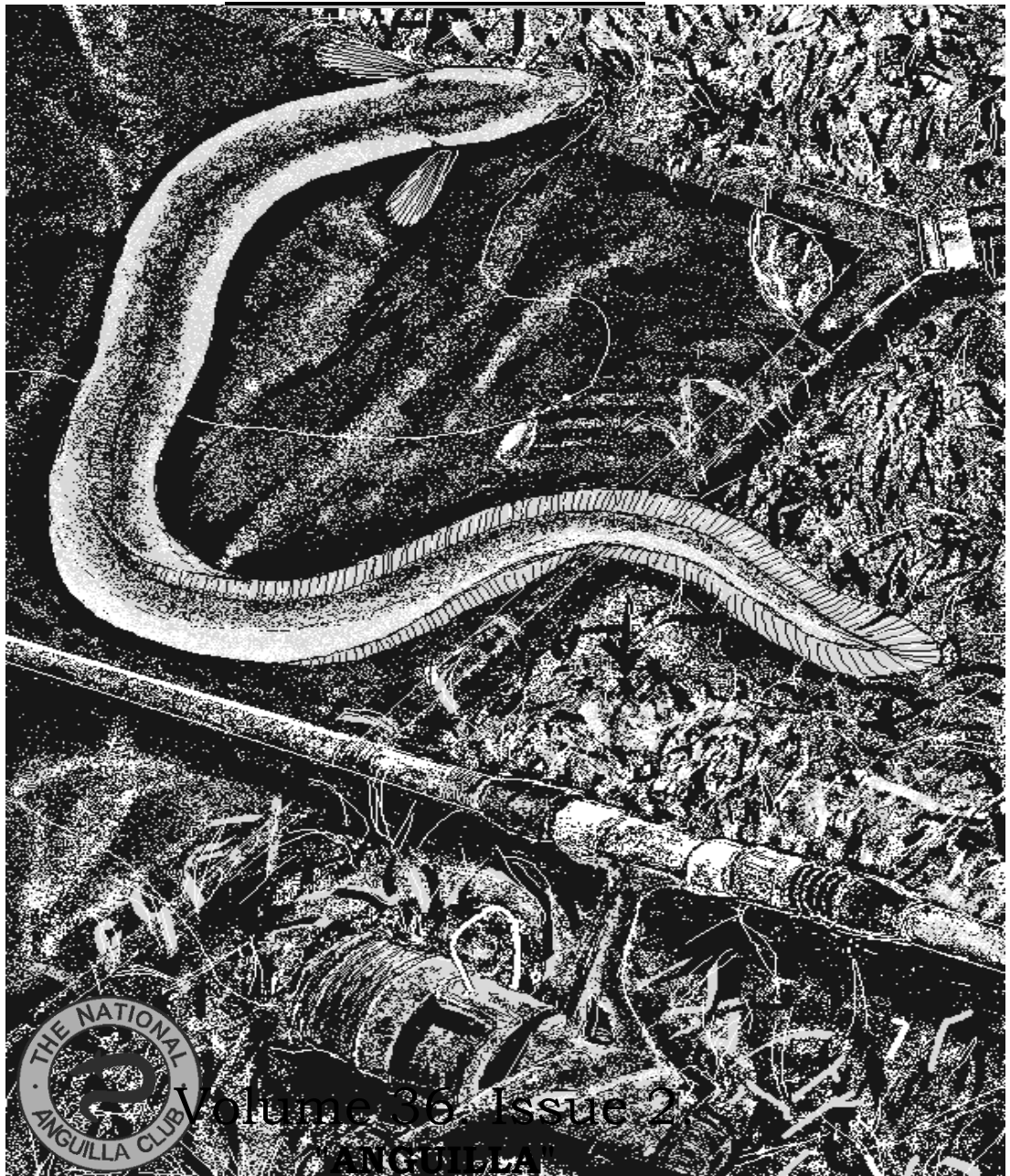


"Anguilla"

THE BULLETIN OF
THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.
SUMMER 1999.



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'TEAM TALK'

By
Steve 'Dances with eels' Richardson.



Welcome to issue No. 2 of '**ANGUILLA**'. I don't think either Stuart or myself can believe that we have completed two issues of the club Bulletin. However, up to a month ago we didn't think we would be able to deliver a full Bulletin (40 pages) by July 1st but, given the activity and successes of the Northwest and Southwest members, we nearly found ourselves having to leave some stuff out. We now have nothing in the 'bank library', so we are hoping for a positive reaction from the contents of this issue to enable us to format the next Bulletin, the winter issue.

Stuart and I have now got the difficult job of choosing the winner of the "**Steve Mahony Memorial Trophy**" from the last two Bulletins and the Christmas Newsletter. (This trophy is for the editor's choice of the best article each year) We intend to name the top three articles at the social and presentation meeting in November, so that some recognition can be attributed to the other writers. (We see it as a form of encouragement for future writers in the club.)

One problem that we appear to be coming up against is that of producing a Bulletin to budget. We have been sanctioned a budget of £150.00 per issue. This was based on a membership of 87 members. (Last years quota) We have, so far, been able to keep within a couple of pounds either way in our efforts. We aim for a Bulletin with 40 pages and out of these we would like to have a minimum of 10 photographs. Our trouble is that to get a good reproduction on line drawings and cartoons we have to pay 7.5p per page to have it "laser" printed. This is also the cost of a page of photographs as well. 'We' are trying to be very careful how we explain this problem because we don't want writers to stop producing articles for us. What we are asking for is to be able to have all line drawings or photographs placed on one page for each article. These can be referred to in the article's text as Fig. 1, Fig. 2 etc, etc... Hopefully you will be able to accommodate our request in this area and still provide us with your valuable work. If you think that you may have a problem with an article, given its layout, please telephone either Stuart or myself for a chat about it. We shall find a solution somehow. What we would like, is for the article's text and the drawings or photo's to come separate. We shall decide where the two can come together. Trust us to do this well, because we only want to produce your work in its best format for the other members to read. (if we get it wrong, then feel free to give us a rollicking... the complaints dept. is 01 51 4740308, ask for Stuart.)

It would also be nice if anyone reading '**ANGUILLA**' would like to nominate a past member of the club as a choice for the 'archive article' subject matter. Stuart and I can keep selecting articles forever, but surely the idea is for you, the membership, to get involved.

The proposed 'letters page' and the 'rig section' have not materialised up to now. We have not received any letters since the 1st issue and there has been no room for a 'rig section' so far. Perhaps the winter issue will be a better vehicle for these items. We shall wait and see.

At the outset it was our choice to bind each issue to give it a more professional finish. We have now dropped this idea due to the cost incurred in the Bulletin's budget. This is perhaps something for the future, although both Stuart and I would opt for colour first, over binding the issues.

I think that is enough of the technical hiccups surrounding the make up of '**ANGUILLA**' for one issue. The main thing is that we have a regular Bulletin being produced and distributed to you, the membership. Everything within these pages is about eel fishing in one form or another. We all have a different slant in our approach towards fishing for eels. Hopefully, the contents of this Bulletin reflect that wide scope of thought. If, when you have read this issue of '**ANGUILLA**', the next thing you do is to go eel fishing, write an article or re-read it again then the time spent putting it together will have been effort worthwhile

Stuart and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue of '**ANGUILLA**' and we hope that you all enjoy reading this, our second production of the club Bulletin. My thanks go to 'The Spac-e-man' for his enthusiasm, skill and hard graft.

The very 'serious thanks' go to Jimmy and Ken for their 'ability' to show us the way out when we get lost and to Pauline and Erica for their patience when we disappear to the 'screens' in-between eeling sessions.

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE.

Dear members, best wishes for 1999 and your last eeling season of the millennium. I look forward to hearing of some very good efforts and some very good catches, including of course some personal bests. I often told members in the 1970's when I was Chairman; every eel is a good eel regardless of size. Catching eels and learning from our catches is what the National Anguilla Club is about. We can all try to improve our chances of catching bigger eels by taking care in where, when and how we fish. Sometimes we can strike lucky and hit a big eel water at the right time. Several of our members have done just that over the years. However, not all members have access to such waters most of the time and we have to make do with what waters are available to us. This is when any eel is important to us, as the t.v. advert says, "size does matter" but only if you are positive the water you are fishing contains very big eels, i.e. over 4lb. If the water you are fishing has been fished a good deal but has never produced good eels then the odds are against you catching a four-pound plus eel. However, if you can fish a water that has not been fished much or has produced big eels then the odds improve.

Selection of water is probably the biggest factor in catching a big eel. The next major factor is where on the water; shallows, deeps, weedy, clear, type of bottom, far out or in the edges- the eels will be feeding somewhere but where? Every successful eel angler has his own theories. Often it is trial and error. In the evening it can be one area, by dawn it can be somewhere very different. The season, state of the moon, water temperature, etc, all can affect the location of a feeding eel. All too often an eel angler arrives at a water and without too much analysis casts the baits out to where the eels may feed sometime during the session.

You must try to work out where the eel will probably feed, or to be in with a greater chance, work out about six or eight areas. These can be prebaited or marked for casting to at night. Each area should be fished for 20 or 30 minutes, possibly with different baits. In this way you have an increased chance of coming across a feeding eel- much more than if you cast to one spot and left your bait there for the whole of the session.

In July 1965 I caught my first two eels over 4lb by casting out as far as I could into a snag-free reservoir and after 10 minutes wound in about 3 yards of line then left it again for 10 minutes. Eventually when I had wound right in I recast to a different area and repeated the process. I used several lobworm sections to leave a scent trail. I always caught eels and I only fished the afternoons in those days. My tackle then consisted of seven foot fibre glass spinning rods and Mitchell 300 reels with 10 lb line direct to long shank hooks. Bite alarm was a plastic clothes peg. I always left the bail arm on and struck as soon as the tip bent round. I never missed a bite and all eels were lip hooked. I also had no fishing umbrella and just carried a plastic sheet to sit on or put over me if it rained. My tackle has come a long way since then but I believe my success has not. Perhaps it is time for a serious rethink. The coming season should see me renewing old but successful methods. Speaking of fishing in the 1960's, I actually had my first fishing session 50 years ago in 1949 when I was 7. I am looking forward to the year 2000 so I can say I have fished in 7 decades.

Best wishes and tight lines.

Vive L'Anguilla Club!
Brian "Frenchie" Crawford



PRE-BAITING, MY EXPERIENCES.

By
Nick Rose

The day of the cockle, part one 1996.

As you may, or may not know, I have been using cockles as bait for some time and in this article I am going to explain this somewhat eccentric behaviour. It all started way back, when I was asked if I would like a ticket for the then big eel water, Kempton. I should not really have taken the opportunity, but as you know there were some very big eels being caught, by Maurice Steeles, and then on his recommendation, Mick Bowles of the British Eel Anglers Club and our very own Steve Richardson. The distance involved in going to Kempton was the main stumbling block. If I had been a single man then I would have done as Mick Bowles did, and live on there for 3 or 4 days a week, but being married, this was just not possible.

So I was limited to just a few sessions in that season, which take it from me, is more frustrating than if I was told I could not have a ticket. It was on one of those trips that I had a long chat with Dave Marr and he told me how he had discovered the eels in Kempton. Kempton is a fairly new pit (20 to 30 years) which was, as with all similar pits, very rich in food. Up to then all that was in there were sticklebacks and some very elusive carp which had Dave and a few other syndicate members pulling their hair out. Most of the carp were doubles, with a very high proportion of twenties touching thirty. Most of the syndicate were just paying up each year not bothering to fish, but waiting for the carp to grow on till they were worth catching (their words not mine). As you will realise, the lake was never over-fished, with two anglers almost a party.

Dave thought he would pre-bait with particles (he used maggots as he thought they were as near natural as any other particle), as a boilie bombardment had not worked over the last few years. Now Dave lived on the lake (he was the stable manager at the surrounding racecourse), so he could bait up to his hearts content, day after day. It was decided to fish and one evening he and another member fished over the baited area using float tactics. That first session and the few that followed produced numerous eels from four to six pounds, but being carp anglers they gave it up as a bad job. Dave mentioned it to Maurice Steeles at a carp society do and the rest is history, with Maurice catching many fours (he actually last count 1 think), fives, at least two six's and a seven. Mick Bowles then joined and did four days a week for the following two seasons for a few eels in comparison but with a six and seven included.

The following year Steve Richardson I think, suffered, as I had done, with family and work commitments, but he managed a four pound six ounce eel which I think held the lake record for the smallest eel for that year.

Now all this set me thinking on two lines. Firstly I must try out this pre-baiting lark and secondly, how the hell did eels get into Kempton at that size in such numbers? As we all know it takes ten years for eels to grow a pound, so the six's and sevens caught must have come into the lake at three to four pounds and grown on. This dilemma, I will touch on later in the article.

As for pre-baiting, after a few years of thinking about it, I decided to give it a try on Badens Pond (that's a code name by the way). This lake is the one I always end up going on at some stage every year, because I reckon it will throw up a big eel to me one day. The history of this lake goes back hundreds of years, but I started to fish it in 1984 when a lad, bream fishing caught a four on lobworm. From '84 onwards the fishing has been hard with a net result, in order of capture;- 1lb 8 ozs, 4lb 2 ozs the same night, one week later the 4lb 2 ozs again (I know it was the same eel as it had obvious markings). Then a gap of a few years while I blanked mega style, then a 5lb 1 oz eel to my son Andrew (hence his nick name Golden B- - - -s), then a few more years up to the 1996 season.

As you can see, not very prolific but still the average was high and there was a five to show for the effort. So after I decided to go for it, my next decision was what bait. Maggots were out because, unlike Kempton where there were only carp to worry about, Badens was full of roach, bream, perch, tench and the odd carp. This also ruled out worms and I could not stand the idea of spending hour's bent over the lawns of Birmingham, collecting thousands of lobs just to feed every fish in the lake. I then remembered reading in Chris Yates brilliant book 'Casting at the sun' about Rod Hutchinson turning up at Redmire with the new wonder carp bait, Prawns and then catching eels all week. So it was off to the wholesale fish market, full of optimism, until I saw the price of them (I would not be able to explain to the missus feeding eels on best prawns). So I spent the next half-hour browsing through the fridges, looking for a cheap alternative. Cockles and mussels came out about the cheapest, so five pounds of each were purchased and it was out with the catapult.

I first walked the banks spraying the baits out everywhere and then after about the second trip, I started to concentrate the baits in one area. This went on for three months, three times a week, I then decided to fish.

The first session was on the 4th and 5th of July. I set up and cast out two rods on hair-rigged cockles (thought I was real carpy ultra cult, hair rigging), one rod on dead bait and one rod on worm. I was joined by an old feller who would not go and I was hiding the cockles and kidding on I was after tench.

An hour into the session I had a screamer and thought, this is it. I picked up the rod and struck into nowt, reeled in and found no cockles on the hair. Never mind, I re-baited the hair out of sight of the old man and cast out. Half an hour later we repeated the saga. Just bad luck, I thought and cast out again. The old feller was looking a bit bemused and seemed to be questioning my angling ability (I'm used to that though) when yet again a screamer was followed by slack line and a few swear words. He started to look at me with a strange expression on his face.

At this point I thought, bugger being ultra cult and cut off the hair, loaded the hook with four cockles and cast out again repeating this with the other rod. The old feller was quite a chatterbox and he recounted his fishing experiences over the years on Badens, telling of monster tench, bream, perch and pike he had caught. I was beginning to think he was never going to go when at 11 pm I had another screamer and half heartedly struck expecting yet another bare hook, when I actually felt some resistance. I knew it was an eel and thought it was about time I broke it to the old man that I had caught what I had come for, to which he said "there aren't any eels in here".

Anyway, much to his disbelief and disgust the eel came into view and was duly netted, then weighed at 1lb 12 ozs. I then gave him the full history of eels and made him promise not to tell a soul. I actually believe he kept his word. His parting words were " I hate eels, slimey buggers". Peace at last! At about 12-30 am I hit the last run and was well pleased with an eel of 3lb 14 ozs. Two eels in a night was a 'result' and I went home happy.

I fished about another five sessions, but only had bream up to 4lb. For some reason I slowed down the session and gave up for that year (got into chub at the time if I remember). That was the summer of '96. Next came 1997.

"The cockle strikes back, the next generation".

This time I was baiting up a different area, same lake. My thoughts were that eels feed territorially, so I moved round the lake 100 yards. Also, I could bait up to start with in deep water and slowly drop them back to a shallow area 12 to 4 inches deep, the theory being it would cut out the stupid bream bites. It did work to an extent, but a few nearly grounded themselves to get to the cockles.

The first session was on the 22nd to 23rd July and out came a 3lb 13 oz eel. Success yet again and another missed run to encourage me to return. A week later and I was back, but I had dropped a gooly, it was the school hols and along came Andrew and side kick Jason. Was I yet again to be screwed by my lad or even Jason?

It was the 29th to 30th July and it started off quite nice, warm and sunny. Andrew and Jason had surrounded my baits and I was worried. At 8:30 pm it was still light and I watched the monkey rise and drop off. The line blitzed off in the usual eel fashion. I struck and for the first time ever, I hit total solid resistance. After a five-minute struggle, Andrew netted the eel without knocking it off, or any of the other things that I had planned if he had caught one that night. It went 5lb 11 ozs and was a new P B. I rang Jean on the mobile and she then rang some of the other lads who kept me chatting for the next 2 hours, brill !!

It started to rain and Andrew and Jason, who had come without brollys because of the nice early weather, retired to the van, I suspect a bit fed up. At 3 : 00 ish I was awoke by a girl and a bloke swimming in front of me in the buff, totally drunk. Do you think I gave a damn?

After a couple of blank sessions apart from bream, I decided to move swims, so I baited up some 30 yards further down the bank. First night the 5th to 6th September at 9. 10 pm I had a 4lb 15 oz eel in the sack. I weighed it four times but it wouldn't put on that extra ounce! After that I did two more sessions, one with 'Dances' and 'the Baitswisher' but blanked. I did miss a run though, on my third rod, cast to the distance with a whole roach on. 'Dances' gave me a bollocking for striking too soon, bless him.

Andrew did have an eel from Badens that year. He was fishing alongside me at the pre-baited swim. Although he caught it on dead bait it regurgitated cockles in the sack, which makes me think it was only there because of the baiting up.

So this season came to an end with the colder weather and thoughts of small river chub on my mind. Along came 1998/99.

"Return of the cockle, the sequel".

Another pre-baiting program, but I was rumbled and found a lad and his mates in the new swim, fishing cockles. I then thought, that's it, and have not fished there since. He must have heard about my eels and watched the lake.

Conclusions.

In my opinion, pre-baiting works big style. Just choose the water and swim and put up with every other fish in the lake, unless you bait up areas away from them, like shallow water. As for bait, anything will do. I suspect chopped

dead baits will see off the silver fish, but attract perch or pike. Just remember this, I was baiting up three to four times a week on the little and often theory.

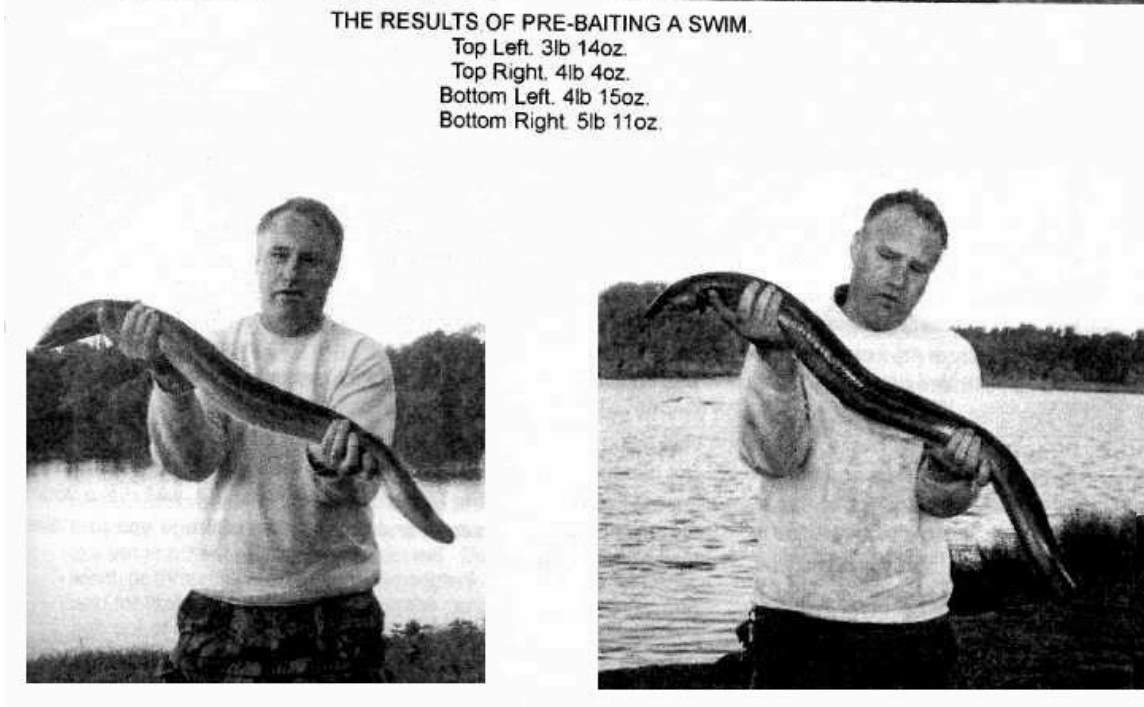
Going back to Kempton and the size of the eels in such a new water, I am increasingly disregarding the old theory about growth rates. Just look at the eels from Docklow and other hole in the ground carp puddles. These lakes have only been dug, at the most 25 to 30 years, but the lack of predators such as pike and the non-stop bombardment of food, thrown in by match boys plus the overstocking of small roach and rudd, must be eel paradise. Trouble is, they won't let you night fish most of them.

As for me, I am going to do the unthinkable this year and try to pinpoint an eel- 1 will pre-bait a carp water that threw up a 7lb'er last year. I am after the 7 because I think as it was caught on worm, I have o chance with cockles. Eels don't just disappear after they have been caught. I really think they just don't eat that bait again and get wary. By the time you read this I may have caught it.



THE RESULTS OF PRE-BAITING A SWIM.

- Top Left. 3lb 14oz.
- Top Right. 4lb 4oz.
- Bottom Left. 4lb 15oz.
- Bottom Right. 5lb 11oz.



GENESIS.
By
Chris Hodgson

As the seasonal mists once again roll away they take with them the final icy remnants of winter. April approaches and the clocks alter. With a thunderous standing ovation the sun applauds the onset of British Summer Time and envelopes us with three or four days of weather more akin to either May or June before lapsing gently back into spring and restoring a sense of normality. Normality though is not a word to be found in our vocabulary. As the change in temperature encourages a rejuvenation in our native flora and fauna it also reactivates our minds, kick-starting a desire within us to revisit our favoured waterside haunts, resulting in a need to indulge in our preferred form of recreation, the pursuit of eels.

For me the first session of any season is always special. The venues are the same but there is always the element of the unexpected. The waters and there inhabitants have been well rested during the winter solstice and, although past experience gives you the cutting edge, you are having to re-establish feeding areas, feeding times, baits, and all the other patterns which contribute towards successful angling.

In an attempt to become more successful I, probably like so many others, have made changes to my terminal tackle and presentation. Suspended baits and pennel rigs have been added to my armoury. Hook sizes have been refined and patterns altered. Calibre wonder wire has now replace my Drennon Seven Strand and I feel that this factor alone will pay huge dividends. However, only time will tell as to whether these changes will prove as beneficial as it is hoped for.

The reason for allowing my digits to dance around the keyboard in order to compose this piece of literary genius is that Tony "B.T". Jolley had asked me to arrange a fish - in at Upper Tamar Reservoir. Due to personal circumstances I passed this task on to my colleague Steve Dawe. He has negotiated and arranged this event and hopefully the details have been sent out. However, I thought that you might appreciate some further insight into the water and so the following is a reproduction of the notes detailing the first nights fishing on the water in 1999.

My eeling season started late this year and although Steve had made several trips already my initial session didn't materialise until the evening of May 28th. It was a balmy, thundery evening with a light breeze drifting in from the west. I arrived at the lake at around 5.30 pm, walked to a swim and set up. Steve had said he would arrive later in the evening and so I set about catching some bait. In between times I had cast out my rods which were baited with some dead minnows that I had brought with me. At 6.00 pm the alarm on the middle rod screamed and line poured from the bait runner. Unfortunately the fish dropped the bait and the take was aborted, a good start though. I had some live baits now and so re-baited and recast. 6.45 and another belting run and line poured from the reel. The eels seemed to like minnows. After letting the run develop I wound down and struck. I felt the familiar thump thump of the eel and started to play the fish when the hook pulled. Again I re-baited with a live bait and cast the rod once more. I decided to try clipping my lines instead of using the bait runners to try and get better runs. At 7.00 pm the same rod was away again. This time a result and my first eel of the season graced the net at 2 lb 12 ozs. I put it into the keep net re-set the traps and put the kettle on. It wasn't long until another run developed. Another positive connection and another eel in the net, this time 1 lb 14 oz. I couldn't believe my luck. I continued to catch bait until Steve arrived at 8.00. He was more than surprised when I told him of the result so far. The action was continual throughout the night for both myself and Steve.

The final count for a 24 hour period was 14 eels and over 30 runs. This divided out to 7 eels piece with Steve accounting for 1 eel over 2 lbs and the best being 3 lb 1 5 oz. My other 5 eels were 2 at approx 1 lb, another at 1 lb 14 oz, a 3 lb 1 0 oz and a 4 lb 6 oz. Not bad for a first session! All this plus Steve also caught a surprise 6 lb 12 oz brown trout which took a large skimmer live bait. So is the Upper Tamar worth a visit, well make your own minds up. I hope that you find something in this piece of interest and that it will encourage you to make the pilgrimage to the South West later in the year for the fish-in.

See you on the bank, tight lines.

HIDE AND SEEK.

By
Stuart Dean

It's funny how an article from 1969 can inspire you to write. Dave Marlborough's article on holding places proves just how far we have come in 30 years, or should I say how little progress we have made? He wrote about our age-old problem of locating eels. 30 years on it seems to me that we have not made any significant progress. Maybe the problem of locating eels was solved many years ago, so there is no progress to be made and there is little we can add to what is already known. The one thing that I think we will all agree on, is that the location of big eels is our biggest problem. In this article I have given my theories about location and the best possible places to position our baits. Remember that none of this is gospel and I am sure that some members will have different views to mine.

I have an equation that I use in the hope of catching big fish:

Location + time + good presentation + the right bait + a slice of luck = Big Fish (**EELS**).

In other words; - The right time, in the right place, with the right rigs and bait, add a little bit of luck and you've cracked it. Some parts of the equation have simple solutions. With some time and thought applied to our rigs etc. we can get them right. With time spent on the bank and experimentation it can be established which is the right bait. Time, is a very easy problem to solve; you just spend as much time as you can fishing your chosen venue. Unfortunately, most of us aren't able to do as much fishing as we would like to, but hours on the bank increase the chances of being in the right place at the right time. Luck, on the other hand we can do little about, it's a case of "Que, sera sera".

That leaves us with location. This is the most complex of the problems we face, and as a result it's the hardest one to get right. There are two basic rules to fish location.

Rule 1. You will not catch a big eel if there are none in the water you fish. You can only ever catch the biggest eel that the water contains.

This is where a little bit of time spent doing some research can reap rich rewards. Find out if your target water has ever produced any eels and try to establish how big those eels were. A word of warning, don't believe everything you are told. A lot of anglers have no idea how big eels are and 2lb eels are assumed to be 3 and 4lb eels. Also don't believe the saying "there are no eels in here". Just because a water has not been known to produce an eel, doesn't mean that it doesn't contain eels, and in some cases it can be a distinct advantage, in that it doesn't produce small eels. This is where you have to rely on your third sense, you know, a hunch, a feeling.

Rule 2. Spend time studying your chosen water.

The things you are looking for on your water are - likely **holding areas** (places where an eel retreats to when it is not actually feeding), **feeding areas** (places where an eel goes to feed) and **transition routes** (paths that an eel uses to travel between holding and feeding areas). I have purposely not called them patrol routes as I am convinced that eels do not patrol in the same way that carp and bream do. You should be able to identify areas of the water that will fall into one or other of these categories. Of course you will apply your own theories to identify which areas are which.

Holding areas. Some of these areas will be quite obvious. I am sure that most of us assume that snaggy areas of the lake, such as sunken tree roots and branches, along with weedy areas, deep silty areas, damaged canal walls and any other snag, are potential holding areas for an eel.

Feeding areas. These areas may not be as obvious and some of them can change surprisingly quickly. Bloodworm beds are a feeding area that generally remains constant and are always located in silty areas. It must be remembered that they can become more or less abundant from season to season and therefore in seasons when they contain less bloodworm they can be visited less by an eel. These bloodworm beds are not obvious, but with time and by getting to know your water you will be able to locate them. Weedy areas contain water snails and other aquatic life forms, including prey fish (roach etc.). Therefore an eel will visit these areas frequently to feed. Once again weed can spring up on different parts of a lake at different times of the season and can vary from season to season but generally they remain reasonably constant. Areas of the water where prey fish shoal up and feed are another area that eels visit to feed and I would say that these are the areas that an eel will visit most often for it's food. Prey fish do move around the lake constantly and where they will be on any given day will be largely dependant on the prevailing conditions i.e. time of the year, water temperatures and wind direction. These feeding areas can move over short periods of time, definitely within 24 hours and sometimes what started out as a feeding area at the beginning of your session could not be a feeding area by the end of it! Snaggy areas of the water also tend to be feeding areas for the prey fish and there will always be some snails etc. and fish (food) for the eel here. The margins of any water are yet another feeding area for an eel. Dead fish and other items of food are either blown into them by the wind, or thrown into them by other anglers. Up against the canal wall is a well known feeding area for eels and for that fact every other fish in the canal. I'm not a canal angler by any stretch of the imagination; in fact I go out of my way to avoid fishing them. I know this is a big mistake but, to be honest, I don't really enjoy fishing them.

Transition routes. There are large areas of waters that, at times do not have eels in any large numbers. These I would class as transition areas. Once again these areas are subject to change depending on where the feeding areas are at any particular time. Eels spend most of their time either in holding or feeding areas and the time they spend in these transition areas is limited to the time they spend passing through. The problem with these large areas of relatively eel barren water is pinpointing the route or paths that eels take when crossing between holding and feeding areas. The most well recognised transition routes on any water are the margins both under your feet and island margins. Other routes (paths) are more difficult to locate and it is often a case of trial and error until you are able to find them. On gravel pits this problem is multiplied many times as there can be lots of gullies that an eel could use as a route and as a result it can take time to locate which gullies eels use and which ones they don't.

To try and locate these routes I often experiment with my 3rd or 4th rod and position a bait in open water where there is no obvious feature, either in the way of snags, weed or prey fish and wait to see if anything happens. It is surprising just how many times this experimental rod can produce more action than baits that have been positioned into areas that been targeted as either feeding or holding areas.

Now this is where it all starts to get inconclusive and as a result confusing. You should have noticed that in all of the sections above I have identified areas and put them into a category. If you take the **snaggy areas** as an instance, you will notice that it is included in the section on holding areas and the section on feeding areas. Another instance is the **margin areas**; this is included in the section on feeding areas and the section on transition routes. So this begs the questions, are snaggy areas holding areas or feeding areas and are the margins transition routes or feeding areas? The same can be said for many of the other areas mentioned in this article. Some of them fall into all three categories! If I must try to answer any of these questions I would have to be honest and say that it is very difficult to say with any conviction which areas are which.

At the end of the day the whole point of identifying these areas is to work out just where the best areas are to position our baits, in order to increase our chances of catching. Below I have tried to assess the pros and cons of each type of area,

Holding areas. Advantages: - 1. The extended time eels spend in these areas. 2. There area at least two opportunities of an eel intercepting your bait, once as it leaves to move to a feeding area and again as it returns to it's haunt / lair.

Disadvantages: - 1. These may not be the areas where eels feed regularly and with any conviction. 2. These areas tend to be snaggy which reduces your chances of landing an eel.

Feeding areas. Advantages. 1. These areas are where you are most likely to find feeding eels. Disadvantages: - Your bait can get lost in the crowd, in other words the eel may take many other food items without ever taking your bait.

Transition areas. Advantages. 1. These areas offer the best chance of intercepting an eel that has the soul intention of feeding. 2. There is an increased chance of presenting baits to an eel that has not already fed. 3. Many different eels may use the same route.

Disadvantages: - 1. Transition routes can be difficult to locate. 2. These routes can change depending on where the feeding areas are on the session that you are fishing.

My order of preference for the placement of baits is as follows: - First **Transition areas**. Second **Holding areas** and lastly **Feeding areas**.

Once we have found the areas of the water that you think give the best chance of catching an eel, we then have to look at the last area of location. This area concerns the level at which we fish our baits. Ledgered on the bottom, or suspended off bottom. This can be critical to the amount of success we have. If eels are feeding off bottom, baits that are ledgered may be ignored. Conversely if the eels are feeding on the lake bed, baits that are suspended too far off bottom could be ignored.

In total there are three problems associated with location: - 1. Finding the right water. 2. Finding the right areas of the water to fish. 3. Finding the right level in the water to fish our baits. All in all a complex problem that occasionally we get right, but I would say the majority of times we get one part or another slightly wrong.

The Twilight Zone.

By
Pete Gregory

Eel fishing is a funny old game. Bloody hard for most of the time, and even when the going is good and you feel that you have something to share with other eel anglers by trying to write an article, the particular subject, can for me, be hard to explain. For the reader too, it can be equally hard to understand and more often than not, half way through, I wish I hadn't even started. During the slide show at last year's winter social (1997) the club mag had only just arrived through the letter box the day before. I looked through it quickly. I did notice Steve's and Stuart's articles on live baiting and related to a lot of their experiences, as so much of my fishing on my present water were similar (ref. later). Also I did apologise to Stuart, for misleading him unintentionally, through his excellent catch reports. My eels caught and reported on the catch report were listed as caught on live / dead-baits. Stuart must have been scratching his head with this one, but he naturally assumed I meant dead-baits. The fact is, they were put out as lives, but there was no proof that when the eels intercepted them, if they were in fact alive or dead. I have my own views on this one, which I will attempt to cover later. Like most of you, I take a lot of notes during my sessions. Although I glance through them as the season progresses, inevitably well after the eel season has for me ended, usually during those long, boring, winter evenings and at a convenient time, I spend hours trying to find out if there are any patterns to emerge, or anything that can be used to my advantage to improve my eel fishing in general for the following year. This year however, I dropped an almighty clanger. I failed to take any notes of the eel's time of capture, which I am really annoyed about, because I did find a number of coincidences to emerge. I am almost certain that through using the pennel type rig, in conjunction with the free running bolt rig (separate article), had I taken into account of the time of captures, I could be telling you facts and not possibilities. This is my third year with the N.A.C. and I am enthusiastic to learn from you, the membership. Since I have been a member each year my captures have improved, and my tally for just two months, last summer, which turned out to be my best years eeling so far, was thirteen eels over 3 lbs, five over 4 lbs and one eel of 5lb 01 oz. Good fishing by any standards!

Now, just for a minute let's go back to Steve and Stuart's articles on live-baiting. I felt Steve approached the whole live-baiting game cautiously, in terms of not trying to upset any anti-live-baiters, whether N.A.C. members or other anglers outside of the club, who probably get a chance to browse through our mags at national conferences or meetings. In recent years, live-baiting has become a bit of a dirty word, especially in terms of the cruelty aspect. Well I've never been one to hold back and my only comment to people, who believe this, is simply "don't be hypocritical". The simple fact is "angling is cruel" and that is all I have to say on the subject. It's a fact.

Now, the subject behind this article strangely enough is, how do eels actually approach, take and devour individual food items. As I have said so many times before, these are my opinions from what I have read, seen and my experiences, while actually fishing for eels. So let's start with the humble worm. During a weekend fishing with Dave Board, we spoke a fair bit on a number of issues, eel fishing in particular. At one stage Dave asked if I had ever watched an eel take a worm at close quarters. He told me of an eel that he kept in an aquarium for some time, which was regularly fed on worms. If you don't know, an eel will suck in a worm at incredible speed, it's mouth opening just enough to accept the tasty morsel. Within a split second it has gone. I assume that with most, if not all small, slow moving or dead items of food, sucking would be normal, especially if a number of other eels were foraging in the immediate area and the eel was determined not to share. I suppose to some degree, no different than if you or I were eating a plate of spaghetti, one slurp and it's gone. The only difference being that the eels suction is greater than ours. A poor example I know but it does get better, I think. So how does an eel actually take in its food? In the case of any worm, an eel would obviously know that the worm isn't likely to shoot off and disappear at great speed, as a small fish would. In my article "Critical Mountings" I mentioned that most anglers still mount worms onto the bend of the hook once only and usually through the saddle. This allows movement of the bait. My concern with this presentation was that too often after an aborted run or a strike to nothing, the retrieve resulted in the hook having nothing more than a lifeless stump remaining, the head, tail or both were missing. Could this be the fact that the eel is sucking in the bait and suddenly coming to an abrupt halt as it hits the bend of the hook? (Diagram enclosed) The simple answer should be smaller hooks, but at the risk of the eel becoming deeply hooked, if the eel is of any size. Now, it is my opinion that if you bunch the worm, or worms on a larger hook, the size being relevant to the bait size being used, the eel would open its mouth wider with more chance of the hook going in, rather than sucking on the free offering. Food for thought maybe. In turn, I believe the hook has less chance of ending up too far down the eel's throat.

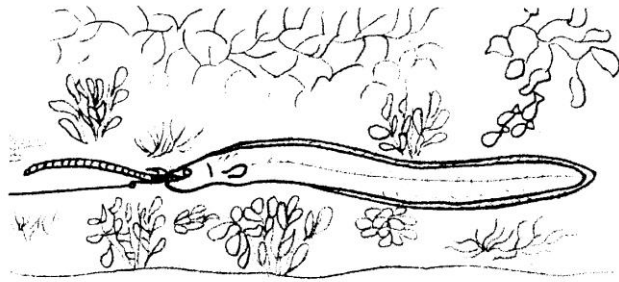
Now this brings me onto the use of larger baits, such as "fish", live or dead-baits. Have any of you seen any documentaries recently on eels? Not so long ago, there was a good programme showing the life of an Australian eel, from Elver to adulthood. There were plenty of things I saw that could be put to good use. During the programme a large animal had died and ended up in the river. Dozens of eels were taking advantage of the free meal. An eel acts very much like a crocodile or alligator in terms of ripping flesh from

the victim. Having taken a large bite, an eel spins on its axis until a chunk is removed. On many occasions, while using larger than normal dead-baits, an eel will normally take a bait side on. Once again if other eels or predatory fish are in the area and the eel is unsettled, it won't hang around and this is when you get those one toners, that is of course until it feels resistance. If your hook is positioned correctly, then a hooked eel is on the cards. However, a dead fish pulled off the hook, will be taken to its safe haunt, to be torn apart and eaten. An eel for most of the time will travel close to, or on the bottom, and I believe for most of the time an eel will feed on, or very near the bottom. However there are exceptions, these being at dawn or dusk, when large numbers of small bait fish are active on top or just below the surface. Any specialist angler knows that these times are often the most productive periods for any species being sought, including eels and depending on the weather, time of year and the type of water you are fishing, every angler in the country realises the potential and we all take advantage of it. Certainly during late spring, summer and autumn eels also know this, and this is where live-baiting can be very effective. At this time of year, even as dusk comes and goes and the skies grow darker and the dead of night arrives, so the smaller fish tend to go deeper and the majority sleeps on or very close to the bottom. Yet again there is another exception. During the different phases of the moon, leading up to a full moon and the phases directly after a full moon, can see your water active for the duration of the night, both from small bait fish, which in turn draw the eels up off the bottom as they can see, smell and hear their intended victims silhouetted against the night sky. Live-baiting can score heavily above any other method at such times. I really am no expert when it comes to eel fishing, but I am quick to learn and for years I have avoided fishing for eels during the moon phases. In the early days, being a complete novice, I knew nothing but to present dead-baits, occasionally worms hard on the bottom. Some years ago while fishing in France and for a number of years after I regularly received French angling magazines. One of these magazines had an interesting article on eels and eel fishing and some excellent photo's, that accompanied it. The whole article was based on the French angling scene and included the way in which eel's approach and attack different food items. An eel, like a snake will move slowly covering a lot of ground as it approaches it's intended victim for example, a small fish. The eels movements are a series of slow, premeditated and carefully calculated moves, stopping, starting, gaining inches at a time until, if lucky, it gets close enough for the final lunge. An exceptional burst of speed and a well-deserved meal if contact is made. More often than not, the prey senses the eel's presence and makes a speedy exit. An eel, as a cobra, will rise above the lake bed and position itself in an almost erect posture (settle down lads), staying in the same position without flinching a muscle. It can leave the bottom and edge it's way up to the surface and as before a final lunge, and another meal. The eel within a split second is mobile and already hugging the bottom, in most cases having secured a meal. They certainly don't hang around (excuse the pun).

Last summer on my water, as well as fishing for carp, during the day a lot of time was spent catching bait, which was incredibly easy here. Over the years while fishing for live-baits using light float tackle, on a variety of waters, it's surprising just how many specimen fish can be caught. This water is no exception, and I was lucky to catch dozens of carp into double figures, perch over two pounds in weight and a P.B. crucian carp of 3-07. As well as these I also caught a number of roach to just over a pound. In fact on a number of occasions the better quality roach of this size had wounds inflicted to the underside of their bodies, in every case at the fishes vent. There is no doubt in my mind that they were caused by good eels. As you can see from the photo, the eel is a good four pounder and the roach a little under a pound, showing a wound obviously inflicted by a sizeable eel. So how do eels attack live fish, which in many cases are very high in the water. In my opinion, eels will only take their prey from underneath. Now going back to Stuart's article on live-baiting. I agree totally with Stuart and his diagram 1, as regards the target area. The vent is by far the best area to place a hook. However, I don't agree with Stuart that a hook can't be positioned at this point. Using a pennel rig I now always position the second hook through the vent. Hook size is according to bait size and I must stress that the barbs must be mega sharp. I've had no problems with crushing the barbs first, providing elastic/rubber band pieces are used to prevent the hook from dropping out. This presentation will not stand up to any rigorous casting or fumbling during the cast and is certainly no good at range. The first hook is positioned through the lip or between the top of the head and the dorsal fin.

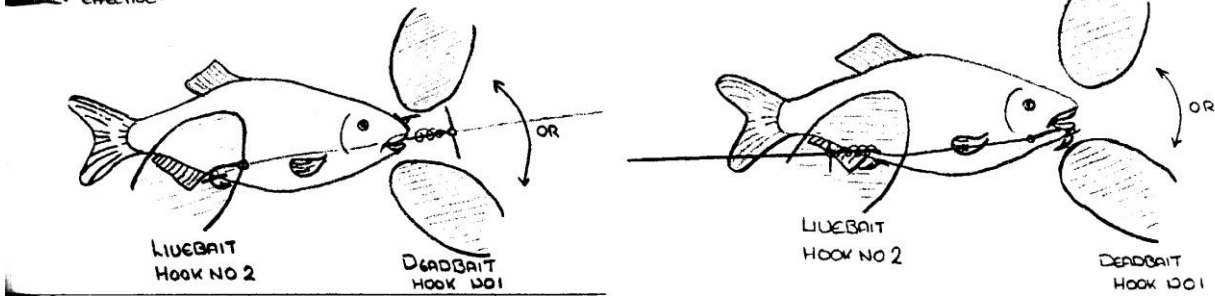
Now read on as I theorise, using the eel's incredible senses as I go. So why do eels go for the vent? It is dark and the eel is lying low. The eels sight is good and above it can be seen a large shoal of roach silhouetted against the night sky. The eel as already mentioned makes it's way slowly to the surface. Any roach looking down can only see darkness. As the eel stealthily gets closer and closer, the fish in the shoal are probably releasing excrement from the vent, which the eel's strong sense of smell will pick up. Through the lateral line the vibrations are getting stronger as it approaches the shoal. By now the eel has chosen the fish it will take. From underneath, slightly behind and out of view, realistically the best attack position, it strikes. Successful or not it returns to the depths.

Now in terms of live-baiting, which is my favourite form of presentation for any predatory fish, I am a bit of an animal. I have no conscience whatsoever in using live-baits of any sensible size, depending on predatory species sought, or in any numbers.



COULD THIS BE THE REASON WE GET SO MANY BITE-OFFS WHEN USING LUREBAITS. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT ALL THAT COMES BACK IS A LIFELESS STUMP ON THE HOOK.

— NO PRESENTATIONS, BUT ON THE SAME THEME
 — EFFECTIVE.



As with Stuart's article, I have done a diagram showing the target area and my preferred hooking positions when using the pennel rig. Don't get me wrong, I have spent a great deal of time over the last two seasons playing with the hooking arrangement, and in my opinion this is as good as it will get, although even now missed runs do occur occasionally. You will notice from the diagram I, that I term Hook 1 as the dead-fish hook and Hook 2 as the live-fish hook. Sorry Stuart, I actually believe that two hooks are acceptable within eel fishing, provided thought goes into it first and by putting one of these razor sharp hooks through the vent of your live-bait, I don't believe any vital organs will be damaged. Don't get me wrong, Stuart's presentation will keep a live-bait going stronger for longer, but it's a catch 22 situation. Do we hook our live-bait in such a way that the bait stays livelier longer, but at the risk of your one and only run of the night being missed because the hook has been positioned just outside the target area? Or do as I do, hook up into the target area (i.e. the vent) in the hope that the fish stays alive for the duration of the session? However, my confidence is higher knowing there's a greater chance of hooking the eel should a run materialise. The choice is yours. I don't know if my theories are right or wrong, but I can recollect quite vividly a number of the eels that I did land and I have spent hours taxing the old brain, usually in bed before I drop off to sleep. I believe about 70% of the eels were caught on the live-bait hook and about 30% on the dying or dead fish hook. Although I failed to take notes of the time of capture of eels over 3lb, I did take notes of which hook actually secured the eels. Interestingly enough, at no time were both hooks ever in the eel's mouth. The list reads: -

- 12 eels hooked on No 2 hook (live-bait)
- 7 eels hooked on No 1 hook (dying or dead fish)

Obviously the longer a live-bait is presented in the manor I use, then death will come sooner, not later. So, for example, if 70% of captures (i.e. 12 eels) were caught between dusk and midnight, it's a safe bet that the bait was still alive with all eels having been hooked on hook No 2 (the vent), the live-bait being up and off the bottom. The other 30% were caught anytime after midnight to the crack of dawn and were hooked on hook No 1 (lip to dorsal), seven eels in all. I assume that the bait was dying, very low in the water or actually dead, lying on the bottom. Now despite my approach to hooking live-baits being a little controversial, on a number of occasions the following morning when the bait has been reeled in, the fish were still very much alive and active. I don't believe that a live-bait has to be hyperactive to draw in any predator. In fact on many occasions I believe it's more likely to be detrimental.

Now just before I finish I would like to say that both Steve's and Stuart's articles were excellent and I certainly learnt something from both of them. If you study this article carefully from start to finish, I hope you will gauge some of the points I have tried to put over. You must continually experiment and take notes. I hope you can make something of my theories and I didn't lose you completely. This has been hard to write and any feedback would be appreciated. Tight lines. (***Editors note: Unfortunately we couldn't use the photo of the roach with the bite mark on it due to the lightness of the reproduction.)

'ARCHIVE' ARTICLES.

This introduction has proved difficult for me to do. With me being a relatively new member of the club I have had to rely on some of the more longstanding members to help me with some of the facts about who were members of the N.A.C. and what was happening in the club at the time this article was written.

First of all this article wasn't published in the N.A.C. Bulletin, but was in fact published in Freeline in 1982. Freeline was the publication of N.A.S.A. and N.A.C. members have always contributed to N.A.S.A. both with time spent on its committee and by sending articles for inclusion in its magazines.

As you will no doubt be aware Arthur Sutton was the founder member of our Club way back in 1962, which makes the N.A.C. the longest standing single species group in this country. When you have been fishing for eels as long as Arthur has, you are bound to learn a few things along the way.

In 1981 The N.A.C. was starting to go through a period of low membership and there were only about 18 members at the time. Some of those members were Brian Crawford, Ernie Orme, Dave Holman, Dave Taylor, Peter Strickland, Terry Jefferson and Mark Davies, who has just recently rejoined the club.

Although it was known that the moon had an effect on eels feeding habits, off bottom fishing for eels was virtually unheard of in 1981 and Arthur was considered a little bit mad for advocating its use. Subsequent events have proved him to be right in telling us that off bottom fishing was a viable method for catching eels. Nowadays we take it for granted that eels can be caught on baits suspended high up in the water and I am sure that at times most of the members fish with off bottom presentations of one form, or another. This article gives us some insight into how the moon can affect the feeding habits of eels and how this method of fishing came about.

A CASE FOR MOONLIGHT EEL FISHING.

By
Arthur J. Sutton

We in the National Anguilla Club have always, mainly through our reporting scheme, sought to improve our rate of catch. Since we first started, back in the days when it was thought that a few chaps only had to band together to catch eels in order to break the record, we have learnt a fair deal about certain aspects of eel angling. We learnt conclusively that eels are to be caught much faster at night than during the day. That worms produce a faster rate of catch than dead-bait. That the later months do produce more big eels than do the early ones. We learnt, too, that brightly moonlit nights were generally a waste of time. Etc. etc.

Now let us look at the last one again. Put it several different ways i.e. we do not catch many eels on moonlit nights- or- our methods do not produce enough on moon lit nights to make the effort worthwhile. Sooner or later we arrive at a conclusion. Eels do not feed on brightly moonlit nights.

If ever we dropped a big clanger this it! We have plenty of fact, and have read into it the wrong conclusion. True, eels do not get caught readily on moon lit nights, **BUT WHO PROVED THAT THEY DO NOT FEED** at such times? I put it to you that eels do feed on moonlit nights and that, using the correct method or methods we can take them. Big ones too. Let me explain.

Nearly all animals are affected in one way or another by light. That goes for birds and fish too. Most creatures react to light or the absence of light, right down through the microscopic organisms. A glaring example, if you'll pardon the term, is the way we used to sort maggots from crysalids during the war when maggots were so scarce. The trick was this. One went into a room with subdued lighting armed with an empty container, a sheet of brown paper, the mixture of maggots and crysalids and a bright torch or lantern. We laid out the paper on the table, emptied the mixture onto it and placed the lantern at one side of the paper, preferably that side furthest from the edge of the table. Within seconds of switching on the lantern the maggots would make great haste to wriggle away from the source of light and once near the edge of the table were simply brushed into the empty container. A few of you will be saying 'oh what a marvellous tip'. So hopefully you will read on.

Another example and one more closely allied to what this article is about. Put a load of live daphnia into an aquarium and let them stay in a dark room for some time. Now go into the room and suspend a light above the aquarium. Initially you will see that the daphnia have taken up a station at or near to the bottom, but under the influence of the light they will, within a minute or two, rise to the surface and stay there for as long as the light is on. The same happens to the smaller creatures, the copepods, infusorians and plankton. The effect is not always similar between artificial and natural light, but the smaller creatures appear to react the same way to either light. Bear that in mind as it does have some significance. At sea, plankton is very easily collected on a moonlit night using a very fine sieve. Such is the concentration of plankton at such times that the surface water is more akin to soup.



I knew, just after the war years, a bait catcher of some repute. This chap gave up worming at night when he found it more profitable to collect daphnia, which he supplied, regularly to local aquarium shops. He first became known to me when I approached him 'messaging about' on the water I was fishing. Asked what the hell he was up to he replied that he had a permit to collect daphnia. Says I "there are no daphnia in this lake", to which he replied 'yes there are but you don't see them in the daytime for they are scattered all over the lake. At night under the influence of my lamp or the moon they concentrate near to the surface where I collect them in very profitable quantities'.

We now bring the pike angler into the illustration. In any pike-angling circle you will sooner or later hear the saying 'the pike are not feeding well today on the account of that blasted moon last night'. You may be forgiven for wondering what last night's moon has to do with the pike's reluctance to feed the following day. Here, brother, is the low down.

Last night's moon brought about a migration to the surface of most of the smaller life forms. Now fish may not be brainy, but they know under such conditions their food will be concentrated at or near to the surface where it can be taken by the fish far more easily than at other times. So they, too, take up station near the surface where they have a banquet. It often happens that after feeding near the surface the fish become comatose and remain quite still. That is how the pike find them. All the pike has to do is become more buoyant and rise from below, coming up amid the shoals of smaller fish. They can have a ball, and rarely need to feed the following day.

Whether eels do exactly the same is open to doubt, for I do not believe that they can increase their buoyancy as easily as other species and therefore would have to swim about in order to remain off the bottom. Whether or not they can I am not knowledgeable enough on the subject to say, but I make the point that being predators they will act similarly to pike in that they will seek the surface feeding fish.

I come now to our quarry and two illustrations of how and when eels have been taken near to the surface, quite deliberately, under a bright moon. The first takes us to Norfolk where I was spending a few days motoring about in an area where I had spent several years during my youth. During an overnight stay at 'The Jolly Sailors' the landlord, who I knew well, asked if I was still keen on fishing- to which question I replied that I was, although my attention was now held by large eels. The landlord advised me to pay a visit to the blacksmith at a little hamlet named Field House within a few miles of one of the smaller broads. This I did, and found the chap to be well educated and very friendly. He was most interesting to talk to and went out of his way to be helpful. It appeared that he made more money from catching eels and sending them to the hotels of Norwich and other such large towns than he ever made from the blacksmith's shop. He used to obtain from the local longshire fishermen down at the creek a quantity of small white fish not unlike bleak in appearance. These he could collect at a minute's notice, as there was a good quantity swimming around in the cockle cleaning pits. The pits were rectangular and of concrete with a huge cork bung on the inside at one end, to stop the water running out. They were flooded on all but the lowest tides and the small fish were trapped there when the water receded. All very convenient.

It transpired that this good fellow went out after eels whenever the moon was bright. I naturally queried this, commenting that this was a bad time for the taking of eels. He looked both bemused and amused. He assured me that this was so and went on to add that he fished his bait dead- **EIGHTEEN INCHES BELOW** a cork bung over about twelve feet of water! He had his tackle ready made up in a shed behind the 'smith's shop and readily showed me the same. He took his fair share of eels from 2  lb. to 3  lb. And the very occasional eel of four pounds, always eighteen inches below the surface on a bright moonlight night. One other point, he never took many small eels, although they were present in abundance. 'If I wanted smaller eels I would fish for them in the dark and right on the

bottom, but the hotel's only want the bigger ones,' he told me. All was confirmed later that night back at my friendly pub, for the blacksmith's eel catching exploits were well known to many. I decreed that I would try this method, and the occasion when I did so brings us to my second illustration.

It was several years ago, the year in which we held our spring trip to Pickmore (Ugh!) So as to get a good start to my journey on the Saturday morning I elected to fish the Friday night just south of Bugbrooke, on the G. U canal. No sooner had it got dusk, when up rose a great full moon in a cloudless sky. I was sorely tempted to turn it in and get good nights sleep prior to my journey. I am always, it seems, looking for such excuses. A moment of madness made me fix up an 8 inch bubble float which I attached to the line and hung a big Thames bleak some twelve inches below it. I cast the assembly to the far bank only to find that the flow through the canal quickly brought the whole lot back to my bank some yards below me. A dozen or so such casts later and I was beginning to despair- for I never did fancy long trotting for eels! However salvation was at hand for, casting again, the line got caught on a long frond of weed and the tackle remained where it was cast. This time I was able to use the bite alarm and within a few minutes I was nodding and dreaming of all those lovely Pickmore eels I was shortly to catch, after what surely must be yet another blank on the G. U. One hour later, in conditions bright enough to read small print, the alarm sounded. I was quickly to the rod to see the line peeling off steadily. On striking, the fish played gently at first, hardly feeling like an eel until quite close to me. Then suddenly the eel was in the net and I was the more surprised of the two, That eel was just over 2½ lbs, but was worth its weight in gold and was, surely, food for thought.

Eels, even larger eels, are far more free swimming than is generally supposed. Treat yourself to a visit to a large aquarium, like that, which you will find in the London Zoological Gardens. The eels in the London Zoo will be seen swimming at all depths. If you are fortunate enough to have a word with the keeper he will confirm that during that period of darkness to which all the inhabitants are subject, the eels become stationary on the bottom. When the lights are switched on the eels soon rise from the bottom.

During a prolonged reading through my vast library of angling magazines I found plenty of reference to fish being attracted to light. Mention is made of eels being negatively phototrophic. Broadly speaking, this means that eels only feed during darkness. As such, I cannot believe that this holds good for all conditions. Generally, I suppose, it is correct. But under a bright moon I now believe the reverse applies.

I think that it was carp angler Jim Gibbinson (ex. N.A.C.) who positively identified eels as being responsible for the loud, somewhat carp-like, noises he and his colleagues were experiencing. They most certainly are eels, large eels, striking at small fish near to the surface. Later on, Jim discovered that this 'surface striking' only occurred on moonlit nights. At that time Jim was about to leave the eel fishing scene and so took the matter no further. Speaking to him during 1977, I found him to share my belief that some day, fairly soon, anglers would start to catch good eels on moonlit nights, by fishing for them at or near the surface. But of course that will only come about if we, the eel anglers, set out deliberately to do so.

Some years ago Mike Muse (ex. N.A.C.) took a very large pike from a Lincs Reservoir which I have fished several times for eels without success. He was joined by his fishing colleagues Bob Reynolds and Fred Wagstaffe (both ex. N.A.C.) and all three hammered the water, but it failed to produce the pike which, in theory, it should have done. Mike had the feeling that the pike were feeding at night, so all three commenced a night fishing campaign aimed at pike. Success was slow to come, until Bob found that the pike were very near to the surface on moonlit nights. They immediately increased their rate of catch tenfold by fishing very shallow in the moonlight and took a fair number of very good pike. **THEY ALSO CAUGHT EELS** on the baits intended for the pike fished right near to the surface, but, like the pike, they were only there on the moonlit nights- or at least they were only caught then. Little of this became known, as this particular water was very strictly 'day fishing only'. I must also mention that this water had its fair share of attention from eel anglers who fished there because of the number of **VERY BIG** eels that had been found trapped in the grating at one end by the keepers. But they had very little success, using orthodox methods.

Should you doubt that eels often leave the bottom, have a trip to Loch Ness. On a calm day you will see eels shoaling in their thousands at the surface. I think that one last, but very valid, example will suffice.

Dave Goodrun, myself and others of the N.A.C. started fishing a small private lake in Lincolnshire known as Lake Helen. During the first year results were good indeed with the best eel failing to me at well over four pounds. We had plenty of evidence that this water held eels in excess of seven pounds. During the second summer results tailed right off until, in the third year, you could fish there for weeks on end without ever getting a run. That water just 'died on us'. We were discussing this with the owner, a RAF officer who we only saw occasionally. We were convinced that we had taken most of the eels and that there were very few left. The owner did not agree with us and took us round to a thickly wooded bank, a bank we were not allowed to fish from. We crawled out along tree trunks which were leaning out over the water and saw, to our great surprise, thousands of eels of all sizes with a few going over seven pounds. This good chap made available to us another stretch of bank from which we could easily cast to the trees. Still no eels.

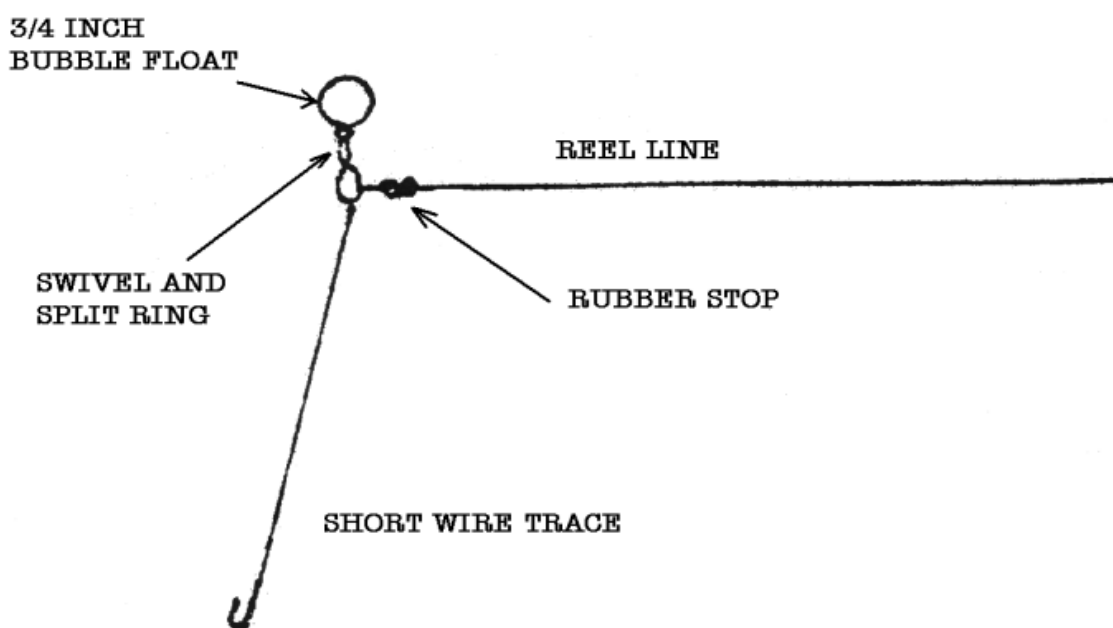
In despair we started fishing other waters, until one day I had a hurried note from Dave asking me to join him as soon as possible at Lake Helen. I found Dave fishing there and getting run after run. He was using a small Rudd fished nearer the surface than the bottom. We all started fishing this way and, although we lost more eels than we landed, that water came back to life. A little later we lost the fishing after some idiot lifted some prize bulbs and caused a lot of damage in doing so. But I recall the episode well and, although it has little to do with moonlit conditions, it does serve to show that eels can be taken at or near the surface.

I think that this is a subject where a lot of theory may be put forward, but it will possibly take a lot of practical work and experimentation before we come to the right method. It is a subject, I feel, into which we can really set our teeth and an aspect of eel fishing in which this Club could take the lead.

I wish there were more I could tell you of the practical side, the type of tackle to use etc.... but this subject is a very open one and at this point in time I know little more than you - or even less! I can illustrate the tackle I used on the G. U canal, but more than that I cannot do.

What we require right now are your ideas and tackle to use. They may turn out to be useless, but we must have a starting point. I would be happier to start with a bait that was anchored in some way to stop it from drifting about. But it may prove best to leave the bait free to drift. Who knows?

Let us get a lively discussion going so that, come the summer, we have some useful ideas to work with.



This is the rig that accompanied Arthur's article when it was published in the NASA magazine 'Freeline' in the autumn of 1982. Since then more anglers have adapted similar rigs and now the most efficient and common Off-Bottom free running rig that predator angler's use is the Colin Dyson rig. This is a variation of a Perch rig first thought up by Vic Bellars, when he was looking for a resistant free set-up.

Mega Eels and a Sick Skoda

By
Jimmy Jolley

In November 1998 I was offered, and accepted honorary membership to the National Anguilla Club, little did I know it would lead me to a new and exiting world of very late nights and excellent company. In March I resigned my honorary membership to take up full membership of the N.A.C because I thought I was getting all the benefits, with none of the expense. And as I was considering doing some eel fishing I thought it only right to pay my subs like everyone else.

So on the 24th April I did my first ever eel fishing session on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, somewhere in rural Lancashire, with my brother B.T and Phil Lukins. All three of us had runs, but no eels where hooked.

The following weekend found us back on the L & L at a spot that produced my brother Tony's first eel after joining the N.A.C, an eel of exactly 3-lb (could history repeat its self?).

Now this stretch of canal is at the bottom of a long dirt track that is a private road to a farm. At the beginning of this track there is a sign which says "Private Road. No cycling. No Fishing Vehicles Whatsoever" so this was duly ignored and by 9 p.m. we where fishing away.

At exactly 10 p.m. Phil had a run on his far bank rod and immediately connected to a good eel. A few minutes later, Tony was sliding the net under a large eel. This eel weighed 4lb 04ozs, measured 43-3/4 inches long, and a P.B. for Phil. "Now this guy is real cool", I thought, (because if that had been me, I would still have been doing cart-wheels up and down the canal yet.) But not Phil, he just looked at this mega eel and said "Nice one". I thought it would be a good excuse to try out my new digital camera, I did manage to get a good photo of Tony calming the eel down before the battery went flat. (I'd forgotten to charge the bloody thing in all the excitement of going eel fishing) But we did manage to get some photos on Phil's camera. The air was blue as I walked back to my swim muttering.

About 15 minutes after Phil's brilliant eel it was my turn to connect with an eel, it took a dead roach fished just off the far side of the boat channel fished on a Dyson rig. It weighed 3-lb 02 ozs, to say I was totally made-up with my first ever fished for eel is a bit of an under statement.

Half an hour later I had another run, this time on my margin fished live bait rod. Now this fish was very unsociable it made off at great speed, as I reached my rods (I was stood chatting and drinking Budweiser in Tony's swim with Phil) I could hear Tony shout, " Wait till it stops". As I got there I thought, "It's not going to stop". So I took my rod from the rest and felt the line with my finger and thumb. The fish was actually pulling the line from my hand, so over with the bail arm, struck and nothing! So I put another live bait on and back out to the same spot. Ten minutes later off it went again but this time everything went right, I connected with an eel that didn't want to make friends at all, up and down the canal it went for what seemed like an age. Then up and down in the canal, (what I mean is from the surface then in to the bottom sending up large patches of oozing, and smelly silt.) Tony again did the honours and into the net slipped a 2-lb 14 ozs eel. Grinning like a "Cheshire Cat" I returned to Tony's swim for the weighing and photos and finish my Budweiser.

With all this activity in B.T's swim, I would have thought he wouldn't have caught. But to the contrary, Tony had a few runs himself and connected with a 1lb-08ozs (ish) and an eel of 2lb-11 ozs. What made this session even more interesting is that it was a mega Moon (99.9% full), and I thought that eels didn't feed in a full Moon? Anyway back to the tale, by 3 a.m. it was time to pack-up and head home.

I forgot to mention earlier that Tony has a "fresh" car, it's a Skoda with a serious health problem, the clutch is knackered! So try as we might the "patient" refused to respond to treatment and so we had to push it to the main road. Tony did manage to get it into gear and vanished in a cloud of dust, leaving us to make our own way back to the main road "It's great to be a member of the R.A.C, in these situations" said Tony when he got back from finding a telephone box. By this time it was about 4-30 a.m.

At 4-35 a.m. a white Ford Escort flashed past, then stop a few yards up the road, then reversed back to us. It was Mark Smethurst; he'd been out "guesting" but ended up on the canal a few miles away. He'd had three runs and lost a definite P.B, when the hook pulled out at the net.

Mark kindly offered to take Phil and myself home, which was probably a round trip of some 25 miles. We tried to decline the offer but Tony said it would help him a great deal, because the R.A.C would only take us as far as his house and he would have to take us the rest of the way himself. And that meant it could be about 9 a.m. when he'd get to bed. So we accepted Mark's offer and feeling ever so guilty, about leaving Tony to "fend for himself" we made our way home. I arrived home at 5 a.m. Phil probably got home at 5-20a.m. Tony got home for 6 a.m. and God knows what time Mark made it home. Oh and by the way, Mark had to go to work at 7-30 a.m. (What a guy!)

After Mark had dropped me off, I thought to myself, "What other club has members willing to put themselves out like that?"

My answer, NONE! Only the National Anguilla Club.

HAREM SCAREM

By
Anthony Jolley

A dark sky gave ominous signs of the bad weather, which was sure to commence at any time. Sure enough, with a flash of lightening and a loud clap of thunder the heavens opened as a deluge of rain soaked the parched soil in the garden at the rear of my house. I ran trying to dodge the onslaught of rain, so as to gain shelter in the outhouse. I had been waiting all week for this trip so a "bit of rain" was not going to deter or delay me in the slightest.

I moved my gear out from its dry surroundings and loaded it into the car, after saying "goodbye!" to my wife and children I made my way to Phil's house.

We travelled out of town, with haste we arrived at our chosen venue, The water had become a familiar place, but in the conditions, it seemed forlorn and it would be unwilling to give up its jewels so easily. Camp was made; although very wet and already feeling the cold we sat back and waited.

The slight and silent movement of the bobbin was signalled by the sharp "bleep" of my Optonic, I jumped to my feet and met with the solid resistance of a snagged fish, try as I might there would be no movement in my favour. eventually all went slack and I sat down despondent, after a minute to compose myself I went about the deeds of re-tackleing and again playing the waiting game.

Time passed without anymore signs of fish movement, the rain ceased and mist began to form over the placid surface of the lake, a rise in temperature was accompanied by a rise in confidence. Steam whispered up and eventually turned into a steady "hiss" as the kettle boiled, Phil did the honours, with a warm drink in cold hands things looked rosy. The sky cleared and a cool breeze rose to dry the air and the earth.

"Action at last" I said, as Phil bent into a good fish without any ceremony the Eel was bullied into the waiting net. once in the mesh of the net both anglers gave a sigh of relief, as all the good sized Eels had been lost on some underwater sanctuary, with only the small Eels being landed no matter which part of the lake was fished, "3lb 12oz" I said , and Phil was pleased.

Things didn't go so well for me, three runs in quick succession, all to live fish, resulted in disaster. Two were snagged after very short runs and instant strikes, the last suffered from the line somehow finding its way behind the spool after stopping a very good Eel in its tracks causing it to come to the surface and smash the water to foam with its tail, which we could clearly see in the moon light. I couldn't turn the handle to gain line or to let it take line, the rod was pulled so as to be pointed at the Eel and I could do nothing about it, the 15 lb line parted at the reel. I sat down devastated, Phil didn't say a word, the look on his face mirrored mine. I didn't cast again that session all three lines had been broken, as I sat there waiting for dawn without the desire to fish on, these words came into my head by Canadian band Harem Scarem.

*1/ I try to talk to the clouds
But they spill out the rain.
Now I'm truly convinced
They've got nothing to say.*

*2/ Will I never learn
Is there something wrong with my brain.
Now the weeds are on fire
And there burning away.*

*3/ Last time I checked I'm at 34 sins
Another won't matter 'cause I'm never gonna win.
Hoping now I'm on the road I can change
Cause I'll change.*

*4/ If there was a time when I needed to pray
That the cold wind blows away.
If there was a time when I needed a place
To wipe the guilt free from my face.
If there was a time for mercy in my life
It's right now.*

*5/ If I were down on my knees
Would it all be in vain.
But for now I'll believe
Until there's some better way.*

*6/ And my pages turn
Til I've got nothing to say.
Now the days with no dawn
Are coming of age.*

*7/ Last time I checked I'm at 35 sins
Another won't matter 'cause I'm never gonna win.
Holding onto a ghost that I can't save.*

*8/ If there was a time when I needed to pray
That the angels come my way.
If there was a time when I needed a place
To wipe the guilt free from my face
If there was a time for mercy in my life
It's right now.*

THE QUEST FOR ANGUILLA

(PART ONE, STARTING OUT)
by Ken Ward, Illustrations by Damien Wood.

WHY?

Maybe you have caught a good eel by accident or seen one caught by a fishing partner. It could be you want to catch a fish that is truly wild and cannot be stalked. You could have had enough of someone coming along and telling you it's name and who caught it, when and at what weight for the last decade.

Not everyone gets that strange and compulsive urge to target the Eel but, for those who have been bitten by the bug, there is more work to be done in preparing *yourself* than to preparing tackle, venues or baits.

First of all you have to forget all those nasty slimy experiences with "bootlace" eels that we have all had to suffer in our past and resolve never to catch an Eel under 2 lbs. again (well, we can hope!).

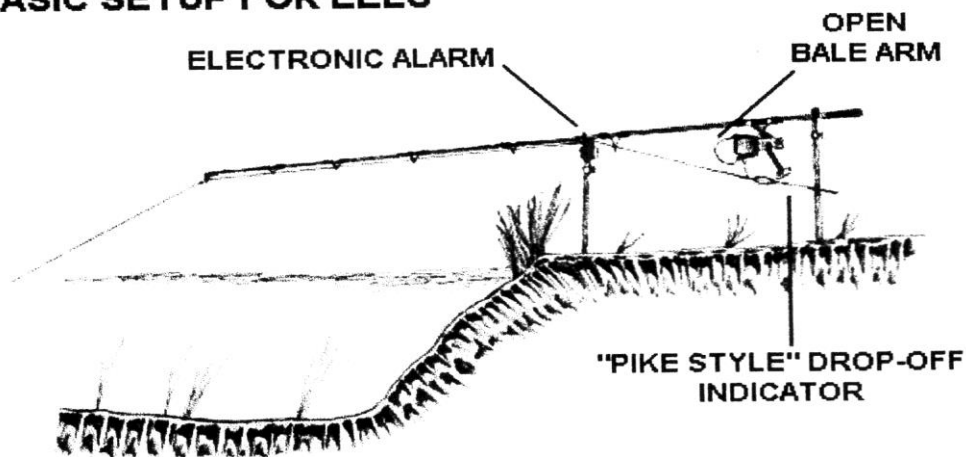
There are some books on eel angling still available and I would recommend watching the two videos made by Dave Holman, one on canal fishing and the other on stillwaters. The videos were made a few years ago and the viewer must take into consideration the greater need for safety and the recent improvements in tackle since these were made. Much can be learned about the approach to eel angling and also the care of eel on the bank. If you don't watch the videos then start out by fishing with an experienced eel angler or join one of the eel angling clubs. The National Anguilla Club has around eighty members throughout the length and breadth of England, Scotland and Wales most of them only too willing to "show the ropes" to an interested new member. The clubs also arranges "Fish-In's" around the country each year.

WHEN?

To avoid a lack of action, start your campaign after the waters have warmed up, around the beginning of May. There is no need to stay out all night, if you get to your swim an hour or so before dusk and fish until two or three hours after darkness falls, this will give you an idea of the prospects for the water chosen.

WHERE?

BASIC SETUP FOR EELS



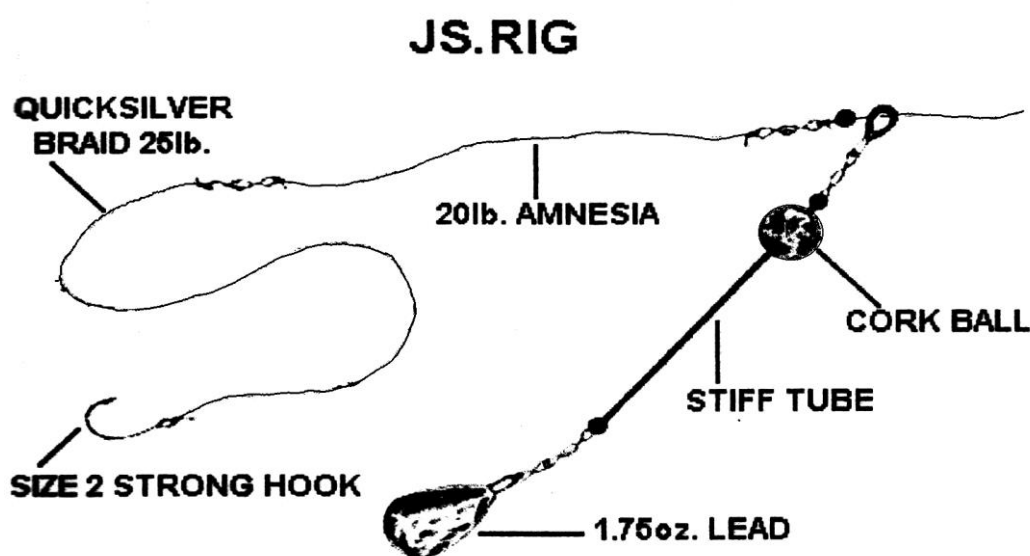
Canals: These can be an excellent introduction to eel angling. I use three classifications for canals, they are:
1: "A canal that produces small eels by daylight". Not recommended as the interest in your baits after dark will probably mean any larger specimens present won't get a look in before the juveniles destroy it.
2: "A canal that does not generally produce eels by daylight". Recommended as this type of water usually has a good head of eels in the 1.5 to 3lbs. class which is the ideal way of learning to catch and handle eels.

3: "A canal that very rarely produces eels" (typically some lengths of the Leeds and Liverpool and the Grand Union canals). These are the targets for later years when you have a long list of captures up to 3lb.plus. These canal lengths can be heartbreaking due to the number of "blanks" that have to be endured but these are the areas for that eel of a lifetime.

Stillwaters: From the smallest farm pond up to the largest reservoir or lake, some can produce eels of great quality and quantity, whilst others can appear totally barren. To find the right stillwater to begin your campaign apply the same criteria as in the canal selection, a water that is known to hold eels but not have the smaller daylight feeders. These waters are normally, but not always, within a few hundred yards of a river, stream or canal. On medium to large waters, consideration should be given to the wind direction as many waters tend to produce eels only from the bank that receives the prevailing wind.

Chosen Swim: Select two areas of the swim to fish. The first area should be within three feet of the nearest island, yes even on a canal! Because the nearest "island" is the bank you are standing on, a margin is a margin whether it is one hundred yards out in the middle of a lake or just in front of your bite alarms. This particularly applies to popular match and pleasure sections because this is the area that receives discarded excess bait and injured fish from keep nets at the end of a fishing session. The eels will home in on this "larder" area as soon as the sun starts to set.

The second area to place a bait could be to a feature (a drop off, gravel bar etc.) but could be anywhere. This is the time for experimenting as the second bait should be locating the eel that is not entering your margin but, passing by on it's way to a favourite feeding spot.



TACKLE?

Rods & Reels. Rods can be almost any "Carp" or "Pike" rods in the 2lb to 3lb test curve, The higher test curve rods are needed, not for the size of your quarry, but to give more control when fishing in areas containing snags. Reels should be any good quality fixed spool type, the "baitrunner" style reels can be used, but are not necessary for the methods used.

Other Items. Electronic alarms, "Drop-off" arm indicators, Forceps, Unhooking mat, Carp sack, Large landing net (42" minimum), Good quality main line of 10lb. BS. minimum, Amnesia 20lb. BS.(still nylon), Braid (Quicksilver 25lb. BS.), Swivels and Strong hooks in sizes 2's, 4's and 6's.

METHODS?

The primary method when first targeting the eel is a "free running" ledger rig, developed by John Sidley, which utilises a buoyant ledger link. The link should be 4 to 8 inches long (the softer the mud, the longer the link). The buoyant link can be made using a length of stiff rig tube. A cork ball is fitted and glued to the top end of the tube. Powergum is threaded through the tube, at one end a snap link swivel and bead are tied on at the top end a bead and John Roberts Run- ring are attached. Before tying off, extend the power gum as far as

possible and tie off securely, this should then retract into the tube.

When the lead settles into the soft mud the cork ball will keep the main line above the bottom allowing free running of line when the eel takes the bait.

Hooklength

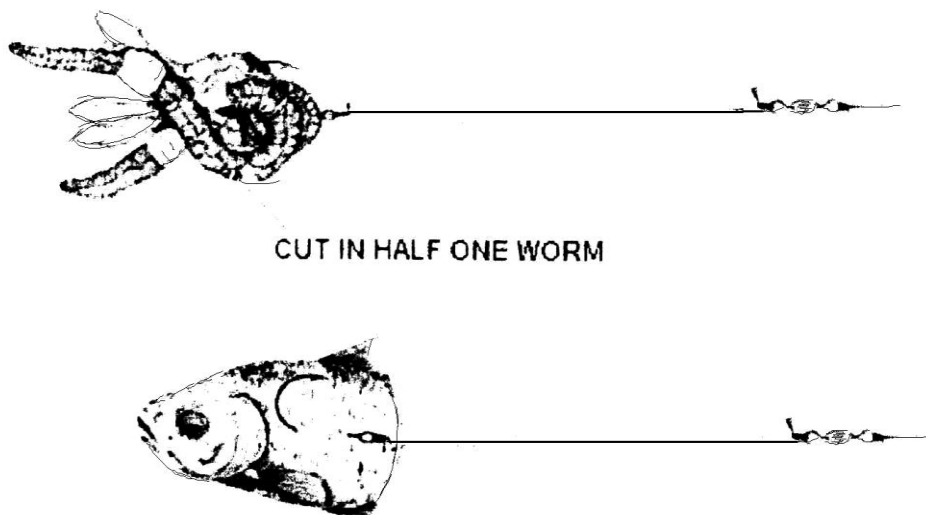
This is made of two parts. The first is a 5 to 7 inches of "Quicksilver" braid with the hook and intermediate swivel attached, tie an 18 inch length of 20lb. BS "Amnesia" stiff nylon between the intermediate and end swivels.

The stiff nylon is used to reduce the chance of tangles with the main line and ledger link.

The total length of the two part trace is around 2 feet. This length has shown over the years, to result in fewer deep hooked fish than shorter or longer traces.

Many eel anglers will not use a braid Hooklength. They remain with "wire" as their only choice, insisting it is essential where pike are present (almost everywhere). My personal reasons for NOT using wire are, on two occasions I have witnessed large eels kink and snap wire as they twisted on the surface. Also I have caught pike up to 8lb on braid without problems when eel fishing.

HOOKING WORMS AND HEAD SECTIONS



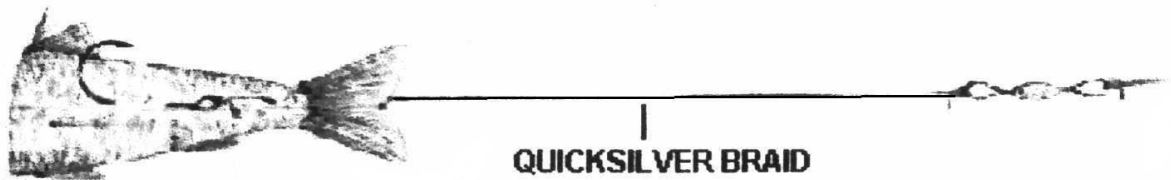
BAITS.

Here we will concern ourselves with just two baits:

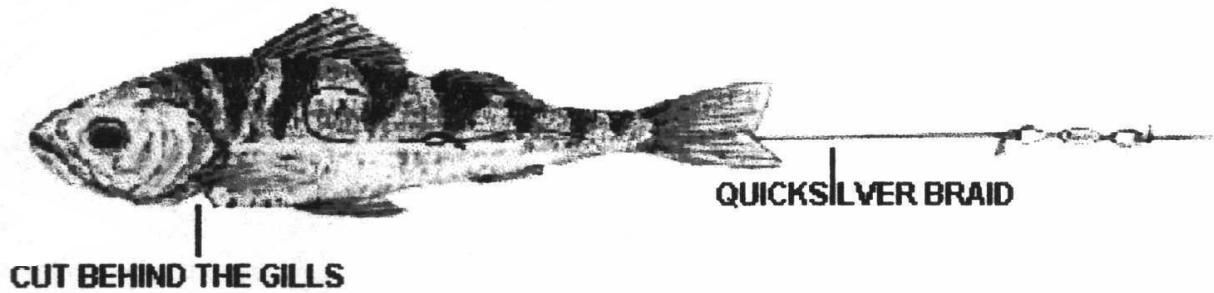
WORMS: These are normally large lobworms fished in multiples of up to four per bait. Always cut one of the worms in half, this gives off a trail of scent in the water.

DEADBAITS: Used as full fish head section or tail section. The hook is through the bait and nicked in to the side. Almost any freshwater fish can be used, although my favourite is the perch, if a perch wasn't the best thing to eat, it would not need all those spines, would it?

TAIL SECTION



FULL DEADBAIT



BITE DETECTION.

Using the set-up as shown, clip up the drop off indicator as lightly as the conditions (wind or under tow) allow and open the bale arm of the reel.

Runs can be a "screamer" down to a single "bleep" on the alarm with out pulling the line from the clip and between these are the runs which stop before you can contact the fish. The later takes need more investigation. If the run does not develop immediately, you should hold the line in front of the alarm and feel for the signs of a feeding eel, if you detect anything then strike. If there is no indication of an eel then clip up the indicator and wait for around five minutes, if nothing results then reel in and check your bait.

The large hooks used and the position of the hooks in the bait are so that an immediate strike can be used. It is important that we take care to eliminate as much as possible, the deep hooking of eels.

PLAYING EELS.

The eel not only has exceptional strength for its weight ; it also has the capability to swim backwards allowing it to fight "on the spot" and to back into snags. The initial task in fight an eel is to get the fish off the bottom in to snag free water. Once the eel is near the surface it is a simple task of reeling it straight in to the pre positioned landing net. This can only be achieved with good strong tackle using a reel with the clutch locked and the anti-reverse locked.

HANDLING THE EEL. To remove the hook from an eel or to get a good

photograph you must first learn to handle them with confidence and care.

First place the eel on an un-hooking mat away from the waters edge.

Lay the eel out in a straight line and upside down.

Using a wet hand stroke the eel from its head along its body, until it starts to go limp.

Now you have around 5 to 20 seconds to unhook or lift for a photograph.

When the eel comes back to fighting fitness start the procedure over again.



NOTE. Never leave an eel on its back for long periods and never apply excessive pressure below the head as damage to the internal organs can easily be caused.

UNHOOKING.

When unhooking the eel use forceps to get a strong hold on the hook. If the hook is not visible then **DO NOT** pull on the line or poke around in the throat, this can only cause damage or even kill it. If the hook is not easily removed then cut the trace as close to the mouth as possible and leave well alone. Many deep hooked eels have been retained over night and even a few days at home (in the bath) most of these fish have spit out the hook.

RETAINING EELS.

A carp sack is ideal and a bonus is when removing the eel from the sack is to check for any food that the fish has regurgitated during captivity, this will give you more ideas for baits to use in the future.



With thanks to



Dave Holman for making the videos that inspired me to “have a go”.
Tony Jolley for the photographs and Phil Lukins for being the subject.

FURTHER INFORMATION.

Books. Eels by John Sidley.... available from Beekay Publications.

**How to catch big eels... by Brian Crawford (now out of print).
Fisherman’s Valley... by John Bailey... David & Charles Publishers.**

Videos. Stillwater and also Canal eel fishing.....by Dave Holman.

Web sites. Specialist Angling (www.angling.freeseve.co.uk) and

Biff’s fishing site (<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~bpoole/>)

This article can be seen on Graham Marsden’s Internet angling magazine with additional photos including a 6lb. Fish caught by Graham Marsden (www.anglemag.freeseve.co.uk)

WALES-LAND OF EELS. By Anon.

In the beginning, the lord god almighty turned to his best mate the arch angel Gabriel and said: “Gabby, to-day I am going to create a beautiful part of the earth and I will call it Wales. I will make a country of breath taking blue lakes, rich green forests and dark beautiful mountains, which from time to time will be snow covered. I will give it clear swift rivers which will over flow with salmon and trout and eels.

The land shall be lush and fertile on which the people can raise cattle and grow their food as well as being rich with precious metals and stones, that will be much sought after the world over. Underneath the land I shall lay rich seams of coal for the inhabitants to mine. Around the coast I will make some of the most beautiful areas of the world, white sandy beaches and cliffs that will attract all manner of wild life and lots of islands that will be like paradise to all that visit them. In the waters around the shores there will be an abundance of sea life. The people who live there will be the friendliest people on earth”.

“Excuse me, Sire,” interrupted Gabriel, “don’t you think you are being a bit to generous to these Welsh?”.

“Don’t talk crap” replied the Lord. “Wait till you see the bloody neighbours I’m giving them”.

N.A.C. NORTHERN FISH-IN ON ELVINGTON LAKE, YORKSHIRE.

Held over the weekend of May 14-16th 1999.

By
Steve'Snigger'Ormrod

Firstly, thanks must be made to Tony for his persistence and sterling efforts to allow our exclusive access to a promising water.

Members in attendance... The dirty dozen+

Anthony BT Jolley, Chris Siddall and son Robert, Dances and Erica, Dave and Claire Chatterton, Stuart Dean, Ken Ward, Jimmy Jolley, Mark Handley Wood, M. J. Dorman and son, Malcolm Law, Damian Wood, Mark Smethurst, Eric Brown and Steve Ormrod.

Before 1 kiss and tell on the weekends' happenings, I will give you a profile of what was in store. Elvington is a 4 acre private lake next to a small caravan site and the owner's premises. An old well established water with depths to 35 feet and lots of tasty shallows with nice pad growth and overhanging bushes. Legend has it that a 10 lb+ eel was caught here last October and regular five's are caught during the daytime matches! On arriving, my first impressions were very good - carp cruising and topping, tench rolling in the pads, lots of bits and a good abundance of insects-ideeee!

As Eric 'the fish chubby' Brown and I arrived at 6.30 pm, Tony and Chris had already made the peg draw. All pegs were skilfully chosen with plenty of room for all to bivvy up and not be on top of each other. Some pegs looked interesting but to get all the gear in place would have been impossible. The weather for the weekend promised to be kind to us with mild temperatures, a soft westerly wind with little rain in the offering. The moon phase was just on the rising cycle with no moonlight. Everyone settled down for the night in confident mood. Friday night/Saturday morning was very successful with several good fish landed around the take including two fours, two threes and several smaller fish [see catch report at the end of this article]. One of the four-pounder's, at 4.12, is a new personal best to M. J. Dorman and congratulations are in order. The lake was alive all night with fish activity, with everyone having lots of liners and false runs. From a personal point of view I was pleased to witness Dave's 3.01 which came just to the left side of my swim by the pads. The fish came right to the top, thrashing and squirming in the half-light - great stuff. Eric to my right had a bonus 10 lb common and was pestered by chub to 2+ on the worm so much, that he gave up and put half a roach on to get some peace!

My only real action came with a blistering run around midnight to a hair-rigged roach tail which had my 2nd N.W Kevfite to the butt, alas it came adrift a few yards out! Better to think what could have been, not what actually was! Saturday dawned with a few beaming faces - and a good helping of red ones too! During Saturday everyone had lots of fun 'accidentally' catching carp to 17.08, tots of tench, roach, perch and goldfish! SHOCK HORROR as a 3.05 turned up to Malcolm Law on Mark Smethurst's rod whilst he was indisposed and right in the middle of the day in broad sunshine - hey ho! Eric and myself made good friends " locals who gave us plenty of knowledge on the lakes residents in return for some snappy carp rigs. One guy and his son squeezed in between Dave and myself and absolutely battered the tench on corn and maggot over the pads; I became a full-time ghillie for the day. A rumour went round that several members had snuck off to do some surreptitious supping down the local boozier in the heat of the midday sun, a gunging in the offering for B.T. I suspect?

Saturday night was quieter as per normal patterns, but we still managed to do the business with Dances battering everyone with another nice fish of 3+ to add to his 4.09. Tony managed a 3+ on a CD rigged livey after sobering up - ohh, ahh! With a few other members getting onto the scorecard. More tales of monsters lost as Damian got banjoed by a good fish on a livey. Stuart too lost a good fish from

our otherwise quiet corner of the lake. Eric also had his half roach bait torn from the hook after a screaming run. The deal meant that we were to wind-up at 6.00 am Sunday morning, which everyone dutifully did, giving us plenty of time for a group photo For me it was great to see all the fish together with everyone joining in the fun taking pics. Etc.

Dances gave a terrific lesson in taking control with an excellent piece of 4.09 fandango! Eric and myself managed to get felt out of the group shot, but seeing as Ken took the picture he was out too. The wonders of technology will put this to right or maybe Eric's severe haircut and my own dubious "snigger" will ruin the pics?

Anyway I was proud to be included in a pic of all the catch on the mat courtesy of Bushman "I need some scales" Ward. We all departed for our various corners of the UK about 8-00 a.m. mission accomplished.

Tight lines -- "Snigger"

Catch report....

Friday 6-00 p.m. -- Saturday 6-00 a.m.

4.12 -- M. J. Dorman, 4.09 -- Dances, 3.01 -- Dave Chatterton, 3.07 and 2.08 -- Jimmy Jolley, 2.08 -- Mark Smethurst (a fish-in blank breaker) 1.11-- Ken Ward.

Saturday 6-00 a.m. -- 6-00 p.m.

3.05 -- Malcolm Law.

Saturday 6-00 p.m. -- 6-00 a.m.

3.11 -- Dances, 3.02 -- BT, 0.12 -- M. J. Dorman.

Footnote: There will be another fish-in booked for September --- further details are in this newsletter BT.



A selection of the eels caught on the Elvington Lake Fish-In, in Yorkshire.

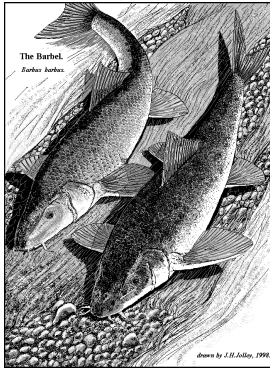
Left..... Jimmy Jolley with his eel of 3lb - 07 ozs

Right..... "Dances" and Martin Dorman with their eels of 4lb - 09 ozs and 4lb - 12 ozs.

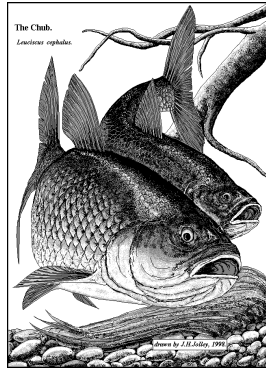
Exclusive Coarse Fish Prints

Below is a selection of coarse fish prints exclusive to the National Anguilla Club. The prints are for sale to members of the N.A.C at 50p each.(Framed copies are available for £3-50p each +p&p). All profits are to go to the junior section of the N.A.C, please send an A.4 size stamped addressed envelope to J.Jolley, 23, Abingdon Dr, Platt Bridge, Wigan, Lancs. WN2 5JQ. Tel;- 01942 862906. Make cheques payable to, N.A.C and addressed to Mrs Erica Richardson, 54, William St, Long Eaton, Nottingham, NG10 4GD. (Please attach a note saying what the cheque is for.)

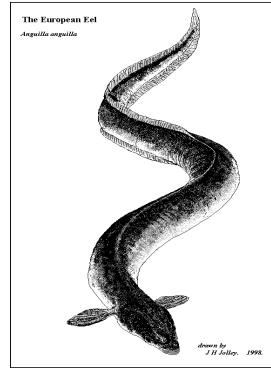
Prints of other species can be produced on request, so send for all your favourite species now.



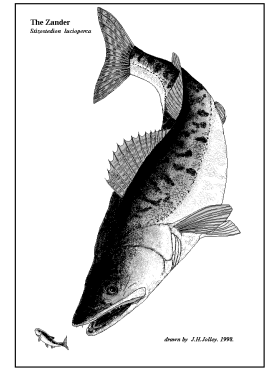
(1) The Barbel.



(2) The Chub.



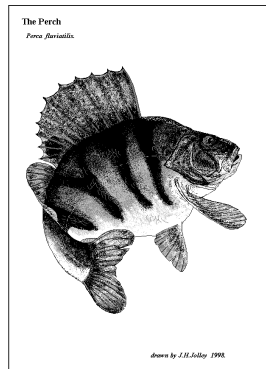
(3) The Eel #1.



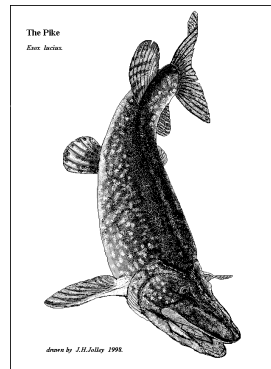
(4) The Zander #1.



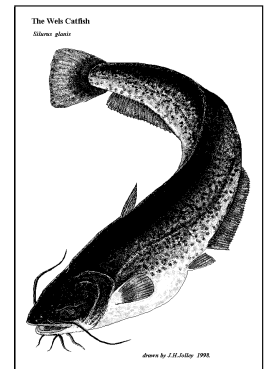
(5) The Eel #2.



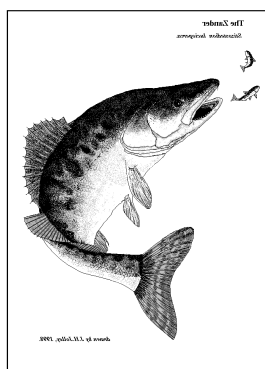
(6) The Perch.



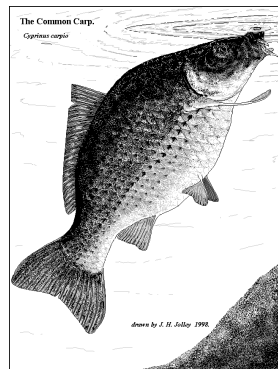
(7) The Pike #1.



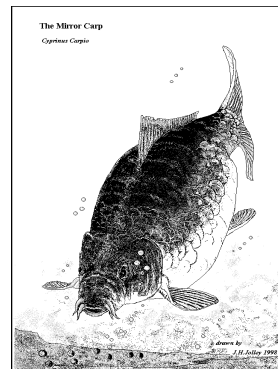
(8) The Wels Catfish.



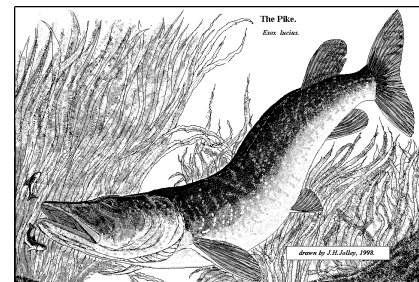
(9) The Zander #2.



(10) The Common Carp.



(11) The Mirror Carp.



(12) The Pike #2.

A Different Concept to Bolt and Hair rigs. Part One.

By Damian Wood

Since the late 60s the eel has mainly been portrayed as a scavenger. When in fact it is the perfect predator that can adapt it's self to any situation to survive. In the past the written script to eel fishing has been placing baits hard on the bottom with minimal resistance. (A concept thought about in carp fishing in the early days.)

Maybe we probably have to go back and rethink about how eels feed naturally before combating deep hooking, missed and dropped runs. In John Sidley's book "Eels" (published by Beekay) most of the methods and rigs are encouraging the eel to pull, prod and maul baits. Reading between the lines, if fixed rigs were used it may sit there and gorge the bait on the spot without any indication at all.

So why are modern carp anglers catching large eel on three ounce fixed leads and tight lines? Is it because 90% of carp anglers are using pop-ups? Does it make the eel change its reaction to the bait? Or is it just coincidence?

I am not saying that we all have been using the wrong rigs, I am just trying to approach the same old problems from a modern prospective. Should we be looking at ideas and methods to entice the eel to do what it does naturally? Or more importantly, encouraging our quarry to grab the bait we are using for it to hook instantly and not just rely on the rigs?

Could using baits presented off the bottom "pop-up style" with semi-fixed, or delayed bolt rigs in conjunction with clutch or baitrunner system be experimented with and not just dismissed.

Are eels cautious of resistance, or the change in resistance?

Here are some ideas purely based on my theories and experience, or should I "just go and get my coat"!

SEMI-FIXED POPEL UP WORM RIG. (See fig 1)

This rig consists of a 1¾ - 2¾ oz in-line lead with a 4-inch length of Amnesia; at one end a loop is tied by using a 4 turn Grinner Knot. This is then Aroldited so the hook link pops up with minimal effort, with the aid of a 12mm-cork ball. The actual hook trace is made up of 35 LB "Quicksilver" which is also 4-inches long with a size 2s "Top Gun Snake" hook designed for pop - ups, then the worms are air injected. This rig can be fished carp style with an indicator and tight line.

Fig 2 is a slight variation and self-explanatory.

POPPED UP MAGGOT RIG. (See fig 3)

This is a different way of presenting maggots. Fished again in conjunction with a semi-fixed lead, but with a 12-inch Amnesia trace with 2 x 12mm cork balls. The rig is anchored into position by means of Tungsten putty some 3-4-inches away from the lead if needed.

The "Quicksilver" hook trace is approximately 4-inches long, combined with a size 2s hook crammed full with large maggots.

This rig is also fished carp style.

SILT RIG. (See fig 4)

This rig is ideal for canals and lakes with silty bottoms. It comprises of a length of line approximately 6 - 12 inches with a lead of your choice. A "John Roberts Run Ring" is threaded onto the main line along with a bead.

A 4-inch length of looped Amnesia and a hook length of "Quicksilver" also 4-inches long with a 12mm-cork ball and air injected worms, to sit the bait off the bottom. The rig can be fished either on a bait runner or with an open bale arm.

LASSOO HAIR RIG. (See fig 5)

(This rig is straying off the article slightly but I've put it in anyway).

I have used this rig with some success mainly for presenting live baits, but also worms and dead sections.

It comprises of a "J.R Run Ring" with a varied length of 6 - 8LB mono, depending on the weed. A 2-oz dumpy lead is used to pin the rig to the bottom keeping the line taught from the lead to the rod tip.

A twenty inch Amnesia trace with a loop so it doesn't tangle, slide on 2 x 12mm -cork balls to keep the bait from diving around the lead trace and a special live bait hook link of 8 - 10-inches long.

All measurements can be shortened or lengthened to suit the situations encountered. This rig must be fished tight (see fig 6), so the "livey" swims around in a helicopter motion and is ideal for using silver fish in the margins.

LASSOO RIG FOR LIVE BAITS. (See fig 6)

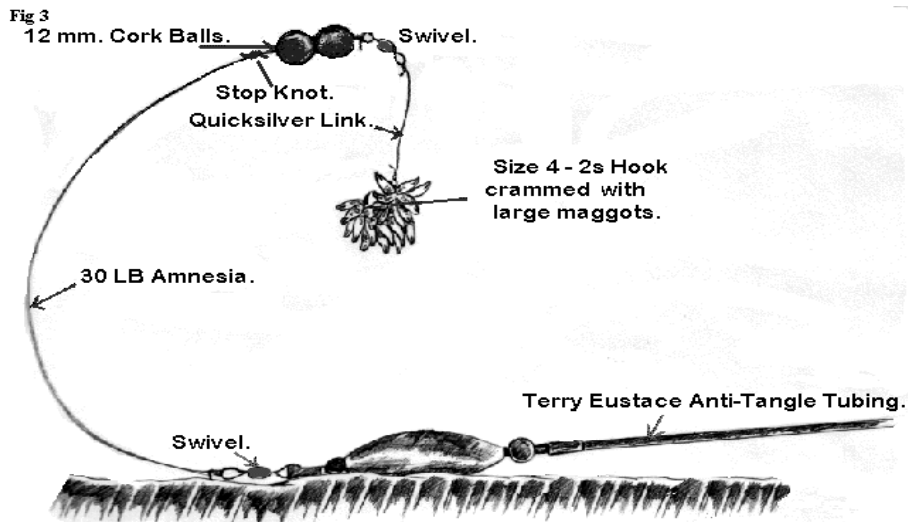
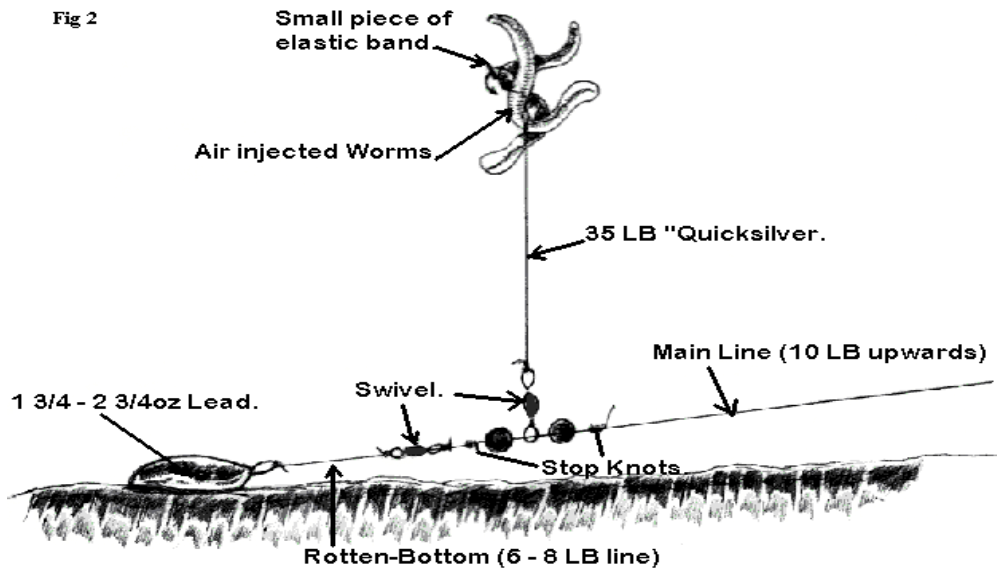
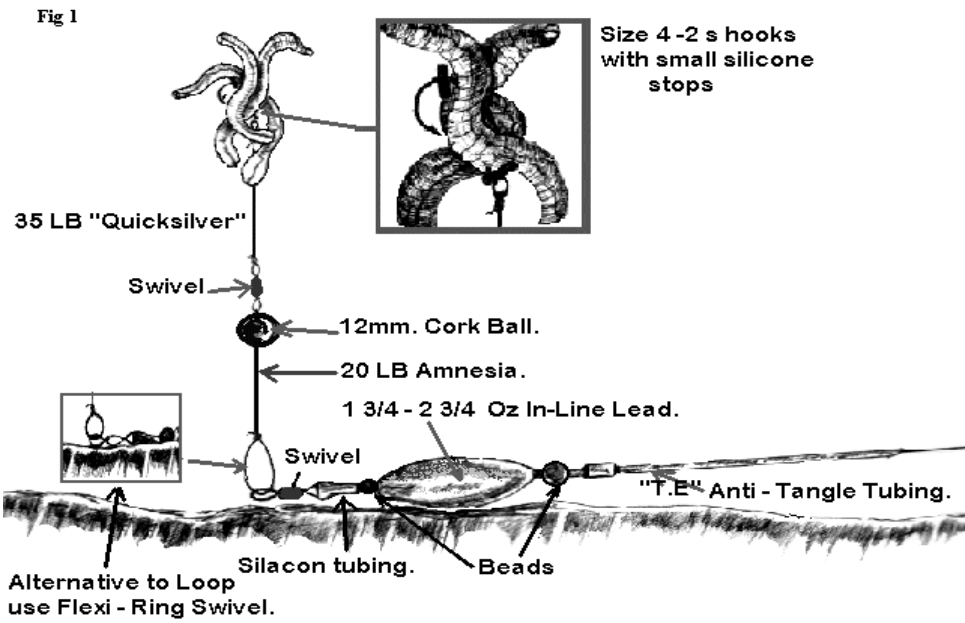
In conclusion

I don't know what it is, but I find myself being drawn more and more towards a different approach to conventional eel fishing methods. At the time, John Sidley was the pioneer of modern eel fishing (and that is something we can not dispute) if John were alive today what developments in rigs and presentation would he have come up with? Looking back through previous issues of the "Bulletin" it seems to me that we are already taking this path.

If anyone should decide to take the plunge, and use any of these rigs. Please let me know how you've got on, either personally or preferably through the pages of the "**ANGUILLA**" magazine.

I would just like to thank Jimmy, (James on a Sunday) Jolley for his help in producing this article.

With respect
Damian Wood.



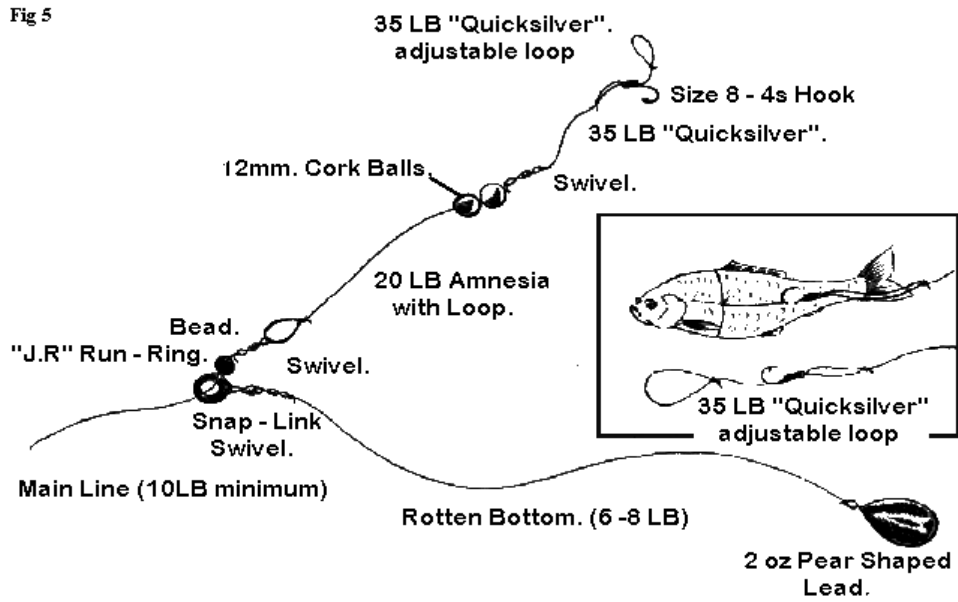
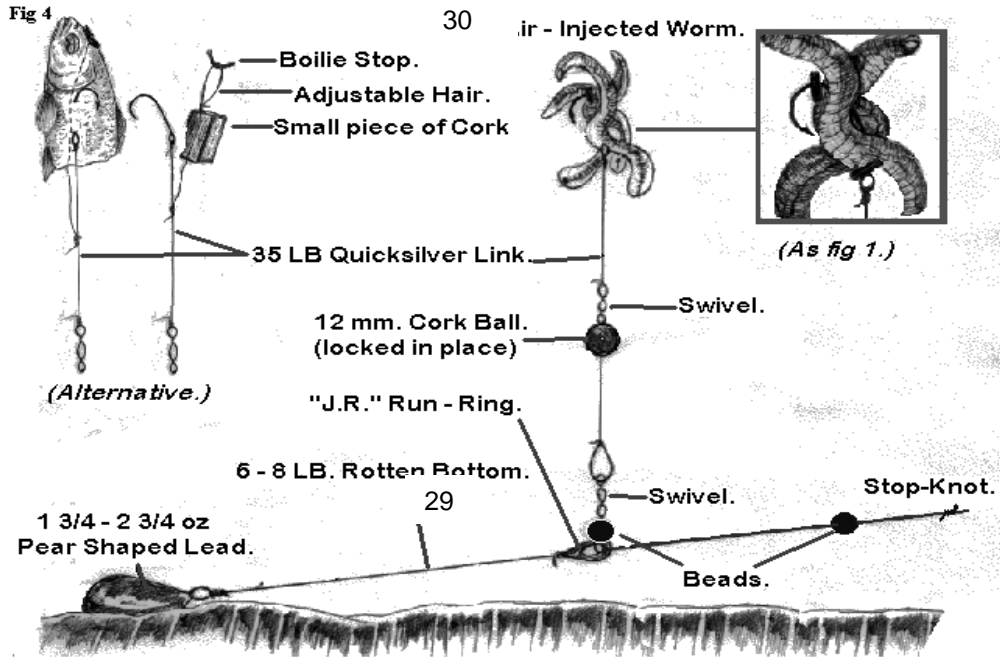
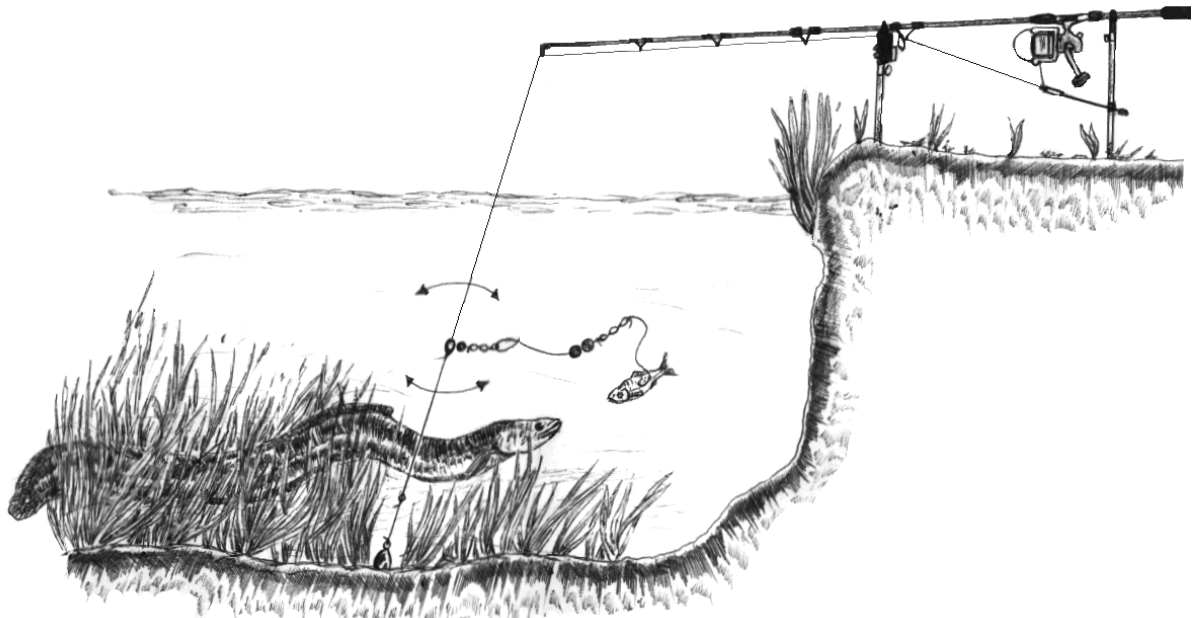


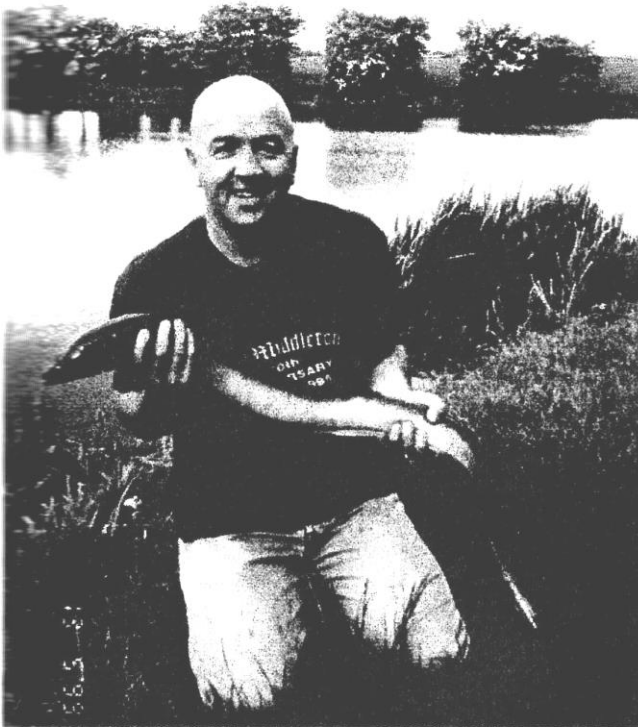
Fig 6



Middleton Angling Society.

During recent work on Giegys, one of 'Middleton Angling' waters, there were a number of eels that were found (not caught). The size of these eels was incredible, with 2 over **8lb**, 3 over **7lb**, 2 over **6lb**, 2 over **5lb** and 1 over **4lb**. **All of the eels were returned to the water alive** and N.A.C members are being given the chance to fish for them. Membership of Middleton Anglers is **£30:00** per year and for this you have access to

13 waters, which have carp up to 23 lb, pike 22 lb, tench 6lb and bream 6lb, as well as the eels mentioned above. You will have to have been a member for 12 months until you are allowed to night fish and night fishing is not allowed until after June 15th each year. For further details contact **Gary Leigh** on **0161 654 6253** or at **4 Byron Road, Boarshaw, Middleton, Manchester. M24 2PP.**



A SELECTION OF THE EELS RESIDING IN GIEGYS. ONE IS AN EIGHT, ONE IS A SEVEN AND ONE IS A SIX.

(THIS MAY BE THE CLOSEST MOST OF US WILL GET TO

BARRY McCONNELL'S CATCH REPORT FOR PART OF A SEASON.)

THE BEAST OF TAMAR

By
Steve Dawe

One of the things about fishing is that it brings you closer to nature and everyone that enjoys the sport has a love for the environment that surrounds our lakes and rivers. My biggest problem however, is that nature doesn't love me. I am gifted with the ability to make even the most humble of Gods creatures want to sink their teeth into me. As a child I was bitten by a snake, and if the truth be known more damage was inflicted by my father attempting to suck out the poison. The snake was a non-venomous grass snake, but that did not deter my father from acting out a scene from a Tarzan movie. I have also been bitten by a spider, a dogfish (small shark), pike and a dog. Then there are the things that sting. Once a swarm of bees crossed a forty-acre lake avoiding all the other bivvies, just to get me. Midges, hornets and wasps have all taken a dislike to me, along with a guillemot that drew blood after I had saved it from an oil slick and taken it to the R. S. P. C. B. Recently, even the most timid of water birds decided I was fair game and launched an attack on me, not unlike one of Jurassic parks velocoraptors.

You should have by now, gathered that Dr Doolittle I am not. The worst thing is that I love animals, but I know that whatever creature I encounter on my waterside excursions will have a compelling urge to inflict a wound on me. I am sure that my own pet Labrador struggles to keep her teeth away from my flesh, and the only thing ferocious about her is her appetite. Well that, should by now have put you in the picture as to my fear of all things wild and perhaps helps you to understand why meeting a big cat is not on the top of my list of ambitions. Stories of big cats living wild in Devon are nothing new and not a month goes by without some mention of one of the beasts in the local press. I have never paid much interest, but had no reason to doubt their existence.

It was early in January 1995 when the first sighting at Lower Tamar Lake occurred. Fred Taylor, the much-respected bailiff on the water had been walking home from the lake, a distance of about a mile through high-banked lanes. As he reached the halfway stage of his journey, a large black cat jumped from the hedge and into the centre of the road. Fred stopped and silently waited. The animal seemed oblivious to his presence and carried on across the road and finally disappeared into the opposite hedge. Fred told me of his encounter a week later. He had not been scared by the situation, a fact that does not surprise me, as Fred could come face to face with the Terminator at the lake and if he could not produce a permit, Fred would throw him off.

It was a week later that Chris, Fred and I were to witness the beast. We had just finished breakfast following a night session. The fishing had been a non-entity, so we were all up early. All three of us were sat on our chairs drinking tea and scanning the lake for fish movement. As we talked we noticed that we were all getting louder, the reason being that the sheep in the field opposite had become agitated about something and their concern was conveyed by the incredible din they were omitting.

As we watched, they formed a tight formation in the top corner of the field. It was then that we noticed the dark shape skulking at the bottom of the field. Our first thoughts were that the animal was a dog, but as the creature crept cautiously along the length of the field, it became obvious that the animal was indeed a cat. The sheep were ignored completely, much to their relief I'm sure, and the scale of the creature was realised as it leapt over the fields fence in one complete bound. Chris scrambled in his bivvy for a camera as the beast faded into the wood that surrounds the lakes point swim.

It was decided that we go in pursuit, armed only with our S. L. R's, loaded with armour piecing slide film! Now I've done some stupid things in the past, but chasing a possible panther into a dark wood with my history of animal encounters, was more like suicide. I could however, take comfort in the fact that my impending demise would be captured on film and probably catapult my two fishing buddies into overnight stars. It was for this reason that I declined the dawn safari, as I felt that sudden fame could spoil the almost saintly qualities of my angling pals, a fact that they would not thank me for. So you see, it was for the sake of my mates that I decided to stay and watch the rods. As they embarked on their perilous mission, I could not help but feel a slight trace of guilt, but it was short lived.

Before long they had disappeared into the shadows at the entrance of the wood. At this point I was struck with a new fear that if they did not return how would I explain my remarkable survival. I needed to mastermind a story so watertight it would make Slippery Eel material, seem like tissue paper. As I sat and formulated a story, I noticed the two figures strolling across the dam, back to the swim. They had survived with not so much as a scratch. On their return they informed me that the beast had escaped, I however, felt it was they who had escaped.

It was a fortnight later when Chris and I were back at the lake, this time on the far bank. The big cat was superseded by the need to catch a fish. Before long it was time to turn in, as the winters nights are long and cold. I climbed into the bag just as the rain started and drifted to sleep with the sound of rain pelting on the bivvy roof. I woke with a start at 1:30 am, everything was silent, the rain had stopped and a full moon was out. The bivvy creaked as the droplets of moisture on the outside started to freeze. I stared out into the now

illuminated night and wished I could capture the scene on print the moon's reflection, as it danced on the inky blue surface of the lake. It was quite beautiful.

As I strained to see more of the moonlit margins, something in the scene was not correct, its dark shape alien to the surroundings. My eyes became more accustomed to the scene by the second, until I could clearly make out the motionless form of the beast. The yellow orbs that were its eyes stared unblinking directly at me. I found it difficult to stop myself from blinking, my eyes became watery and my heart was pounding. I felt that if the animal did not attack me soon, I would suffer from heart failure, as by now my chest was hurting. The need to blink could be held back no more, and I did so.

As my now relieved eyes refocused on the area where the cat had stood, it became apparent that it had used my instant of blindness to sink into the shadows. Adrenaline made me react and I zipped up the bivvy door, turned on the T.V. and fired up the kettle. This gave some comfort, but in reality would not have stopped a 150lb ravenous feline. I lay back praying my alarms would not sound, if they did I knew I would not leave my safe house. Chris however, would rush out oblivious to the danger and get mauled to death horribly. After several feeble efforts to wake him (well, one actually), I reasoned he was big enough and ugly enough to look after himself. Soon I fell into a restless sleep. I was awake in the morning by Chris sporting a steaming mug of tea and a cheesy grin. The latter told me a fish had been landed.

Chris informed me of his early morning caller and I in turn told him of mine. My encounter with the Beast was overshadowed by Chris's landing of a 14lb mirror carp, and rightly so.

This was our last encounter with the Beast to date, and both Chris and I have come close enough to know that these creatures are roaming wild in Devon. I would not wish the animal any harm and I'm sure that they are as wary of us, as we are of them.

This article is not meant to put anyone off the Upper Tamar fish-in, but if you do come on this trip, make sure you pack your Nash Panther Repellent.

The Photographs below are examples of the stamp of eels that reside In Upper Tamar Lake. All these eels are 31b Plus and there are Plenty of them to go at within the water. Come alone and be lucky



THE JUNIOR FISH-IN AT LYNCH HILL FISHERIES. OXFORDSHIRE.
Held on Stoneacres Lake over the weekend of 18th, 19th, 20th June 1999.

By
Nick 'Fanny Craddock' Rose.

The official fish-in was to be held over the Saturday night to Sunday morning but Andrew and Jason Tyndall wanted to go down for the full weekend, so off we went.

We arrived at about 19.45pm and I set up in the swim that I fished last year on the southern region fish-in. Andrew, as usual, went to the other end of the lake with Jason in tow.

Steve, Erica, Amanda and Tyler arrived at 21.15 pm. Tyler is a prospective new member and is Erica's eldest daughter's young lad. Now as you may have guessed, this relationship caused me to be amused all night and the next morning. I finally admitted that the reason for my amusement was because Tyler kept calling Erica and Steve Grandma and Granddad. I just couldn't stop giggling about it.

Anyway, back to the fishing. Steve and I caught no eels that night but we did have a couple of pulls on the worm rods, that were, as usual, missed.

In the morning Jason came down and told us he had caught a 2lb'er and that Andrew had also had one of 1lb 12oz. Then Andrew came down and his eel grew to 1lb 14oz. (Strange!!!!!!)

As the day went on I went about setting up the Bar-B-Que and the tables and the chairs ready for the party. Soon the rest of the members turned up. First of all Keith Bradbury and Nicola were spotted walking up the bank with Andrew Clarke. Andrew had offered to lend Nicola his fishing tackle so as to allow them to travel down to the venue on the train in comfort. Keith works for Rail Track and was on a freebie ticket.

Next came Chris and Robert Siddall followed not long after by the Huish tribe. Kevin explained that they were late due to the Ferndale police stopping them from leaving home due to the village being cordoned off because of the weekly murder or armed robbery that happens in the village from hell they call Ferndale.

And so it was Bar-B-Que time and chef, Anton the Hedgehog Rose served up burgers and bangers with spuds in a buttered sauce, along with fried mushrooms and onions. Up to now no one has reported going down with food poisoning, so it must have been OK.

After this we had a good chat and handed out the junior's polo shirts, these had the club badge and the junior's name on them. These were paid for out of the money raised from the raffle for the Brian Crawford rod which was donated by Denys Lawrence and other tackle donated by Robin Wallis and Steve Batchelor. Every one then went back to their swims to see if the juniors could catch some eels.

The Hedgehog had a small eel of 1.08 approx. and lost another one in the weed. This, according to Richo, was the 40lb mirror carp that resides in the lake.

Jared lost one in the weed also but we did see it and it looked about 2lb. Kevin managed to miss it with the net and then spook it off so as to avoid any grief about him not catching anything.

The next morning Andrew came down to report 4 more eels, the best going 2lb 5oz. One of the eels he caught was on Jason's rod because Jason wouldn't wake up. (Andrew used to do this until he had the run of the 5lb'er and that time he beat me to the rods.)

No one else caught that night but Pat Huish had a new PB perch of 13oz's on the Sunday morning. This was after I had scrounged a bacon and egg sarnie off her.

We all packed up and left by 11.00am except Kevin and the family, he stayed on until 15.00pm. This was just as well really, because when I got home and unloaded the van Andrew realised that his tackle bag was missing ... yes you've guessed it, I had left it in Kevin's swim while I scoffed the sarnie. So it was back down the M42 and M40 to pick it up. Andrew reckons I left it there on purpose so that he could not go fishing anymore.

All in all, everyone had a great time and can I add a special thanks to Erica for organising it and the lad's for their kind donations.

MORE FISH-IN NEWS.

There will be two regional fish-in's held over the weekend of **September 24th, 25th, 26th 1999**. Anyone wishing to attend either event is welcome to contact the relevant R.O. for further details and maps.

The Northwest region venue is 99% confirmed and details of this fish-in are available from **Mark Smethurst** on **01204 696637**.

*****Note.... Steve 'Ooh-Ah' Gardner is still the Northwest R.O... Mark is just the contact for this fish-in. The Midlands region** fish-in is to be held at **Emberton Lakes**. Anyone interested in this should contact **Nick Rose** on **0121 3736082**.

A SESSION WITH THE HEDGEHOG (GUINEA PIG)

With Chris Siddall

This conversation with Chris Siddall took place on the banks of a secret Milton Keynes lake called Bradwell Lake.

Nick Rose: - Chris, do you realise that I only came to fish your 6lb eel swim, and you bring me here?

R. Chris Siddall.. - The reason is that the canal is shut until Wednesday. Ha, Ha!

N.R:- I have been fishing the G.U. Canal for at least two months, so that's no excuse.

R. C. S: - I don't want to lose the ticket as it's patrolled around here and they are quite strict. I think it can throw up another monster. Two years ago I would have said that the G.U. would not produce a record, but now, four eels later, 8lb 04oz June 97, 7lb 01 oz July 97, 9lb 03oz Sept 98 (the weekend of our Emberton trip), then fired up by that news, one week later I went on and caught a 6lb 01 oz eel. Now I think it could do a club record and even the National record.

N.R: - you are relatively new to the club, what are your thoughts on it and the members you have met?

R.C.S:-Very warm and welcoming, not cliquy. A bit disappointed that only 20 to 25 people are active in the club.

N.R: - I press ganged you into a committee post in doing the Social Organisers job. Do you regret it, or will you in the future?

R.C.S: - No I don't. I think that with my experience over the last 30 years in clubs and groups, that the catching of monster fish on a fish-in is not the main priority, it is more of a bonus.

N.R: -What is the main priority?

R.C.S: - It must be convenient to get to, enough room for everyone, easy parking, room for easy bivvy erection and reasonably priced, enabling the lads to have a good social and a good chance of an eel.

N.R: - Over the last two years there have been a couple of in-group problems that have resulted in rather loud and sometimes aggressive AGMs. How do you see these problems?

R.C.S. - I really don't know about the Steve Batchelor problem, so I won't comment. As for the fish-in problem, I really think we must in the future use a water with plenty of space, enabling anyone who turns up to fish in comfort.

N.R:- Enough said. Now on a lighter note. As a 6lb man, where do you go from here?

R.C.S: - When I caught that 6Lb eel I was disappointed that it was *only* 6lb. That is not an arrogant statement, but having done a 9, 8, and a 7, it was the smallest. Mind you, I did not stop singing for days. I feel ashamed that I only thought it was *only* 6lb, but I am proud to have caught a fish of a lifetime.

N.R:- What method and rig did you use for that eel?

R.C.S: - A variation of the Sidley rig, only I put between the two swivels, 40lb shock leader, and the same shock leader on the lead link and I used Middy Tec-Core trace wire.

N.R: - I use heavy amnesia between the swivels and leave the link nylon, It's much the same as yours and it works well.

R.C. S: - Yes I have had no problems either. As for my approach to a new water, I look at its geographical features and look from an eel's point of view.

N.R: - Please explain while I look up how to spell geographical.

R.C.S: - It's about access.

A slight break here for Alex, Chris's lad, to rip into him for not bringing his jumper from the car.

N.R:- I have fished waters with no access and caught eels.

R.C.S:- There must be access that you don't know. If there is no direct access, your chances are proportional to the proximity to a major waterway.

N.R:- At this point I had to get out my thesaurus and sort out what he was saying. I then said forget this crap and tell me if there are eels in this lake, now.

R.C.S:- I don't know yet, that's why I brought you here, to use you as a guinea pig. When I first came down to this area from Sheffield, I used dead's and worms and failed miserably. When I joined the N.A.C. I started catching again.

N.R: - A good advert for the N.A.C. getting back to the club, how do you see it going from now and do we think about our own water or not?

R.C.S. - I think an eel only water would be a waste of time. The whole essence of eel fishing is "find it, fish it, catch it and move on".

N.R:- Do you think the club should push itself to gain more members, or bring more anglers into eel fishing, or as I think "the more eel anglers the less fish for me"? Selfish I know, but it's true in eel fishing.

R.C.S:- I was surprised that for such a high profile club, how few members there were, but there are not that Many eel anglers around.

N.R:- That is, real eel anglers, not someone who dabbles in it among all the other "in" species. Anyway, I am tired now, so what do you think, shall we catch or what?

R.C.S:- I told you, I don't know. You are my guinea pig.

N.R: - At this point I sat and drank my six tins of cider sure in the knowledge that I would not be bothered by eels in the night. I did manage a mega pike though, on a live bait. Alex caught six minnows on maggot, though I thought it was the same one and he kept bringing it back to us. If this is true and it runs in the family, watch out for a 6lb plus eel again this year from Chris.

Footnote:- Ask Chris next time you see him about the strange family tradition, regarding his and the three lads first names. Also, get him to show you his articles in the 20-year-old, now defunct, Coarse Angler, especially the one on best baits so far.

His nickname in his family is "Sad Sid". Is this suitable for his handle in the club, or what?

RECORDS OFFICERS REPORT No 1.

1st Oct 1998 – 3rd Feb 1999.

As you would expect, things are pretty quiet at this time of the year. I mean there aren't that many of us who venture out and fish for eels in the winter. As usual there are a couple of keenies who aren't put off by the cold.

Steve Pitts fished 7 sessions in October and was rewarded with an eel of **3lb 5oz** on the 10th which was taken on a herring tail. He fished a further 6 sessions in November and caught eels of **2lb 15oz, 2lb 8oz, 2lb 1 oz** and **1lb 4oz** on the 13th, 14th, from a Midlands river. A return trip on the 14th/15th' produced eels of **1lb 9oz** and **1 lb 15oz**. All of these eels were caught on mackerel tails. December, and Steve managed to fish 5 sessions and took eels of **2lb 9oz** and **2lb 12oz** on mackerel tails and one eel of **1lb 2oz** on a sprat head. All of these eels were caught from a Midlands sand pit on the 11th/12th of the month. Into the New Year and Steve fished 7 sessions in January and caught 2 eels. These eels weighed in at **2lb 10oz** and **2lb 2oz**. Both were caught from a Midlands pool on the 24th.

Another member not to be deterred by the cold is "**The Eeling Hedgehog**". On the 1st November he had eels of **2lb 10oz, 2lb 5oz, 2lb 1oz, 1 lb 14oz, 1 lb 11oz, 1 lb 8oz** and **1 lb 4oz**. All were caught on worms fished off bottom in a S.W. lake. In December, Nick fished 3 sessions and had eels of **2lb 2oz** and **1lb 14oz** on the 27th. He also had 2 eels of **1 lb 10oz** on the 30th. Once again all of these eels were caught on worms fished off bottom on a S.W. lake. 6 sessions in January produced 2 eels, both from the same S.W. lake on off bottom worms. The first was on the 16th/17th and weighed in at **1 lb 8oz** and the second was caught on the 29th/30th and was **2lb 5oz**. On the 31st January I went and fished a session with Nick on a N.W. lake, but unfortunately we both blanked.

"Dances with Eels" has also had some sessions with Nick during January, 3 in all. Two of the sessions were blanked but on the 29th "Dances" caught an eel of **1 lb 11 oz** from a S.W. lake fishing off bottom worms. A session on a local river didn't produce any eels for "Dances" but he caught a barbel of 7lb 5oz which was followed to the net by a large double figure pike.

RECORDS OFFICERS REPORT No 2.

4th Feb - 6th June 1999

As usual this second report is a little more full than the first report of the year. From April onwards far more members get out on the bank fishing for eels, as a result there are a lot more eels caught.

I (**Spac-E-man**) started my sessions in mid April and I would love to report lots of eels but I can only report one of **4lb 7oz** which was caught from a N.W. Lake on lobworms fished off bottom. I have had 12 sessions so far this season and I've hardly managed a run, but hopefully my luck will change in the coming months.

On the other hand **Damian "The Burglar" Wood** has had a brilliant start to the summer. In May he caught eels of **2lb 2oz** and **1 lb 8oz** on the 2nd, **3lb 11oz** on the 6th and **1 lb 8oz** on the 7th. On the 10th he set a new P. B. of **4lb 06oz** and on the 19th he caught an eel of **4lb 03oz**. He then set a new P.B. again of **5lb 08oz** on the 30th, which puts him at equal **47th** on the **Top 50 list**. Not one to stop there on the 6th June he landed an eel of **4lb 2oz**. All of these eels were caught on lobworms fished off bottom.

"The Burglars" regular fishing buddy, **Jimmy Jolley**, has also had a great start to the year. On the 30th April he landed an eel of **3lb 2oz** which was a P. B. along with an eel of **2lb 14oz**. The bait for these eels were a dead roach and a roach head. On the Elvington Fish-in (15th May) he broke his P. B. with an eel of **3lb 7oz**, using a roach tail as bait. He also banked an eel of 2lb 8oz on the same trip. On the 21st May he then broke his P.B. yet again with an eel of **4lb 6oz**. The bait this time was lobworms fished off bottom.

Steve Dawe has had plenty of eels so far from the South West of the country. He started on 1st April with An eel of **1lb 4oz** on a ledgered live roach. In May he has caught 19 eels. On the 1st he had eels of **3lb 12 oz** and **2lb 8 oz**, both caught on live rudd. Between the 3rd and 5th of the month he had 8 eels from two different venues. They weighed between **1 lb 4oz** and **2lb 8oz** with 6 caught on live baits and 2 caught on dead baits. From the 8th until 28th he had 5 eels (3 on live roach, 1 on worm and 1 on skimmer dead bait) between **1lb 10oz** and **2lb 4oz**. On the 29th he landed three eels at **2lb 7oz**, **3lb 15oz** and **1lb 8oz**. All of these eels were caught on ledgered live roach.

"**Dances with eels**" has been out on a few Midlands waters and has managed to bank a few eels. In February he fished one session on the 26th/27th and blanked. In March he fished 2 sessions. On the 13th he had a daytime session which resulted in a blank and on the 30th he fished a Lincolnshire water and landed 7 eels between **1lb** and **2lb**. All of these eels were caught on lobworms fished in an 18 -inch deep margin. **Pat "The Baitswisher" Richardson** fished with Steve and banked an eel of **2lb 4oz** on a roach head section. Dances didn't fish in April but in May he fished a Midlands lake twice and both resulted in blanks. On the Elvington fish-in (14th/15th May) he landed 2 eels. The first was **4lb 9oz** and was caught on a ledgered rudd head section, and the second was **3lb 11oz**. This was caught on a ledgered rudd tail section. A session with "**The Eeling Hedgehog**" and "**Spac-E-man**" on the 28th turned out to be another blank for him and Stuart while the Nick banked eels of **2lb 2oz** and **1lb 10oz** both on ledgered lobworms. On the 1st June a trip to a Midlands lake produced no eels, but Steve had 2 pike, one 8lbs to off bottom lobworms and one 6lbs to a live perch. A return trip on the 3rd had to be abandoned due to local flooding, so Steve made the most of the situation and went on to a Midlands canal. He landed 2 eels, one of **2lb 2oz** on legered roach head section and another of **3lb 1oz** on legered roach tail section. On the 10th June a session on the G.U. Canal once again with "The Eeling Hedgehog" resulted in another blank.

"**The Eeling Hedgehog**" has fished for eels in every month of the year so far. In February he managed two sessions. On the 4th/5th he caught two eels, one of **1lb 14oz** and one of **2lb 4oz**. Both were caught on worms fished off bottom in a S.W. Lake. A return trip on 12th/13th turned out to be a blank session. Another return trip on 12th/13th March resulted in no eels but 3 pike at 3lb, 5lb and 9lb 10oz. His second session in March was on the G.U. Canal on 31st/1st April. He had 2 eels, **2lb 12oz** on the 31st and **2lb 10oz** on the 1st April. Both eels were caught on ledgered lobworms. A further 2 trips in April were fished by Nick but both were blanked. In May, Nick has fished 7 sessions. The 6th/7th was a blank, and on the 9th/10th, he landed a **2lb** eel on a fish head section from Ray's Tip. A session on the same lake on 12th/13th produced eels of **2lb 2oz** and **12oz**. Both of these eels took live baits. 3 sessions on Past A Joke Pool (17th/18th, 18th/19th and 25th/26th) have been blanked by Nick, but on the 17th/18th Andrew "Golden Bollocks" Rose fished with Nick and landed an eel of **4lb 13oz** using worms as bait (now you know why he has his nickname). Nicks only other session in May is the one mentioned above when he fished with "Dances" and the 'Spac-E-man' when he landed 2 eels. A session on the 10th June with Dances with eels, on the G. U. Canal produced an eel of **2lb 14oz** for nick along with 2 perch and a small pike. The eel was caught on ledgered lobworm. At the moment Nick is still on track to catch an eel in every month of the year.

Steve Pitts is another of our members who has fished for eels in every month since last October. In February he fished 5 sessions and unfortunately didn't land any eels. But in March he managed to fish 6 sessions and on the 13th he landed an eel of **3lb 2oz** using mackerel tail as bait. In April he had more success, He fished 11 sessions and banked an eel of **3lb 10oz** on the 2nd. The bait for this eel was a live roach. On the 4th he caught an eel of **2lb 12oz** using a roach head section as bait. In May he has put in 15 sessions. On the 8th he banked an eel of **1lb 9oz** on a full roach, and on the 13th (his birthday) he landed an eel of **4lb 11oz**. This eel was caught on a roach tail. On the 21st he landed an eel of **3lb 12oz** using a bream tail as bait and on the 27th he caught 2 eels. One was **3lb 7oz** and the other was **3lb 13oz**. Both were caught on dead bait sections.

I've saved the best bit till last. **Barry McConnell** has been spending a lot of time on the banks of the Shropshire mere's. He has been rewarded for his time and effort with some very good eels. I can't tell you how many nights exactly that he has fished since the beginning of April, but I can give you some idea of the amount of time that he spends on the bank. In May he did a twelve-day/ night session, returned home for three days and then went back on a nine-day/night session. In April he opened his account on the 10th with an eel of **5lb 6oz**. Then during his 12-day session after blanking for eight consecutive nights he landed eels of **5lb** and **2lb 13oz** on the 10th May. On the next night (11th) he banked a monster eel of **7lb 4oz**, which is a new P.B. and puts him at **equal 7th** on the club's **Top 50 eels list**. On the 18th May he caught an eel of **4lb 14oz**. On to June and after four consecutive blank nights Barry caught eels of **5lb 7oz** and **3lb 8oz**. These two eels were caught on a new rig designed for fishing into snags. All of these eels were caught on bunches of lobworms fished at long range. I would like to pass on my congratulations to Barry on what is a magnificent achievement and a just reward for all his effort.

FUTURE FISH-IN DETAILS FOR 1999.

There are three more club fish-ins this year. These are as follows.....

1. **Milton Keynes Club Waters.** To be held on **July 23rd, 24th, 25th 1999**

This is a rover type fish-in. You can choose any combination with lakes or canals. Ticket prices are **£5.00 for 24 hrs or £10.00 for 48 hrs.**

Please contact **Chris Siddall on 01908 271976** for more details and maps etc.

2. **Upper Tamar Lake, Devon.** To be held on **August 20th, 21st, 22nd 1999.** This is the water that Chris 'Snickers' Hodgson took his 6lb 4oz eel from and Steve Dawe took his 5lb 1oz from. This venue has mega potential and will be worth attending. Ticket prices are **£17.00** for the weekend **but if you book before the trip then Steve Dawe can get you a ticket for £15.30.** Peninsula Fisheries who run the lake have agreed to let us have a discount of between 10% and 15% depending on numbers attending. For more information please ring **Steve Dawe on 01837 54096,**

More information on these trips is contained on the loose flyer enclosed with the bulletin

3. **Elvington Lake, Yorkshire.** Trio No. 2. To be held on **September 10th, 11th, 12th 1999** Those members who were unable to gain a place on the 1st trip have been given first option of a place on this one. The remaining places will be selected on a '**draw out of the hat**' basis at the Milton Keynes fish-in. (August 23rd, 24th, 25th) Any member interested in a possible place should please contact **Anthony Jolley on 01942 212384 by July 20th 1999.**

Would you please make all phone calls between the hours of **20.00pm and 22.30pm,** whichever night you decide to phone. Ticket prices are **£15.50** per person for the weekend.

MARATHON MAN.

Dear Members.

Just a short note to thank you all for your support and generosity in supporting my run at this year's London Marathon. It was a truly memorable day during which I can honestly say I experienced every possible human emotion. I finished the event in **3 hours 13 minutes and 38 seconds** in position **3099.** Not bad out of 31,000 runners. Your kind donations amounted to **£135.00.** It was amazing to have money coming through the post from people that I didn't know. In my opinion, this really shows how tight-knit a group the **NAC** is and this is a quality that can only be good for the organisation. For personal reasons, my fishing time is going to be limited this year but I am definitely going to be at the Southwest fish-in. Hopefully I can thank you all personally then. **Thank you once again, from both VICTA and myself for all your support.**

My best regards, Chris 'Snickers' Hodgson.

****Production team note.

On the 11/5/99 Chris's wife gave birth to their second child. Another boy and who is to be called **Mackenzie.** Spookily, in Chris's words, he weighed in at 6lb 4oz... just like that trophy winner last season. The club would like to offer its belated congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Hodgson on their addition to the family.

RECORDS OFFICER'S POSITION TAKEN OVER.

Stuart 'Spac-e-man' Dean expressed his desire to relinquish the records officer's position at the last AGM, 21st March 1999, but said he would continue for this year in order for the club to find a replacement. **Jimmy Jolley** said he would be willing to take over this position and as such was elected onto the co-opted committee to gain valuable learning into the workings of the main committee.

Due to personal reasons, Stuart has decided to step down from the Records officer's job as of now. Jimmy Jolley has kindly stepped into the vacated position and will cover the Records officer's job until the next AGM.

The Committee would like to thank Stuart for all the good work he has done within the Records officer's role over the last couple of years and they admire his honesty and promptness when it came to informing the committee that he would have to step down from the position.

Happily, Stuart is to continue in his role as joint Magazine Producer, as this is where he feels that his time can be best put to use.

The committee would also like to welcome Jimmy to an active role within its set-up and look forward to working with him in the coming months. **Would all members please forward their catch details to Jimmy Jolley as of June 1st, 1999. Jimmy can be contacted on 01942 862906 or E' mailed on jimmy@fotoart.freeserve.co.uk**

THE GUNGE PAGES.

"Dances" with eels waited for nearly three hours for the rain to stop falling from the sky, itching to get out on a session. Finally the rain relented and Erica sent him on his way asking if he had everything with him. "Dances" said, and set off only for the rain to start again before he was half way there. Undaunted he carried on, and when he arrived set up and got a soaking in the process. With little time left before it was dark, he set about catching some bait and got four in total. He baited up his eel rods, two with worms and two with live baits and true to form the rain stopped once the last rod was in position. He got out of his wet clothes and settled down to have a coffee and sandwiches.

When one of the live bait rods sounded a couple of bleeps, he moved to the rod and went to pick up his landing net to find it wasn't there. Obviously he had left in the car so he wound all his rods in and hiked back to the car only to discover that it wasn't there either!! All of a sudden he had a flashback to the previous weeks session with "The Baitswisher" and could see his net propped up against the hut that he had been fishing next to. No net means, no fishing, as there was a three-foot drop down to the water in his swim. How could he have landed a big eel? So he packed up and trundled off home, to use his words, mad, frustrated and p*-*!d off and was home by 10:45pm. Not one to waste a whole night, he set off to the park to collect some worms and with a bit of luck, meet some unfortunate person he could thrash within an inch of their life. The worms were no problem but as "Dances" luck would have it, he was in the park by himself. The good news is, that after a phone call, he discovered that his net had been put away in the hut ready for him to collect at a later date. A few lobworms though, is little consolation for a good soaking, a ruined session, the worry that you might not see your landing net ever again and his inevitable inclusion in the gunge.

At our recent GM it was noticed by Erica, that Steve "Ooh-Ah" Gardner appeared to have his hand on "Dances with eels" leg for the whole of the meeting. When she mentioned this to "Dances" he replied "What do you mean it looked like he had his hand on my leg. You know we are good friends, of course he was feeling it". What with "Spac-e-mans" revelations about swinging both ways on the Emberton fish-in, we have to ask ourselves just what kind of people are running this club!!

The Eeling Hedgehog' is at it again. On the Friday night of the junior fish-in weekend he was sitting and talking with "Dances", whilst both the intrepid eelers sets of rods lay silent and motionless as usual. They were discussing what the of their slide-show should be, as neither of them had caught anything to write home about so far this season. They had gone from 'How to catch 2lb eels from new waters' to "A 3lb eel is still a good eel regardless of what other members might be catching during the season" to "if Damian lived in the Midlands then he would be catching 2lbbers as well" to 'The Hedgehog's' favourite "never mind the blues brothers, we're the two's brothers".

This had gone on for about 3 hours when 'Dances' then asked probably the most important question of the night. 'The Hedgehog' replied..."what we need to do is to ~~ZZZZZZZZZZ~~". 'Dances prodded 'The Hedgehog' firmly in the ear and said, "Are you going to finish your answer off" when all he got for his troubles was a louder "ZZZZZZZZZZ". Unbelievably, he had fallen asleep in mid-sentence.

I bet you all can't wait for the "Old Gits" slide show in the autumn can you.? We have already asked to be placed last on the running order because of the standard of the other speakers and it has to be said, that at this rate, we may pull out due to suffering from "Nightol over-dose".

There were several rules laid down by 'B.T.' on the Elvington fish-in. One was the quiet use of alarms during the night he was taken completely to the extreme by 'B.T.' who left his alarms back in Wigan. He did however, manage to borrow a couple of alarms from the more kindly members attending the fish-in. He then proceeded to use them at full volume all through the Friday night. (Even when setting the bobbins)

"B.T.' and 'Lucky Law' went missing and eventually turned up at around 16.00 pm. When asked where they had been, "B.T. replied that they had been to the village for a pint. 'Spac-e-man' Dean said that he thought that there was an alcohol bad on this fish-in, to which Tony replied "there is no alcohol on the fish-in, we went to the local pub to get round the ban".

"Lucky" gave a wry smile and said "Tony asked me to come and keep him company for a few hours" and wobbled back to his swim.

Footnote*** "B.T. fished Saturday night without any alarms.

There are quite a few members now 'on-line' on this inter-net thingy. 'Dances' receives quite a lot of electric mail nowadays and some of it contains gunge without the sender knowing at the time.

The new records officer, Jimmy Jolly has been sending quite a lot of 'e' mails to 'Dances, reporting the results of the sessions he and 'The Burglar have had. This has been of the type that reads... here's a big 3 that I had, and here's a new PB 4 Damian has had, and here's a new PB 4 I have had, and here's another 4 to 'The Burglar ... topped off with, here's the 5.08 that Damian had last night. Well we all know that eventually there comes the time when things slow down or stop. On the 3/6/99 this message arrived in the mailbox ... Quote, un-quote.."Just a line to say that we all (B.T., The Burglar, Flukin's and myself went on a new stretch of the canal on Tuesday night. We all blanked big time. (Well, the burglar had a 2lber but he don't count anything under 4ib's nowadays) Anyway, hope to hear from you soon... *Jimmy*. When 'Dances' spoke about this to Damian later that night he was told... Quote-.. "Jimmy's lost it big time Steve, he is really cheesed off that everyone has a nick-name other than him. Can't you sort him out a moniker please."

"I can" replied 'Dances' "but it isn't printable!!!!!!

Later that night, another message dropped in 'Dances' mailbox. It was also from 'No-moniker-Jolley'. This one read. "I shall send you a set of those Dyson floats that I make ASAP, please don't put me in the gunge for my flippant remarks." Well, thanks for the floats mate, but bribes don't work with me. Besides I sold them to 'The Hedgehog' for £5.00.

Back to the Elvington fish-in. 'Dances' and Erica were fishing opposite Mark 'The Whisperer' Handley Wood. 'Dances' decided to set up ledger rigs on two rods and a Dyson live-bait on the other rod. Soon it was dark and 'Dances' made Erica a cup of coffee (there was no alcohol allowed, ha ha!!! and it was our anniversary) when 'Dances' looked up he saw a large bright orb in the night sky, low on the horizon. Quickly, 'Dances' changed the two ledger set-ups to off-bottom rigs because he knew that these were good options when there was a full moon. A couple of hours later 'Dances' realised that the bright orb hadn't moved any higher in the night sky or moved position. Realising that something was wrong, he could only think that it was one of 'B. T. 's' 'star-lites' having been cast too far and landed in the tree nearest to 'The Whisperer or that there was a lighthouse behind 'The Whisperers' swim that he had missed in the rush to get set-up before dark. 'The Whisperer had no idea what 'Dances' was going on about when he was quizzed in the morning. It came as no surprise then, that 'The Whisperers' head-torch didn't work on the Saturday night. Rumour has it that 'The Whisperer fell asleep in his bed-chair with his head-torch on, after the early action he had at dusk, on the Friday night.

Martin Dorman was seen carrying his sleeping bag to his swim at Elvington followed by his wife and children carrying his rucksack, rod holdall and a food bag with enough food to feed an army in it. This observation is amazing because at 6 ft 14" and 17 stone if he is an ounce, he could have managed to carry the bloody car to his swim without breaking sweat. Ever faithful, his wife commented that Martin was suffering from a bit of a cold and was feeling under the weather. Martin's wife and children obviously look up to him, but then again I don't know many people who wouldn't. Perhaps he should be nick-named 'Redwood'. The best bit of it was that she was only dropping him off before she became a full time Sherpa.

'The Eeling Hedgehog' took 'Dances' eel fishing on a stretch of the G. U. canal in Leicestershire recently. after a NASA meeting one Thursday night. When they arrived at the swim there was a choice of two fishable swims. 'The Hedgehog' told 'Dances' to fish the open water swim and he would fish the bridge swim. Asked why he was given the open water swim over the horny bridge swim, 'The Hedgehog' replied that bridge swims are second over open water swims on canals in his experience. The results for the nights fishing were one pike, two perch and one eel of 2.14 to 'The Hedgehog' and a silent, not a bleep, blank to 'Dances' (when will I ever earn?)

Old gunge, but still a lad good. 'B.T. and 'Dances' were having a conversation at a committee meeting when 'B.T.' said that Judge Dread, the musician, had died. Keith 'The Wolfman' Bradbury must have been trying to muscle in on the conversation because he said "what, the cartoon character has died, I never thought he would get killed".

There is little news from the 'Baitswisher' in this round up of gunge. Unfortunately he had decided to fit a new kitchen before the season started and it was due completion by the 16th June. (He never stated which year though) Rumour has it he has been out just once since his earlier night out with 'Dances'... but it's probably just a crazy rumour. There's no doubt that by the time the Christmas issue is out, that 'Dances' will have enough gunge from half a season from their sessions to fill the allotted pages in that edition. It is no coincidence that there are only two pages of gunge in this issue ... it's all down to 'The Baitswisher not getting his line wet as yet.

Mark Smethurst arrived a shade late at the Elvington fish-in. It was gloomily dark as he set up his bivvy. just two swims away from 'Dances' and next door to 'The Burglar'. Anyway, because it was late 'The Burglar' and 'Dances' went to help Mark set-up and make sure everything was OK. After about 50 minutes Mark was sorted out and so 'The Burglar' once again put the kettle on for 'Dances' and himself. Obviously, it was the done thing to include Mark in the hot drinks whip round and when the kettle had boiled 'The Burglar called Mark over for a brew. On arriving in the swim, Mark saw 'Dances' and 'The Burglar, offered them his hand and said "Hi Steve, Hi Damian, it's good to see you again. Are you fishing nearby because we can have a chat later, if you are. I was late arriving and have been setting up in the dark. God that was an awful drive over here." 'The Burglar looked at 'Dances' and then at Mark. "We've been helping you set up for the last 30 minutes or so Mark". Mark's reply was a cracker. "Oh right, it was that dark I didn't know who it was'. (Appreciated or what !!!!!!!)

'Spac-e-man' pestered 'The Hedgehog' and 'Dances' to take him fishing with them in early May and, nice eelers that they are, they duly obliged. They arranged to share a session on the 28th May on a local water to 'The Hedgehog'. 'Dances' and 'The Hedgehog' made some sarnies and a couple of flask's of coffee and awaited the arrival of the session sharer. Eventually 'Spac-e-man' turned up and informed the eeling duo that his worms had been to work with him all day and, due to the heat, they had melted down. No problem really, the duo said they would share their worms. He then said that he hadn't got any lives or dead's either. Again no problems, share and share alike. With that out of the way off they all went, to the water that 'The Hedgehog' knew about but hadn't fished before. On arrival they discovered that there was a notice on the tree saying no closed season fishing. 'Dances' asked what they were going to do about that and was there somewhere else they could go. 'The Hedgehog' looked at the notice, took it down from the tree, put it in his van and said, "where do you fancy fishing then". Two hours later and all three were decided on who was fishing where. (There was a lot of "you fish there" and "no, you can fish there" and "are you sure you don't want to fish here, cos you can if you want") The strange thing is, that considering it was a social session the 'Spac-e-man' set up miles away from the other two. However, once they had set-up, out came the food and coffee... 'Spac-e-man' then said "I haven't brought any food with me". So it was share out time again. All 'the old git's' can say to all this is "Stuart has brought a whole new meaning to the phrase..... 'Anyone for a shared session'".(Thank god they didn't plan on having a sleep)



THE "HEDGEHOG" WITH A FINE WINTER EEL....

John

... A VERY EXPENSIVE WINTER EEL

