last few years, I have spoken to just about all the active members in the club about this and everyone has their own ideas on the rigs they are using or are about to try. I am no different, as I have said before I have tried most of them.

I remember way back in the past (well a few years, at least), I was on a fish-in at Pine Lodges in Lancashire. I was chatting to now ex-member Gary Leigh about livebaiting and he said he was using a new rig he had thought of, and what did I think? When he showed it to me, I said it was the best rig I had seen and was the result of a brilliant mind. Gary was gobsmacked, until I opened up my rig bag and took out an identical rig to show him. We had both thought of the same thing! It involved the use of a small hook semi fixed to a standard rig with stop, or locking rubbers on the trace. See FIG. 1

FIG. 1

Nick and Gary's Livebait rig



The idea was that the stop rubbers took the force of the cast and the hook was just nicked into the bait, thus keeping it alive and putting the hook in the prime hooking position on the bait. This position is where I think that most healthy fish are hit when attacked by an eel from underneath, i.e. in the belly area. Notice that I said **HEALTHY**. This rig also gave the added advantage that if the eel did grab at the bait at any point along its length, the trace would be in its mouth and on striking the hook would pull into the eel. Brilliant!! Yet it made no difference to my hooking ratio, and I don't know why. Recently I was on a trip to Wigan and was speaking to Jimmy Jolley and Damian Wood. They have been using a similar rig, but not using a small flying hook, instead just nicking the main hook lightly into the bait. Again a thinking group of anglers.

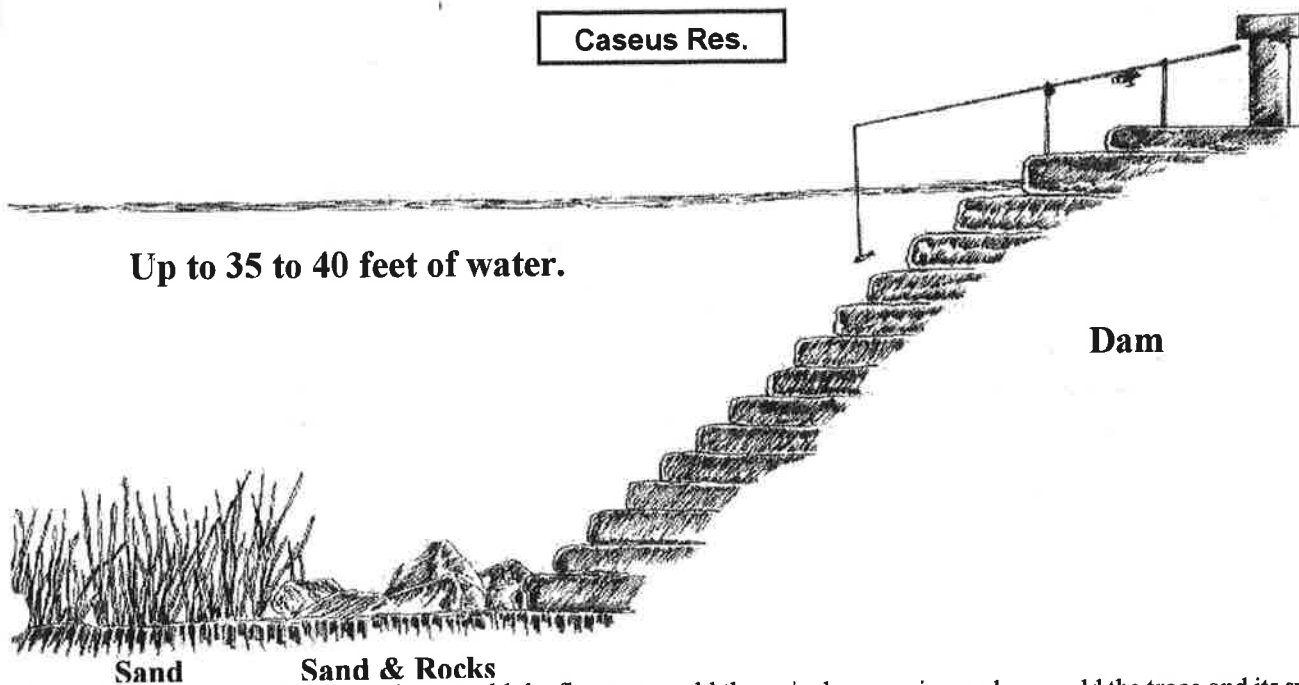
Both of them have told me that only big baits were being taken and small baits i.e. 2 to 3 inches were being ignored. Now, I don't think this is the case and this is not a snipe at the two lads, but my own thoughts. The bigger baits were alive and active. Notice I said **ALIVE AND ACTIVE**.

At a water I call Pugwash Pond, that I fished last year, I experienced a situation similar to one that Jimmy had told me about from one of his sessions. He had 20 to 30 runs, one after another, all on lives and all missed. I was

fishing a shallow lake, 18 to 24 inches deep at most, fishing a small bay off to the side of the dam wall and was using a Dyson rig on the two rods in that area. No sooner I had I set up the rods than I was having a run, all of which were missed, resulting in a lost bait. I changed one rod over to the Waggle Over Rig and the runs dried up on that rod, except for two runs which resulted in two eels, both about 1½ Lb. Result!! The runs were all small eels. Or maybe not? As it got lighter the runs carried on to the Dyson Rig rod and it was possible to see that the bay was not only full of fry, but full of big predators. If I were to tell you that there are no pike in this lake, what would you think they were? They were carp!! Not only were they attacking the fry, but they were picking up the lines from the Dyson rig on their fins, causing endless runs. The pool is stuffed with carp, they were hungry and taking advantage of some easy food. That night I caught 3 other eels in the big 2Lb bracket, but all on static worm or dead. I also had a carp on a livebait, tench on worms and all from the small bay. This may not have been the problem at Jimmy's water, but remember this, all is not what it seems, under the water.

At the last social (Winter 1999), I did a slideshow with "Dances" and I mentioned that during my winter sessions at Caseus Res. During a full moon and freezing conditions, I would use a Waggle Over Rig on the steps. I caught eels that had come up from 35 to 40 feet of water to feed in what could only be described as the margins. The bank of the Res. Goes down in concrete steps, all the way down to a sandy/ rubble bottom leading out to more sand and mud. As soon as you hit the sand, Canadian pondweed was thick, very thick, or just impossible.

I found that the Dyson Rig was useless, unless it was fished with a lead tail of at least 6ft or more. Even with an instant



strike the lead would pick up weed, so would the float, so would the swivel or run ring and so would the trace and its swivel! This meant chaos when hauling an eel in and that was just what it was like, hauling, no fight, just the dead weight of the weed. I even netted one eel with so much weed around it, that it filled my 60 inch net and when I searched through the net, found the eel was hanging outside the net, tangled up in yet more weed.

So I tried a different approach, and fished worms on the steps, close to the bottom and near the weed, but with limited success. I moved the baits up the steps, away from the weed, and had some results. This water, through all of its history, was a worm water with 99 out of 100 eels caught on worms, but one day I fished a live on the steps and lost the fish in the weed before I could strike. I moved the baits up and up the steps to avoid the weed. This resulted in catching eels under the rod tips. "What has this got to do with the subject?" I hear you say. Well, firstly I was using the waggle over rig, and secondly I was using and catching on lives. Finally, I could see the bait under the rod tip, as the water was gin clear.

I would watch the rod tip dance about as the livebait tried to escape. Suddenly the tip shot around and I was into a run, NOT, I would strike and no bait came back or an untouched bait came back??? After a few missed runs, I put on the torch and watched. This was possible as the water is gin clear and I was fishing under the rod tip in about 2 to 3ft of water. I was using Roach, Perch or my personal favourite, Gudgeon. When under the lights, they pulled here and there, dancing about as before. Suddenly they shot off. It could have been 5 or 20 minutes but they shot off and with no eels about, the rod tip (3lb test rods) pulled around 6 to 8 inches before the drop off unclipped and they were gone. I could see this was not a take but if you were fishing into murky water and could not see, this would have been a bona fide run. To make matters worse, I would feel the line and

what was a possible Eel pulling. It was just the livebait, be it a death throe or what, but there was incredible pulling power. So maybe not all our runs are legit?? Interestingly, although I caught Eels by this method in the dark, not once did I see an eel under the torchlight.

As for my first two points, I was using methods totally alien to this water. Never be afraid to experiment on one rod.

Do you remember the two comments early on in this article, **HEALTHY** and **ALIVE AND ACTIVE**? Well, again due to the clear water in the reservoir I could also see the reaction of the lives to prolonged entrapment. As normal lives would swim away from its tether point, occasionally turning and going the other way, I have said earlier that I think the Eel hits the bait coming up from beneath in the belly. This is cock on when the bait is fresh, but you watch a bait that has been in the water some time. It is all over the place, going up and down in the water and hanging from the trace. But importantly, upside down a lot of the time. This is due to fatigue, the weight of the hook, trace and swivel. Even though it bounced the rod tip around, it is usually at some sort of strange angle, thus totally knocking up any theory as to where to put the hook as the eel would still attack, usually from below. However, due to the position of the bait, it would hit just about any point on the bait. The eel could attack from above or from the side you say, same end result.

Now too big bait verses small baits. Small baits of the Roach, Rudd, Perch and Bream variety are invariably very young fish and just don't last the pace. A fish farmer told me that the biggest killer in young fish or fry was stress. So all the rigs that I have tried involving hairs, elastic bands and multi hook arrangements (and believe me there have been loads) generally involve a lot of handling resulting in dead or dying juvenile baits. So you use bigger baits and get more missed runs (it's a bugger ain't it?). I have just started using Minnows as a bait, mainly because Steve Richo let me have a few from his live bait bin, he and now I have an easy supply of them. Look in any old book and it's a classic eel bait. They are small when mature so less likely to get stressed and die. They carry on going for a lot longer than most baits which just hang about off the end of the trace, with just an occasional jerk about to keep us anglers happy. The Minnow and Gudgeon, given that they only have a light hook hold in an area that has not internal organs, keep on for a lot longer and keep relatively **HEALTHY**. Now, I know everyone is thinking 'hang on a bit, I have had small baits last all night', and so you have, but think how many times you have retrieved dead or dying baits. It may also be very lively out of the water, but next time, drop the trace in the margins and watch it for ½ an hour and you might see what was a very lively bait out of the water but a very still bait lying side-on or even upside down in the water, effectively being a dead bait. Remember Pete Gregory's article on live baiting, where he reported his captures as live/dead baits? As he could never be sure what they were when the eel took them.

So what of the statement 'only big baits work'? Well, I think any bait will work, given the eel is there, but think about it. It's dark and usually murky, which cuts down on visibility. This leaves vibrations and if the small baits are just doing nowt, or the occasional pull, and the big bait is always at it pulling, jerking and generally trying to get away because it is healthier or stronger, it must be giving out the best signals, NOT 'come and get me, I am the biggest meal' signal. What is the answer? Well, I think a small, lively bait, checked and changed on a regular basis. This gives you the better chance of hooking the Eel. Watch out for false runs, they happen more times than you think. Don't be afraid to change a rig in the middle of the night. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Use different baits and rigs on your rods, hedge your bets. You may catch eels of a standard year size, say 2lb, 3lb to 4lb on lives, deads or worms, but miss out on that big one because it eats the opposite to the rest, and you have got preoccupied with their needs and not that Biggie.

You may wonder what the waggle over rig is. Well, it is a rig method that I use for fishing under the rod tip in canals or the margins. It is just a piece of silicone tube over the main line, with a beta light pushed in. The main line is then tied to a link swivel and then the trace, see FIG 2.

All you do is set the beta light to the depth you want to fish and just waggle the bait over into the water. If you move the beta light you can always set it to the depth you want at any time. Let's be honest, it's better watching a light bounce around, than a motionless drop off or monkey. You also know when your bait is active. The bait can only go round in a small circle, depending on the length of line from the rod tip to the water. There aren't any other rig bits for it to foul up on, especially if you cover the trace-connecting swivel with some silicone tube. So less chance of a tangle and as little weight as possible, reducing the fatigue factor on the bait. A word of warning, don't be tempted to fish it too deep, as this leaves a lot of line which can be tied in a knot by a top feeding baitfish such as rudd or roach.

I usually lightly clip up the line just in front of the buzzer, so that you don't get continual beeping all night. You'll be surprised how fast the runs are with this method. This is not a new method, so don't think I am making a claim that it is. I must have seen it somewhere. It also works well on the Fen drains for pike and zander. As for the name, well Andrew came up with the "waggle end" when he was very young as he tried to explain the quiver tip method he wanted to use. Anyway Waggle is a lovely word so I use it a lot (no, not in bed)!!!

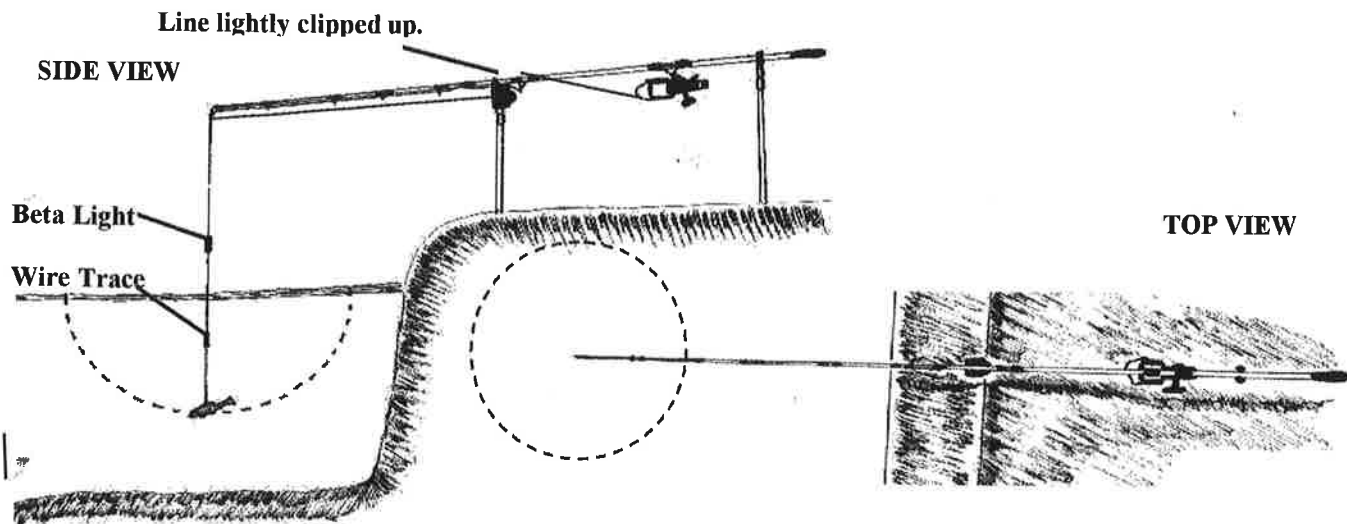
I still don't have the answer to missed runs, but I'm more concerned these days about keeping the bait alive and very lively, than the rigs I use. I like to keep my baits small, so that when a take does occur, the

chances are, the bait and the hook are in the eel's mouth from the very start. As for the numerous bait hooking up methods, try them if you want, but don't waste a whole seasons fishing using them and sticking to one method, only to discover that they

are no more or even less effective than a simpler one. Just think about this. Was it the rig that caught the eel, the bait, the method, or as is usually the case were you lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time?

FIG 2.

## Nicks Waggle Over Rig



**The bait is restricted to the area shown and this can be adjusted by lengthening the depth thus increasing the turning circle.**

One last point. When livebaiting you will get lots of runs from small eels, which you are very unlikely to hook. This is fact. Those eels, have, like most predators, no real idea on size, so they may attack baits which are either too big, or will take a long time to get down it's neck. Pike attack fellow pike of their own size or even bigger and try to swallow them. This is not a problem to the eel, as it has loads of time to digest it or rip it to bits, so missed runs are inevitable. Don't be put off. Try a different livebait, such as worms, put in the same off bottom position even up to 30ft off bottom. It may evoke a run and the chances are that the hook will be in the mouth, resulting in an eel. "A result" or is it? You may have solved the problem of hooking small eels, but are they what you want to catch?

For the last few years, I have been travelling around the country, flitting from one venue to another, visiting people and generally having a socially good time. The result has been that I haven't been catching much in the way of sizeable eels. It's time I went back to how I used to fish, targeting fewer eels, but of a better size. The only way to do this, is to sit it out on a water that has fewer eels in it, but of a size that makes the wait worthwhile (just like Barry McConnell and Pete Drabble do).

This is only my opinion though remember. You may think that you can fish a prolific eel water and catch lots of big eels i.e. 3s, 4s, 5s. Well, yes you can, but these waters are few and far between. Make the most of them because they don't last forever!! This is going to sound arrogant now, but so be it. 3s, 4s, and fives are big fish for all of us, but it's not what I am fishing for. I want a 6,7,8,9lber or even a double. I have no doubt they are out there and I am prepared to wait!

## Footnote: -

I re read Damians article "Pressurising Eels Part 2" to find a quote of mine was incorrect. I realised that a lot of this article had some bearing on the article I have just written, so I will make a few comments on it, as well.

Firstly, the eel that I caught twice was not caught over a bed of cockles, just a big bunch of worms. This was way before my cockle era, but it makes no difference to the rest of the quote. I did catch it twice, one week apart and at the same weight and length, but on different baits i.e. worms then a roach head. I did state that we must catch them more than once.

John Sidley did tag eels, but he personally did not catch any of them again. The tags were crude to the extreme and he changed his method to cutting nicks out of their tail fins (not little outlines of me). Again he reported no recaptures, but think on this. Science has proved, if I am not wrong, that eels can drastically change their head shape to accommodate the food they predominantly feed on. A small nick in the tail fin could easily be repaired by a fish of such capabilities, thus proving zilch regarding his tagging.

The old scars of line wrap could have been caused by Damian himself, during the initial fight, as scars on an eel look old even if they are only 1 day old. Try it on the next one you catch, by marking it with your own line or braid.

I cannot comment on Whiteacres, but I have spoken to Des Taylor about Docklow on numerous occasions. His theory is that they came in as elvers and because of the amount of food put into a place like this, they have grown on very fast indeed. I must admit that I was sceptical at first, but it is happening all too often to be totally wrong. On my syndicate lake in Shropshire Mere, eels of around 1½ to 2lb were being caught and causing a nuisance to the carp boys. They complained to the EA as they had put lots of elvers some 6 to 8 years previously into the surrounding streams. The EA's response was to say that no way did these eels grow on so fast and they asked for some samples. A few weeks later the EA said that they were part of the recent stocking that had taken place as their age proved this. Keep a look out for some of these carp catching holes, there could be some surprises in store.

As for eels moving to safe areas of a lake. Yes I think this is possible. As eels are somewhat territorial, the ones caught at one end of a lake could leave and thus leaving the unfished area full of eels. Sounds unlikely, but possible. Or could it be that this area had become rich in food and the eels moved over to feed on it? They do this as I have proved with my prebaiting. As Arthur said, they were among trees and roots, a good hideout for a very large shoal of fry, under pressure from a lot of predators. Would this explain the reasons for the eels being caught up on the surface?

I have a controversial comment to make here, and that is, Do the members have any idea how many eels actually die after capture. It's no good saying they swam off well and looked fit. I was on loch Ness some years ago, and after a good nights fishing, I had caught some 6 to 8 eels. They were all the same size and they were all caught on worms, as we could not get fish baits at the time. They were all lip hooked and on release swam off strongly. As the water was shallow and gin clear for a good 40 yards out before it dropped off to about a mile deep, I could watch them all make their way to the drop off. One of them stopped about 10 yards short and never moved again. I swam out to it the next day and it was stone dead. How many of the others died in the deeper water? Des Taylor says that he thinks a third of the eel that were caught at Docklow died (not all caught by him). They were found by the owner. I think the owner now bans eel fishing, as he has a soft spot for the only natural fish in the lakes.

How many of the eels we leave hooks in survive?

As I have said before **The major cause of death in fish is STRESS!!**

The comments on dropped runs, I have generally spoken about in my article, but I can add that Damian and Jimmy said they experienced a reduction in dropped runs. Could this be because they were now clipping up a lot tighter, and not getting the false runs I spoke about in the previous article?

**One last point to all the members. If you think that you can't write an article, just get the last mag and re-read it. I did it, and I have managed to write over a page on an article I mostly agree with.**

## Eel Weight, Length and Girth

By Pete Drabble

The NAC had an enquiry from Mr John McDonald of Scotland regarding a dead eel he had found at Loch Ness. There was only part of the eel as its head was missing but it had been possible to measure the length of the top part of the tail fin, which was 19½ inches, while the girth was 7½ inches. Mr McDonald was wondering if anyone could estimate the weight of the eel. Steve Richardson asked Barry McConnell if he had any idea how big it was. The inquiry was shuffled to Pete Drabble who was able to deduce through photographs and measurements of eels that the fin comprises two thirds of the total length of an eel. From this he approximated the length, then weight of the eel from averages taken from measurements of eels caught.

Pete had to admit that there was a bit of guesswork involved and he felt that it was not as accurate as it could be. He decided to try and devise a scale similar to Mona's scale, which gives the weight of pike for a given length. He gathered all the available information and tried to make a graph with girth and length as the axis, then plotting the weights of the eels. This formed a nice curve but still didn't prove at all accurate.

Pete decided that a more complex mathematical equation was needed. He went to a mathematician friend who came up with a formula for calculating the density of an eel, where the weight is proportional to the girth squared times length ( $W = G \times G \times L$ ). In order to make this formula work it is necessary to plot a graph with weight on the X axis and girth times girth times length on the Y axis. This formula is then taken a stage further by developing the value *E*. This value *E* is the gradient taken from the ratio of the slope of the line on the graph. *E* equals  $X/Y$ . *X* equals girth squared times length. *Y* equals weight. The final formula works out to be **GIRTH SQUARED TIMES LENGTH DIVIDED BY THE VALUE *E*.**

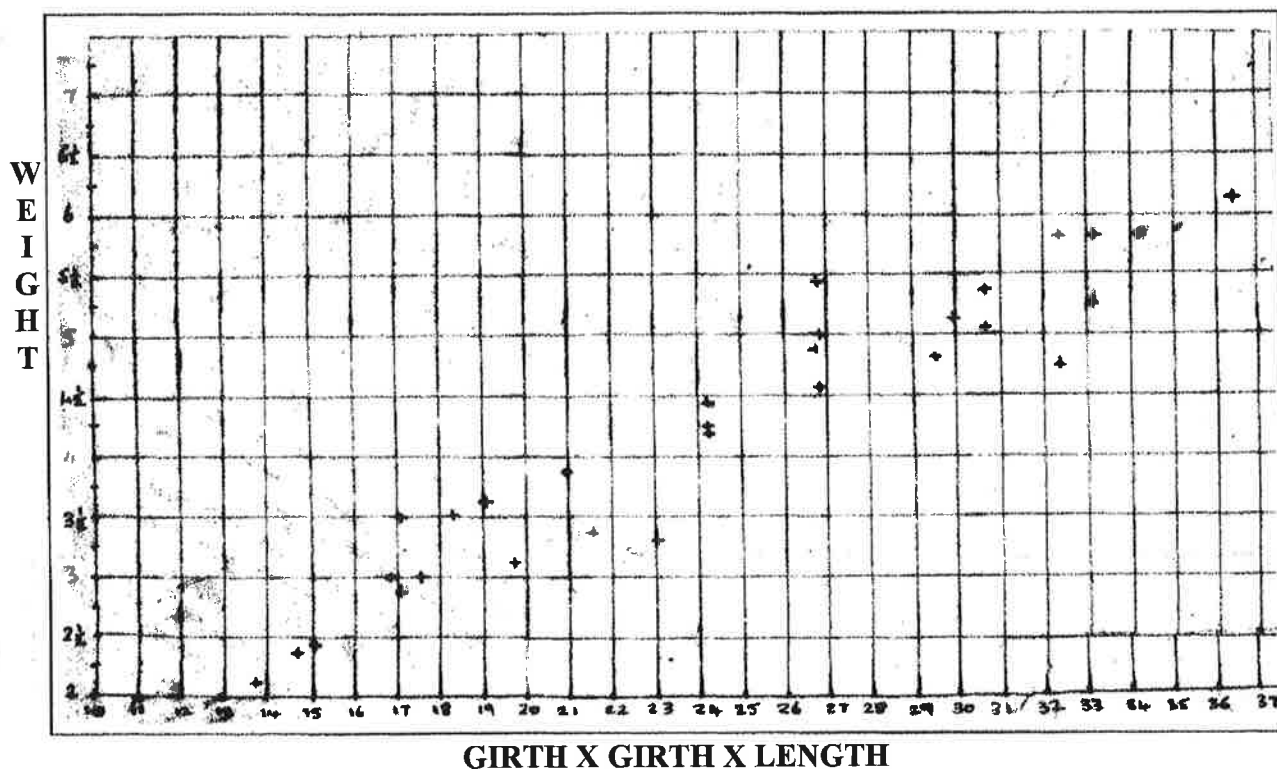
Girth X Girth X Length

E

We put the information of known eels onto the graph and noticed a scattered pattern building up. Short fat eels or long thin eels stand out from the norm on this pattern and the above average proportioned eel is fairly accurately displayed within a certain margin of error. The margin of error has decreased as more eel measurements have been added. Hopefully, enough information can be gathered to help increase the accuracy and reliability of the scale. Unfortunately it has been discovered that few eel anglers bother with both length and girth measurements. Jimmy Jolly helped out by sending a few measurements of eels that he and Damian Wood caught last year. Obviously the more information gathered the more accurate the graph will become.

If any of you have the weight, length and girth measurements of any of the eels you have caught, could you please send the details to: - Peter Drabble, 52 Crosby Street, Cale Green, Stockport, SK2 6SJ. If this mission is successful, the final result will be published in the Anguilla Club Bulletin, so we will have our own NAC scale, where, given the length and girth measurements of an eel, we will be able to accurately work out its weight. The ultimate objective is to work out a chart similar to a road mileage chart. This entails working out every combination of W, L, and G and may take some time, but we are working on it, so bear with us.

(We apologise to Peter and everyone for the quality of this graph. We have had great difficulty reproducing Peter's original.)



### Top 50 Eels as at 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2000.

1	8 lb 03 oz	Arthur Sutton	Shropshire Mere	Dead Bait	? 1986
2	8 lb 00 oz	Robert Jones	Greystones Lake	Worm	May-69
3	7 lb 15 oz	Peter Climo	Greystones Lake	Worm	May-69
4	7 lb 08 oz	Robert Jones	Greystones Lake	Worm	May-68
	7 lb 08 oz	David Holman	Shropshire Mere	Worm	Jul-82
6	7 lb 04 oz	Chris Brown	Midlands Water	Dead Bait	Jul-86
	7 lb 04 oz	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	May-99
8	7 lb 02 oz	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Pond	Worm	Jun-97
	7 lb 01 oz	Arthur Sutton	Stanstead Abbots	Dead Bait	Aug-79
	7 lb 01 oz	Kevin Stephenson	Bluebell Lakes	Worm	Sep-95

11	6 lb 11 oz	Steve Gardner	Lancashire Pond	Dead Bait	May-95
12	6 lb 10 oz	John Sidley	Birmingham Lake	Dead Bait	Jul-86
	6 lb 10 oz	Keith Bradbury	Daisyfield Lake	Dead Bait	Jul-96
14	6 lb 08 oz	David Taylor	Swan Pit, Lincs	Worm	May-86
15	6 lb 06 oz	John Sidley	Birmingham Lake	Worm	? 1985
16	6 lb 04 oz	Tony Hollerbach	Bedfordshire Lake	?	Aug-77
	6 lb 04 oz	Chris Hodgson	South West Lake	Live Bait	Jul-98
	6 lb 04 oz	Malcolm Law	Elvington Lake	Live Bait	Sep-99
19	6 lb 03 oz	Arthur Sutton	Cheshire Mere	Worm	May-97
20	6 lb 02 oz	John Sidley	Midlands Water	Dead Bait	Feb-89
21	6 lb 01 oz	John Sidley	Birmingham Water	Dead Bait	Nov-86
	6 lb 01 oz	Chris Siddall	Grand Union Canal	Worm	Sep-98
	6 lb 01 oz	Damian Wood	Leeds/L'pool Canal	Worm	Jun-99
24	6 lb 00.5oz	Graham Booth	Gunhouse Pool	Worm	Aug-73
25	6 lb 00 oz	Neville Evans	Clwyd Water	Dead Bait	? 1985
	6 lb 00 oz	John Sidley	Midlands Water	Worm	Aug-88
27	5 lb 15 oz	Keith Sykes	?	?	?
	5 lb 15 oz	David Taylor	Baston Lakes	Worm	? 1984
	5 lb 15 oz	David Holman	Cheshire Mere	Worm	? 1984
	5 lb 15 oz	Keith Bradbury	The Crem	Octopus	Jun-98
31	5 lb 14 oz	Chris Davy	Woods Lake, Essex	Dead Bait	Jul-75
	5 lb 14 oz	Keith Bradbury	Lancashire Pond	Slug	Jul-95
	5 lb 14 oz	Stuart Dean	North West Lake	Dead Bait	Aug-97
34	5 lb 13 oz	Richard Hudson	Yorkshire Water	Worm	May-74
	5 lb 13 oz	Arthur Sutton	Kingsmead	Live Bait	Sep-85
	5 lb 13 oz	Stuart Dean	North West Lake	Live Bait	May-97
	5 lb 13 oz	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Brandlings	Jul-97
	5 lb 13 oz	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	May-98
	5 lb 13oz	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	Jul-00
40	5 lb 12 oz	Keith Bradbury	Daisyfield Lake	Worm	May-96
	5 lb 12 oz	Keith Bradbury	The Crem	Octopus	Jun-98
	5 lb 11 oz	Keith Sykes	?	?	? 1978
	5 lb 11 oz	Malcolm Law	Daisyfield Lake	Dead Bait	Aug-96
	5 lb 11 oz	Nick Rose	Badens Pond	Cockle	Jul-97
45	5 lb 10 oz	Graham Booth	Haxby Pond	Worm	May-74
	5 lb 10 oz	A. Mills	Hatfield Forest	Dead Bait	Jul-82
	5 lb 10 oz	Maurice Steeles	Kempton Park	Worm	? 1991
	5 lb 10 oz	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	Jun-98
	5 lb 10oz	Peter Drabble	Shropshire Mere	Worm	Jul-00
50	5 lb 09 oz	Kelvin Hardman	Birmingham Water	Dead Bait	Jul-76

### 3lb+ eels 1999-2000

1	5lb-13ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	7-Jun-00	4:30a.m
2	5lb-10ozs	Peter F. Drabble	Shropshire Mere	Worm	23-Jun-00	10:30a.m
3	5lb-03ozs	Anthony Jolley	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Live Bait	27-May-00	
	5lb-03ozs	Paul Smith	Rickmansworth Aquadrome		30-Jun-00	
	5lb-03ozs	Damian Wood	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Live Bait	27-Aug-00	6:00a.m
6	5lb-02ozs	Graham Wilkes	Rocla Lake	Live Bait	1-Jul-00	10:45a.m
7	5lb-01ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	16-Jun-00	3:30a.m
8	4lb-15ozs	Damian Wood	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Live Bait	14-Jul-00	11:20p.m
9	4lb-14.5ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	20-Jun-00	4:45p.m
10	4lb-14ozs	Anthony Jolley	Elvington Lake	Live Bait	5-Aug-00	4:15a.m

11	4lb-10ozs	Nick Duffy	Midlands Lake	Fish Section	3-Jul-00	
12	4lb-09ozs	Steve Pitts	W.W Pit	Fish Section	30-Jul-00	9:00p.m
13	4lb-07ozs	Anthony Jolley	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Live Bait	9-Jun-00	
	4lb-07ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	17-Jun-00	11:05p.m
15	4lb-06ozs	Pete Gregory	Devon Water	Venison Stick	17-Oct-99	3:20a.m
16	4lb-05ozs	Robert Haig	Colne Valley Gravelpit	Worm	7-Oct-00	4:30a.m
17	4lb-04ozs	Robert Haig	Colne Valley Gravelpit	Worm	4-Oct-00	4:45a.m
18	4lb-02ozs	Anthony Jolley	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Worm	27-May-00	
	4lb-02ozs	Nick Duffy	Midlands Lake	Worm	27-Aug-00	
20	4lb-01ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	20-Jun-00	2:25p.m
21	3lb-15ozs	Steve Richardson	Derbyshire Stillwater	Fish Section	22-Set-00	8:00p.m
	3lb-15ozs	Steve Pitts	W.W Pit	Fish Section	30-Sep-00	9:15p.m
23	3lb-13ozs	Steve Pitts	W.W. Sand Pit	Fish Section	21-Apr-00	
	3lb-13ozs	John Davis	Midlands Lake	Worm	6-Apr-00	2:35a.m
	3lb-13ozs	Seve Pitts	B.P Pit	Fish Section	7-Jul-00	1:45a.m
	3lb-13ozs	Robert Haig	Colne Valley Gravelpit	Worm	8-Feb-00	5:30a.m
27	3lb-12ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	19-Jun-00	4:15p.m
	3lb-12ozs	Steve Pitts	Snake Pit	Fish Section	20-Apr-00	
	3lb-11ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	17-Jun-00	00:45a.m
	3lb-11ozs	Peter F. Drabble	Trentham Gardens	Worm	20-Jul-00	10:15p.m
31	3lb-10ozs	John Davis	Midlands Lake	Worm	29-Apr-00	4:20a.m
	3lb-10ozs	Steve Dawe	Upper Tamar	Live Bait	8-May-00	
	3lb-10ozs	Stuart Dean	Elvington Lake	Live Bait	12-Aug-00	10:15p.m
	3lb-10ozs	Jason Morgan	Trentham Gardens	Worm	26-Aug-00	10:15p.m
35	3lb-09ozs	Chris Siddall	Trentham Gardens	Fish Section	19-May-00	11:00p.m
	3lb-09ozs	Steve Pitts	C.M Pool	Fish Section	28-May-00	
37	3lb-08ozs	Anthony Jolley	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Live Bait	31-Oct-99	
	3lb-08ozs	Steve Dawe	Upper Tamar	Live Bait	29-Apr-00	
	3lb-08ozs	Robert Haig	Colne Valley Gravelpit	Worm	2-Aug-00	
40	3lb-07ozs	Pete Gregory	Devon Water	Venison Stick	2-Oct-99	
	3lb-07ozs	Steve Pitts	Snake Pit	Fish Section	22-Apr-00	
42	3lb-06ozs	John Davis	Fenland Drain	Fish Section	26-Oct-99	5:15p.m
	3lb-06ozs	Nick Rose	Grand Union Canal		10-Apr-00	
	3lb-06ozs	Chris Siddall	Grand Union Canal	Fish Section	19-Apr-00	10:30p.m
	3lb-06ozs	Steve Dawe	Upper Tamar	Live Bait	8-May-00	
	3lb-06ozs	John Davis	Midlands Lake	Fish Section	4-Jun-00	2:40a.m
47	3lb-05ozs	Jason Morgan	Staffs & Worcester Canal	Fish Section	15-Jul-00	10:30p.m
	3lb-05ozs	John Davis	Midlands Lake	Worm	2-Sep-00	4:35a.m
49	3lb-04ozs	Barry McConnell	Shropshire Mere	Worm	22-Jun-00	10:45a.m
	3lb-04ozs	James Angeletta	Elvington Lake	Worm	4-Aug-00	
	3lb-04ozs	Stuart Dean	Northwest Lake	Live Bait	20-Aug-00	10:15p.m
	3lb-04ozs	Steve Ricketts	Coastal Pit	Live Bait		
53	3lb-03ozs	Anthony Jolley	Elvington Lake	Live Bait	5-Aug-00	3:30a.m
	3lb-03ozs	Steve Ricketts	Coastal Pit	Live Bait		
	3lb-03ozs	Steve Ricketts	Coastal Pit	Live Bait		
56	3lb-02ozs	Steve Pitts	Woodlands Water L.P	Fish Section	1-Apr-00	
	3lb-02ozs	James Angeletta	Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Worm	2-May-00	10:00p.m
	3lb-02ozs	Chris Siddall	Rickmansworth Aquadrome	Fish Section	30-Jun-00	11:30p.m
	3lb-02ozs	Steve Pitts	W.W Pit		23-Jul-00	
	3lb-02ozs	Jimmy Jolley	Elvington Lake	Live Bait	4-Aug-00	10:00p.m
61	3lb-01ozs	Peter F. Drabble	Elvington Lake	Worm	4-Aug-00	9:30p.m
	3lb-01ozs	Steve Ricketts	Coastal Pit	Live Bait		
63	3lb-00ozs	John Davis	Midlands Lake	Worm	7-May-00	
	3lb-00ozs	Steve Dawe	Upper Tamar	Live Bait	8-May-00	
	3lb-00ozs	Graham Wilkes	Emberton Lakes	Worm	2-Sep-00	2:15p.m



# THE GUNGE PAGES

"Dances" announced at the winter social meeting that he was going to kick the a\*\*e off Kevin in the cider challenge, this winter and he would also do the same to "Spike". He said that he would catch a huge chub, bigger than the both of them put together. Talk about putting yourself up, to be shot down. I can see "Taff" and the Hedgehog loading their shotguns already.

News reaches me that the Milton Keynes fish-in venue earlier this year was selected for all the wrong reasons and with a definite leaning towards making one man's years of denial come to an end, if only for the short period of a weekend.

Apparently, one of our social officers, 'Sad Siddall', suffered the indignity of being thrown out of the club which had the controlling rights to the said water. The alleged incident is somewhat of a mystery but involved 'Sad', the late Bob Baldock and four rods. Even I am not prepared to go anywhere near this piece of Gunge given the implications of libel but 'Spike' obviously thought that due to me being involved in e-mailing 'The Councillor Kid' out of the club, taking the 'Blackpool Bard' into oblivion (spelt EGO-TIS-TICAL) and unwittingly seeing 'Passport Pete' follow him out whist sharing the same hanky to dry the crocodile tears away as well. (I cannot really take the full credit for that, because there were others involved too, allegedly) that I would be 'up for the cup'.

Make your own minds up on the events that led up to 'Sad's' ejection, but I wondered if perhaps it had anything to do with 'ringing his rod'. Given that last sentence, I'm glad I've spelt ejection correctly.

Elvington 2000 came and went and although 'Lucky Laws' 6.04 was not bettered, perhaps the Gunge material from last year was.

'Spike' decided to take his caravan to the venue this year and saw an opportunity to make the stay somewhat more relaxing. Under a veiled generous offer to the 'Spac-e-man' to bring along his wife and two daughters for a relaxing weekends fishing, lay a despicable plan to utilise 'Scouse servants' to pander to his every coffee and cooked meal. However, but typically of 'The Hedgehog', he under-estimated the female species again when Pauline sussed his plan out.

The plan was for Pauline to boil water whenever he and The 'Spac-e-man' wanted a coffee and to cook three hot meals a day to keep the intrepid duo in peak eel catching condition.

Sometime into the weekends fishing, 'The Whisperer', aka 'Dick Turpin', came into 'Spikes' swim and asked if he could give him a shout when he had the kettle on, as he had forgotten his cooking gear and would love a free brew up.

'Spike' had to admit that he too had left his cooking gear at home but thought that he had covered this small set-back by organising his own personal café, via bringing the caravan to the fish-in and inviting the 'Spac-e-man's' beloved wife into the bargain.

Unfortunately for 'Spike, 'The Whisperer' and 'The Spac-e-man', Pauline only opened the café for one hour each day. The up-side was that the 'Dean girls' had plenty of provisions to go at over the weekend and the caravan was considerably lighter on the return journey to Brum.

First day in on the Elvington fish-in and the 'Spac-e-man' decided to incorporate the wisdom and knowledge of 'Sad Siddall' regarding the placement of his baits in his swim. 'Sad' unselfishly as ever, told the 'Spac-e-man' that he would definitely place one bait under the very inviting overhanging tree in the corner of the swim.

Not one to ignore the offer of advice from the master, he then duly lost six perfect baits into the said tree's branches before eventually getting one right tight in the spot. Later that night, the expected happened and the bait was picked up and the indicator wailed into the night air. The 'Spac-e-man' picked up the rod, struck the run and commenced a strong fight with an unseen foe. A few minutes later the hook pulled out from a very, very big eel. Gutted, shot to pieces and still shaking from the fight the 'Spac-e-man' wobbled round to 'Spikes' swim for some comforting words of sympathy and much needed encouragement to get back to the fishing.

Nick listened to the tale of the lost biggie and then proclaimed "Serves you right for listening to 'Sad Siddall'. You have probably just \*\*\*\*ed up your best chance for the season...and all because you asked 'Sad' what to do instead of me".

Stuart then got up from the floor, switched on his head-torch and went in search of the strongest tree branch from which to hang himself from. Anyone who has fished with the 'Spac-e-man' will know that even the slightest suggestion that he has done it wrong will place him in suicide mode. Fortunately for the club, the strongest branch available was too cluttered up with rotting eel baits for him to get hooked up as well.

All the above had occurred before 'The Burglar' had arrived on the lake. The reason for this was due to the fact that he had decided to come to the fish-in with 'Auto-route' Smethurst.

Now Mark is renowned for finding unknown routes to fish-in venues and his NON-homing-pigeon like directional skills are even more remarkable given that he is a self-employed TRAVELLING tools salesman by profession. How he manages to find the sites in which to ply his trade is beyond our comprehension.

Anyway, some six hours later, on what should have been a three-hour trip from Lancashire, Mark admits to being lost. Worse still, is the realisation that neither he nor 'The Burglar' had remembered their maps. However, both seemed to remember Jimmy Jolley saying to them, whilst they were on a drunken night out in Wigan, that they should follow the road to Beverley. (To top the above Gunge, Damian asked what her second name was, just incase they had difficulty finding her the first time.)

True to form, this is just what they did, going right past the entrance to the fish-in on the way. The time then was 7pm. Following the signs to Beverley, they carried on past there and proceeded to look for signs for Elvington on route. Eventually they had to stop and park up because they had driven on to the beach and were facing the North Sea. They set up on their gear on the beach, thinking that they were the first members to arrive at the venue, only discovering their mistake when they used some of the water for a brew up.

Finally, on arriving at the proper venue hours later, everyone knew they had arrived because 'Auto-route' then commenced to place his bivvie pegs in the ground with a Kango hammer. This really gave the marginal baits, that the anglers each side of him had got in place earlier without so much as a pin drop, a considerable disadvantage. However, this was probably the game plan as 'Auto-route' was only going to set up home, cast the baits a long way out and crash out on his bedchair due to being cream-crackered from the driving and the constant gnashing of teeth from 'The Burglar'. (The subsequent noise even drowned out the party that Andrew, Robert and Jason were having in their swim.)

Ken 'No Sleep' Ward started out for the lake, from Bolton, at 8.30pm and arrived light years before them. When Ken arrived, he amazed 'Spike' by erecting a bivvie and placed a Fox bedchair within its confines. This took 'Spike' by surprise because Ken usually only puts up an umbrella and sits on a deck chair, scorning the bivvie boys. However, on closer inspection the only used once bivvie had been attacked by a mouse and was full of holes and the Fox bedchair was missing the bottom end, so making it effectively just a green chair. This, it turned out, was Ken's best attempt at being ultra-cult.

Later that night, Ken joined 'Auto-route', Andrew, Jason and Robert for a little get together for a bit of an UN-social from 1am until about 4am. The main topic of conversation was Ken's internal examination for his haemorrhoid problems. This must have played on poor young Robert's mind because approximately an hour later he was still thinking about Ken's problem, whilst the others had moved on to a different conversational topic. Then, out of the blue, young Robert said, "I have a tight arse". This caused all to fall about laughing so loudly, that everyone on the lake heard the commotion and wondered what had gone on.

Andrew, who is a long standing fish-in fishing partner with Robert told his dad, 'Spike' for those who may not realise, "That although he didn't know about the strength of Robert's rectum, he did acknowledge that he was 'as tight as a ducks bottom'. 'Auto-route' apparently spent the rest of the night wondering if Robert's bottom was tight and of how he could prove it. Strange thought process Mark!!!!!!

Ken has a new job as a courier and he explained to the gathering that one of the jobs he has done recently was to transport 4 cows heads to a research centre, so that they could have research carried out on them for the 'Mad Cows Disease outbreak. Robert asked Ken if he had looked at them and Ken had replied that he couldn't because they had seals protecting them. Robert then asked him why seals were protecting them instead of guard dogs!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

'The Burglar' was heard to moan about the lack of professionalism that Ken was showing over the club Web-Site. He said that he wasn't happy with the fact that the club site was not up to date and that Ken should make sure that the club was being projected in the right way with an up to date site for visiting anglers.

The truth was soon dragged out of 'The Burglar' when in a moment of tactical talking 'Spike' got 'The Burglar' to admit that he was put out because non of his recent eels were on-line. Silver bullets are being made as you read this and they shall be sent out with this magazine just in case we have another 'Werewolf'-'Wolfman' within our ranks....If so, it is a shoot to kill policy this time mate.

Still at Elvington and in the Vodka swim, Jason had a run and it seemed that he had contacted a large eel as both he and Andrew were heard to say they could see it and it was big. They shouted to Robert to bring the net but he did not respond. Further shouts of "It's a big eel and we need the net and a torch quickly" were met with stoney silence from Robert. At this point the phantom eel entered a tree root and became snagged. By this time Andrew and Jason were about ready to bounce Robert about the place if the eel got off.

A few seconds later Robert walked into the swim with Jason's rig in his hand and mainline trailing behind him. "Is this yours?" said Robert, "I have just wound it in".

Just goes to show what a bottle of Vodka and some beers can do to the mind. One thing is for sure, it doesn't give you a tight bottom in the morning, does it Robert?

Even stranger things on the Elvington fish-in. 'The Burglar' was seen to be using a new ultra-cult luminous white sack, designed to drive all the eels out from the margins towards his baits that had been launched towards the horizon. For most of the season all that has been heard is Jimmy saying "I should have caught that eel instead of Damian" and "I should have caught that one as well" ... blah, blah, blah. Now we know why Jimmy should have caught all those eels from the canal this year..... because 'The Burglar' told 'Spike' that Jimmy had designed the sack. The plot thickens we think.

As an aside to this, at the winter social meeting there was a slide used that showed Jimmy wearing the white sack over his head in the night time, to keep the mossies off him.

Bondage and 'The Burglar' could be the new title of an up and coming article by the man who gave us 'Tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree' 129 times in one night in sunny Scunthorpe!!!! (Jimmy told 'Dances', at the winter social meeting, that he had got the Gunge wrong and that it was Scunthorpe not Cleethorpes.... Apparently he seemed quite pleased with the rest of the Gunge.)

Talking of 'The Burglar' and his big casts (careful 'Dances'). 'Spike' was fishing on the very quiet bank at Elvington, which was full of snaggy, sexy looking swims, canopied by bushes and trees. After placing all his baits within a rod length of his bank, he settled down to wait in the knowledge that all the eels in this area of the lake were covered by his cunning positioning of the irresistible offerings. Two minutes later, everyone on the opposite bank hurled their baits over to his margin placing them within inches of his own baits.

At this point, 'Spike' wound in and wandered round to the caravan and hit the beer...after extracting it from Pauline's grip.

Moving on to the Milton Keynes Fish-in. At this time there was a petrol shortage going off and 'The Burglar' was phoning up 'Lucky Law' every night asking if he had got some fuel for the trip.

'Lucky' thought that this was considerate of 'The Burglar' making sure that there would be enough fuel for the trip and reminding him to make sure he had some. At the fish-in 'Lucky' found out that this wasn't quite the case at all.

'Lucky' spent most of the first few hours moaning about the petrol taste in his mouth, due to having to siphon some out of his car for the cooker to be put into use (Thank God it wasn't a diesel, Malc.!) )

'Lucky' found his way into 'Spike's' swim after hearing a rumour that there was a gallon of wine in Nick's caravan (There was, but Pauline got there first) Anyway, he helped Nick drink three bottles and then announced that he was seriously worried that he hadn't caught an eel since his Elvington monster last year. 'Spike' replied that he hadn't been sober since then as well. (Strange coincidence!)

News comes in of an eel angler fishing in the Midlands region and we think his name is Robert. Rumour has it that he has not done too well but is trying very hard. The Midlands R.O. has asked that if anyone bumps into him to let him know that "The Hedgehog" will gladly help him with some guidelines and assistance, as to how to catch eels or any other species that Robert wants to have a go for.

'Spike' travelled to Liverpool to share a session with the 'Spac-e-man'. They decided to meet at the lake and on arrival 'Spike' saw just one bivvie, so he headed straight for it. As he got there, two small boys came out of the bivvie followed by Stuart. On seeing 'The Hedgehog' he tried to explain but it all came out in gibberish. All he could say was "God no, this is going in the Gunge, ain't it... Oh God, No, No, ... Oh God.... No Nick..... Please!!!!!!

'The Burglar' came up to Nick and Malc and said "What a great guy that Graham Wilkes is." It turns out that this statement was made due to Damian finding a senior member smaller than himself. Graham has now acquired the 'moniker' of 'The Jockey' since the winter social. This was given to him by a member whose first name sounds like Erica....(Oops, sorry duck!!!)

However the 'moniker' fits quite well because Graham phoned up 'Dances' and mentioned that he was short of a few magazines. 'Dances' then offered to send him 99% of the ones he was missing, at no charge. Graham responded favourably and thanked 'Dances' for the offer and said he would send a donation to the club as payment.

'Dances' searched through his collection of copies and duly bagged them up for postage, all nine magazines and three newsletters.

24 hours later Graham phones up 'Dances' again, waking him up in the process with no apology forthcoming either, and says, "Where the bloody hell are my magazines old son". 'Dances' informs him that they are winging they're way to his house by 1<sup>st</sup> class post as they speak, so Graham says "Oh, that's all right then" and puts the phone down.

Riding roughshod over 'Dances' can cause serious damage to ones persona in the Gunge pages, don't you know old boy. (Hence the reason why 'The Jockey' fits the bill....that, and the fact that he is smaller than 'The Burglar'.

'The Hedgehog' went to a fancy dress party with 'Dances', Erica and young Amanda. This party was to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday of fellow member Kevin Stephenson. (Mr. 7.01)

'Spike' went as someone from Hawaii-Five-0, Erica was a Bay City Roller, Amanda was dressed in a slinky little hot pant number and 'Dances' went as Sid Snot. No change there then.

The following month 'Spike' was at another fancy dress party. This time with our illustrious Chairman and his lovely wife, Patricia. This one was a Halloween party and 'Spike' didn't have to dress up much. (Sorry mate!)

Anyway, 'Taff' and 'Spike' were neck and neck for first prize of best outfit until they realised that 'Taff' hadn't put his mask on yet. However, 'Spike' did go on to win a bottle of scotch.

Unfortunately, the club Chairman went on to spread his entire evenings drink and food around the house later that night. Even worse than this, 'Taff' tried to blame it all on a bad bag of crisps he had eaten during the evening. Jared, now understanding that some things have rubbed off on him over the years from mixing with 'Spike' and 'Dances', gave his mum a right telling off for not waking him up so that he could video the whole episode.

'Spike' was well out of it both physically and mentally, as he slept it all off in his van away from the multi-coloured yawn.

As an add on from all of this, 'Spike' noticed that in both 'Dances' and 'Taff's' houses there were an unusually large amount of ornamental hedgehogs. Quite obviously, Eeling Hedgehog Hero adulation, albeit from the wives of the aforementioned NAC men, he hopes.

On the Rickmansworth Aquadome fish-in, Paul Smith managed to upstage both 'Sad' and 'Spike' when he caught a super eel of 5lb 3oz. Gunge enough in itself. However, the weighing of this eel holds a slight giggle and a lesson to be learned.

After capture, Paul decided to get the weight sorted out straight away, as it was quite obviously a huge eel and a potential PB as well. Into the weigh sling went the eel and Paul started to lift the sling off the floor via the scales. The needle went to 4lb's, then to 5lb's, then up to 6lb's, then onto 7lb's....Only for Paul to say this can't be right. Sadly, it wasn't right. As Paul was lifting the sling off the floor, his foot was firmly planted on the bottom of the sling and if he hadn't have stopped, the eel would eventually have been recorded at 13 stone 10 pounds. That's the giggle bit out the way. The lesson learnt....Don't do this in front of Nick Rose.

'Spike' took another trip up north just prior to the winter social meeting in order to drop off the club stand at 'B.T.'s' house and spend a night eeling with the 'Wigan Wonders'. Before deciding on a venue, Anthony decided to give him a full tour of all the waters within a 30-mile radius of Wigan. Now 'Spike' has held a dream for a long time and this is to eat a Wigan Pie, stand on Wigan Pier and catch an eel from the now infamous Leeds and Liverpool canal. 'B.T.' took it upon himself, as he does, to try and make this dream come true and after shouting out "Surprise, Surprise" they went off in search of the 'three sided holy grail' that was Nick's vision of Utopia.

The trouble was, all the pie shops were closed, the pier was only a foot long and 'Spike' managed yet another blank. ('B.T.' better not try making a living out of becoming a fishing guide....but Nick does say that if you're 'lonely tonight', then he is just the man to get you back into fishing alone again very quickly.) Now we know why Damian fished alone for four years when he first started eel fishing. The first night was spent seeing how to do it with 'B.T.' and then he just went his own way.... A very long way away as it happened.

On another session earlier in the year, 'Spike' and the 'Spac-e-man' were fishing a Staff's water when Stuart decided to use a small dead Toad as bait. Out went the Toad and zilch all happened all night. The 'Spac-e-man' couldn't believe it because there were dead Toads everywhere and he thought it must be the going food source for the eels.

On returning home, he phoned 'Dances' up and retold the session. He also mentioned the using of the dead Toad. 'Dances' said, "You never used a dead one did you?" To which the 'Spac-e-man' replied "Yes, why"?

'Dances' informed him that it is OK to use a dead Frog but dead Toads become poisonous after death due to a chemical reaction. The 'Spac-e-man' thought about this and said, "I thought there was something funny about all the untouched dead Toads and the lack of action during the night. I think I may have even read about this somewhere".

He then said that he had fished a wasted rod all night on a hard water and was 'wassed' off about that. 'Dances' then asked if he had baited the other rods up after the dead Toad one and if he had, then they had probably become tainted with the poisonous scent from his hands and that was why he had received no action from any of the rods during the session. 'Dances' also said he was surprised that 'Spike' hadn't told him about the chemical change that occurs at death in Toads and Stuart said, "Did he know about it then" and 'Dances' answered "Yes, of course he does, we both found out at the same time some years back".

The 'Spac-e-man's' answer is too crude to print here...but he was not amused. Even more amusing is the fact that 'Dances' and 'Spike' had spoken about the session even earlier than the conversation he and Stuart were having and had made up the story about the Toads becoming poisonous, to push him into suicide mode for a few hours. (Friends... You need Friends... friends like us.)

Lastly, at the winter social meeting there was some confusion as to the running order for the day and the set agenda to start the day off. The club Chairman managed to keep the days formal issues in check, even though some there thought that the meeting was solely there for hijacking purposes.

When the day's formal issues were dealt with we came to the social element. 'Sad Siddall' was the ONLY social officer present, due to 'Auto-route' having to rush his good wife into hospital over the potential new arrival of the another member of the Smethurst family. (Hope all went well, and this is the youngest Gunge to date mate.) Anyway, come the time for the raffles and 'B.T.' decides that it is time for him to give a breakdown of all the raffle prizes on offer, going through all of the prizes bar one. He actually seemed to be auditioning for a spot on QVC Sky television with his hard sell technique. ('Spike' had serious thoughts on where to put the gleaming brand new rod-pod that he had donated to the cause.)

Poor old 'Sad', he is the social officer and his social side was hijacked by a now frustrated 'B.T.' Was this to be his last but-in on the social side of things...NO, 'B.T.' then decided to attack his own brother and his mate 'The Burglar' on their hooking set-up for livebaits during their slideshow. A heated debate ensued with Young 'B.T.' ending it by saying that it was still no good.

He then found yet another niche in the NAC set-up by announcing that he was now the Junior Raffle Treasurer. This prompted one member to consider taking on the Senior Raffle Treasurer's role as extra back-up. This apparent desire to formulate new positions out of the blue by 'B.T.' has seen the committee expand from eight or nine positions to the present seventeen. It now takes a weekend for the committee to discuss and decide on what to do over an issue. Even then there are still the odd "Yeah, but what if" and "I know that but..." from the young Jolley. (If he sat in the room on his own, he would argue with himself for the first hour and a half.)

Earlier on in the meeting he had even shown those present that he had a soft spot for the Vice President by taking a long, low, bow whilst 'Frenchie' was cutting the committee down to size in his much missed manner. Some say they are sure that they saw a glistening tongue as his head passed by desk level. Thank God he was behind 'Frenchie' and not in front of him.

A lot of members think that 'Flukins Lukins' cannot talk. Actually he can, its just that after years of fishing with Tony he has forgotten how to converse with another human being, due to not getting a word in edgeways on they're sessions.

\*\*\*\*\* All the comments in this last bag of Gunge are compiled from over eight member's thoughts and views and are in no way meant to be taken seriously, as some have done in the past. If you find yourself in these pages, embrace it, acknowledge it and smile.....you never know who you are fishing with / talking to, there are Gunge masters everywhere.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW  
YEAR**

**The Hedgehog decided it was time he gave Loch Ness a go.!!!!!!**

