

The National Anguilla Club

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# BULLETIN

VOLUME 13

NUMBER 2

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EDITORIAL

Dear .....

I suppose that that's rather a strange way to commence an issue of the Bulletin, but the truth is I've been so busy of late that both my personal letter writing as well as my commitments to the Anguilla Club have been suffering - hence the somewhat delayed appearance of this, February's issue. The popular belief has been that the reason for no Bulletin is the absence of material. The truth of the matter is that I've got a whole stack of material, only some of which is reprinted here. My oppologies to those who have taken the trouble to submit material only to find that its been left out.

For the past six weeks, I have been on winter walkabout. My travels have taken me to the frozen wastes of Cheshire to suffer the insults of one Ernest W Orme (not that I really mind Ernie's insults, they help me to realise how right AJS is when he waxes lyrical about Orme's qualities!). No doubt, our Ernie will be full of fresh lies and inuendos about your's truly when we gather at the forthcoming SGM. Lies, I tell you, all lies. Those photographs are forgeries!

My wanderlust has also taken me up to Yorkshire. I stayed with a pal of mine in Leeds; and do you realise that, despite the large number of members we have in Yorkshire, coupled with the fact that a few years ago I almost moved up to that part of the world, that was the first time I have ever fished in that county. Despite all the stories I've heard about it being cold up there, I quite liked it (I caught a few fish, which is more than I generally do elsewhere!). I've also ventured west, and stayed for a few days with Bob Pountney in an attempt to wrinkle a few pike out of Cheddar res. The results were negative, but Bob's local licensed premises are quite nice.

Add to these protracted stays, the brief sojourn down to see Terry Jefferson & co, and you will see that there's not been much time left for anything else. It was decided, therefore, that I'd have a swift set to, type out as much as possible by this weekend, and then send it off to AJS for him to do his thing. With at least some of the store of material compiled into an issue, I can then set about the March issue (which will contain the 1975 report). In all probability, we will still have sufficient material on hand to make up the April issue. But please don't let that be a deterrent if you have something to contribute. And once more my oppologies to those of you who have sent in articles that do not appear either in this, or the next issue.

Several of the letters that accompany articles mention the fact that there is very little response to Bulletin articles: in fact, Alan Hawkin's article, "The Virtue of Being an All-rounder", is, in Alan's own words, "heresy". Both the author and I hope it evokes a response.

It is pleasing to see that Kevin Richmond's article - "The Day-Night-Twilight Controversy" - has led to some response. So far, its one for (AJS) and one against (Tony Hollerbach) the inclusion of Twilight on our session report forms. I know Brian Crawford has something to say on the matter and will include same when he sends the 1975 report. However, as this looks like being a major topic for discussion at the AGM this year and, whatever decision is taken there will affect you, it may be a good idea to air your view before then.

DAVID SMITH.

MY EEL FISHING FOR 1976A.J.SUTTON.

## Foreword.

This article should, under more normal circumstances, be entitled "My Season '75". However, so dismal was my '75 season that I had a change of heart. Hence the present article.

We have, all of us, good cause at some time or other to sit back and reflect on what has gone before. It is not just 'an old mans occupation', and applies to us all. Of course, on reflection, you may well decide that nothing need be changed. If so, that is O.K., but sit back and count your blessings, for you are fortunate indeed. In my own case the reverse is true. The mediocrity of the results from my last two or three years of eel fishing cries out aloud for some form of change. I know that my sport can, and will, improve - but not without a helping hand from me and some little effort on my part.

First of all, a look at what I have been doing, or I should say NOT been doing. Like most of us I have become stereotyped in my ways. More seriously, I have become stereotyped in my way of thinking. So much so, that reason often goes by the board. I hope this article will show that I am trying to fight back. To fight my way back to success. One is inclined to think that it is all in 'the lap of the Gods', or that we have no control over what animals - or fish - do. The first I would not know about although I believe it to be a lame excuse. The second is true only up to a point. We can, and do, bear an influence on many of the actions of eels. We may have little or no influence in the eels initial action, but its subsequent actions may be wholly dependant on what we do or fail to do.

Early in my eel fishing career I took great pains to remain quiet throughout the night. I planned my activities so there would be no unnecessary movement on my part. I avoided crunching about on gravel like one would avoid the plague, and if necessary would put down straw or other material to avoid underfoot disturbance. Fishing entirely alone for the most part, there was no temptation to dash about in the night looking for the nearest member whose kettle was nearing the boil! I attempted to stay awake and alert and all the time THOUGHT about what I was doing. I could hardly foresee that starting the National Anguilla Club would change all that. But of course it did. It has become so enjoyable sharing members tea talking through most of the night that each session has turned out to be a social occasion and the actual fishing is secondary.

I must be honest and admit that my determination to put in more effort and attempt to improve my returns is, to a certain extent, brought about by the fact that I am now forty seven years of age and can thus see the day when I will have to pack up night fishing. That day has not arrived yet, but when it does I would like to be able to look back on my last years of eel fishing with an air of satisfaction.

To that end, as I have already stated, I realise that a fair amount of change and no small effort is called for on my part. I will be looking very carefully, and with as open a mind as possible, at past results. Uppermost in my mind will be the fact that a method which worked well for me in the past may, at the present time, be as dead as a dodo. Other methods which showed some promise but which were for some reason or other not given extensive trial, must be tried again. Care must be taken not to attempt too many methods or ideas in a given period, and a certain amount of prior planning is called for. At the same time, one must not be so dogmatic as to refuse to change ones plans if such change is obviously called for. Now, up to this point what have we ?

- 1/. I will attempt to fish (and think) more actively during the dark hours and endeavour to leave sleeping and / or chinwagging to the daytime.
- 2/. I will be ready to change tackle and/or method if such change is indicated by conditions or results.
- 3/. I will study past results carefully. At the same time I will select a number of promising methods which I will give a good try during the season.
- 4/. Above all else I will try to keep an open mind, or to develop one, and not be content with methods I have used in the past unless, of course, they are still productive (which at present they most certainly are NOT).

Looking closely at point No 1 I foresee that I will not be selecting a permanent pitch. In the recent past it has been pleasant to dump all ones gear in a certain comfortable locking spot within easy reach of the car. Up goes the broly and the cover. The cooking utensils are arranged and the bed-chair carefully made up. One then breathes a sigh and says "Ah well, this is home for the next two or three days". One might as well add "Come what may", for come what may is what usually happens and in most instances turns out to be exactly nothing !

So I intend not getting bogged down with all manner of items most of which will only be used in the daytime. This will mean that I remain rather more mobile, and that mobility can be put to good use. The tackle trolley which has laid idle for so long now will come out again soon to be overhauled and oiled ready for use.

I intend that my eel fishing will commence rather earlier this year, mainly because it will give me a little grace to get things organised well before the summer starts. Many of the ideas in mind for this year have been gleaned from other members, but in some instances are the same or similar to those ideas which, hitherto, I have failed to put to use.

An important item I intend to modify is the bait. I have for a long time now been using baits much larger than I used hitherto. Watching Brian Crawford in action has convinced me that I must be prepared to use smaller baits. Nor will I shun the humble lobworm. A glance at the Noteable Fish list published in Anglers Mail on December 31st will show how useful the worm can be. Of eighteen eels recorded of four and a half pounds or more, only four were taken on fish baits All but one of the remaining fourteen were taken on worm, as was the largest - an eel of eight pounds and seven ounces taken by Nigel Frostwick and witnessed by myself and other members.

All this change will be something of an upheaval for me, but it will added interest and an exciting fillip to something which was beginning to stagnate a little. I will, of course, keep you informed as to the results of such changes as I now intend.

Note from A.J.S.

Since the article was written it has come to my notice that we are able to fish at night as from the start of next season at the Broxbourne Pits.

This, for those of us within easy reach of the venue, is very good news. So, apart from the change in methods I envisage, there will also be the excitement of fishing a water which is known to hold a head of big eels.

The tackle trolley mentioned above is now outdated, for I have a new one. It is a lovely job, all parts being Chrome plated. It has a very convenient wire basket on four rotatable wheels like castors. Only one snag - Can any member suggest a way of getting rid of the name on the trolley - TESCO !

EARLSWOOD

By Bob Jackson.

Well, here's the low down on the water that made the headlines last year. One way or another, Earlswood managed to get more than its fair share of publicity. To begin with, I shall try and give a brief description and history of the water.

Earlswood consists of three pools - these being Windmill, Engine House and the Private Pool. They were constructed in the year 1800 as feeders to the Birmingham/Stratford-on-Avon canal and are now what you may call well established lakes. The canal is almost sure to be the access for the eels because it joins the Warwickshire Avon at Stratford, which, of course, at Tewkesbury, joins the best eel funnel in the country - the Severn.

The only pool that Bob Croxall and I have fished so far is Windmill. When the levels are normal, the depths in Windmill are as shown on the attached map. As can be seen, there are quite extensive areas of weed.

As well as the eels - which form our main interest - the fish population consists of large shoals of bream, good quality roach, a few tench and perch, and the odd carp. Pike are present and run into the "twenties". The beds of the pools consist of a gravel margin 40 - 50 yards wide, beyond which is reasonably firm mud, 12-18 ins thick, overlying the gravel bed. They really do have all the conditions necessary for the development of large eels.

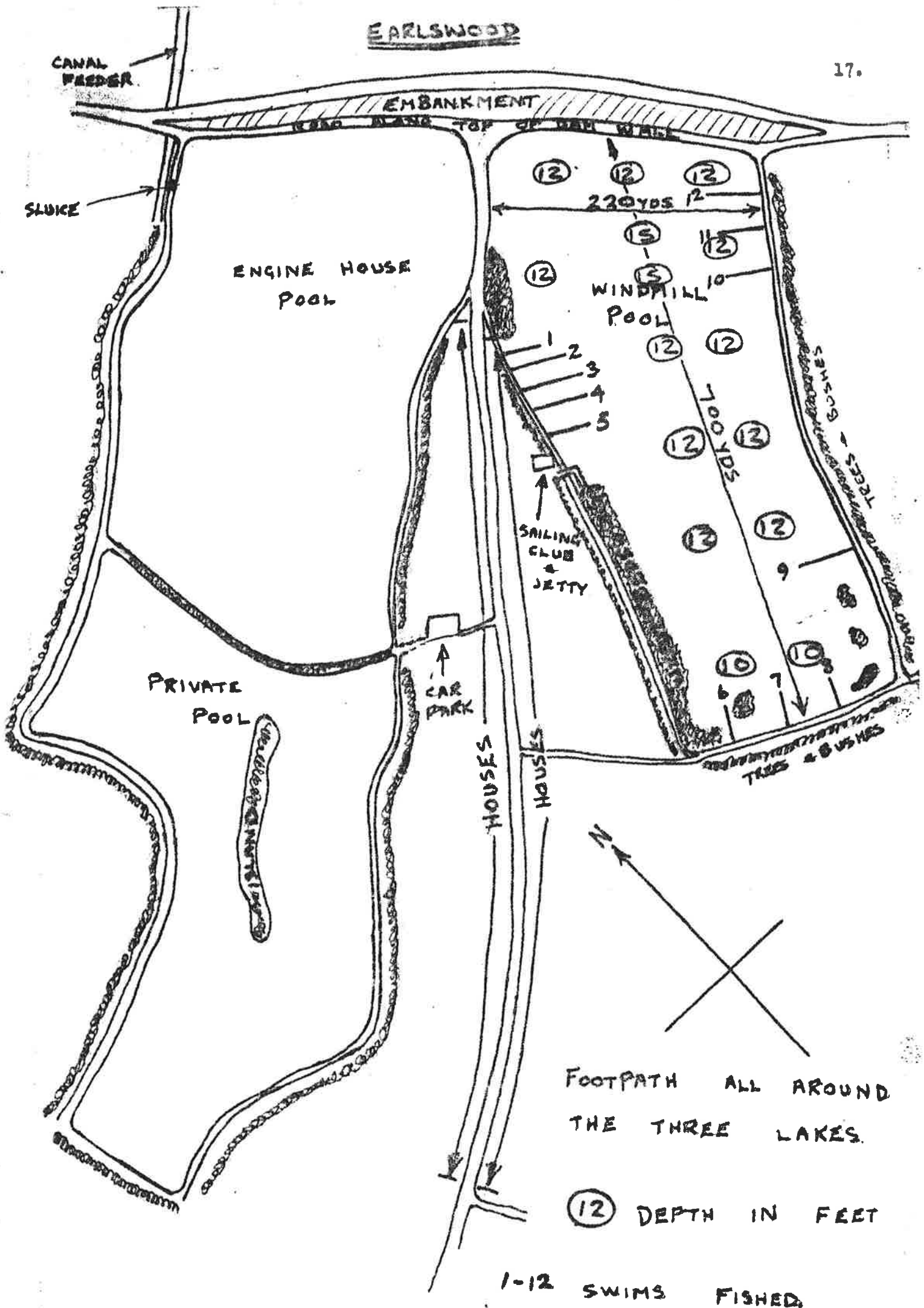
It should have been blantly obvious to Bob and myself that here was the place we should have directed all our efforts when we first started fishing seriously for eels, but I think it was a case of it being too close and we could not see the wood for the trees. I really only really found them on the off chance when I was teaching my wife the finer points of "snottie bashin'" one evening. I put out a dead-bait "just in case", and at about 9pm I was amazed to see the silver paper lift. The resulting strike produced a eel of 2:8.

Following that we had about four or five early morning and evening sessions. all they produced were a couple of abortive runs. We did not have any all night sessions that year because in those days (1973) we were law abiding citizens and there is, supposedly, no night fishing at Earlswood. Come the following year, however, and we weren't so law-abiding!

The first session was an after work til midnight session in mid June. At 23.30 Bob had a run, but the line parted on the strike. Within minutes the line on his other rod went trickling out. This produced a fish of 3:4. This was followed, some five minutes later, by both my indicators going at the same time. The line was simply streaming out; but, alas, both baits were dropped. Since then, nearly every one of these "streakers" that either one of us has had has been dropped. The successful runs are either steady, slow runs or twitchers.

During that July, quite a number of 2lb+ fish were caught including two of 4lb. At the beginning of August it was as if someone had turned off the eel-run switch, because, from the steady sport of mid June and July, August through to mid-September was an absolute blank apart from three or four streakers. Not very good when you consider that we were fishing two or three all night sessions per week..

During the winter of 1974 we obtained permission to fish a couple of waters in Birmingham that we knew contained big eels. So, we decided, Earlswood



would have to take a back seat. We had a couple of all night sessions in mid June which resulted in my capture of a fish of 2:0, but from then on we fished the two waters previously mentioned. By the third week in August we had only three eels to show for a lot of effort.

In the meantime, John Sidley had been getting Earlswood a lot of unwanted publicity with eels that a lot of people, including myself, disputed the stated weight of. Never-the-less, they were still good fish. He is well known amongst the Birmingham big fish scene as an exaggerator of fish weights. To quote one instance that I know to be true. This concerns a trio of pike that were stated to weigh 11, 13 and 14lbs. If the biggest went to 10lb, that is as much as it was. The 28:4 pike he claimed to have caught at Earlswood recently was unwitnessed and there were no photographs. It was reported in the Angling Press and it was said that he returned the fish to the water because he didn't have a **keepnet** with him to keep the fish while he waited for a camera to arrive. Believe me, John Sidley would have knocked the fish on the head rather than return it without a photograph. That's the sort of person he is.

Having got that of my chest, I can get on with the story. During the last week of August, Bob Croxall decided to have a night at Earlswood. Fishing in swim No 5, he had one abortive run at 23.00. Then at 03.15 the line peeled of once more, this time to result in an eel of 5:6. The following Saturday night he fished it again with yours truly right alongside. In fact, I fished the pitch where he had his 5:6 and he fished swim No 3. That night there was an almighty thunderstorm. I had two text-book runs that amounted to nothing. Bob had one run in which the silver paper jammed in the but ring, but the strike connected with an eel of 4:9 $\frac{1}{2}$ .

We get lots of luck at Earlswood: I get the bad variety whilst Bob gets the good stuff. Honestly, if he fell into a sewage trough he'd get out smelling of roses!

We fished a few more nights at Earlswood, the result being one fish of 2:8. Mid September saw the last of our eeling for 1975, but in October, a pike fisherman caught a very large eel on a live gudgeon, free-lined in the margins. The eel actually weighed 7:12 but it was rounded up to 8lb by Anglers Mail photographer Gordon Holland. Incidentally, it was caught in the Engine House pool.

Anyone writing to me next summer should address their letters c/o Earlswood lakes, because I shall virtually be living there even though they are as little as one mile from my home.

#### THIS ELUSIVE EEL

By Tony Hollerbach.

It seems that sometimes there are no replies to some very good talking points that are raised in Bulletin articles. It must be very frustrating for our Editor to produce controversial articles and then have no reply. Fair enough, some people may write directly to the author, but don't you think it would be better to extend the debate to everyone via the Bulletin? Having had the opportunity to sit down and read through some of the recent Bulletins, I should like to throw out a few questions of my own.



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Alan Hawkins wrote an article a while back entitled "Eel Sense" (Bull 12.3) which described the eel's ability to smell. But how were all these experiments done? I mean, how can one tell if an eel is smelling or not? Their use of smell was compared with our use of sight, and it can be as selective as our eyes. But if we shut our eyes, we can shut out all sights. Can an eel also shut out all smells?

Furthermore, can smells in the water be moved about by wind? For instance, would it be profitable to fish into the wind or are we better off with it to our backs. That may be an interesting experiment to try. From this comes the general question of does water turbulence caused by the wind have any affect on our eel catching chances?

I have mulled over this problem and, looking back over the past two seasons, a definite pattern exists showing there to be an advantage in fishing in windy conditions: three of my four biggest eels were taken in windy conditions this srason and in the '74 season, my best fish was taken on a windy night. In '74 I was mostly fishing the River Great Ouse, but 1975 saw me fishing lakes. Significantly, on both lakes and rivers, windy conditions appear to be best. Is this an isolated case, or do other people find the same thing? If so, why?

Tagging was a topic that came to the fore in 1975. Both Brian Crawford (Bull. 12.5) and Alan Hawkins (Bull. 12.8) wrote about it. One of the things Alan suggests that we could find out by tagging is whether or not eels move very far. In other words, do eels have definite territories. To take the problem logically, by looking at the animal kingdom in general, the answer would seem to be yes. But, do eels? Personally, I think so.

The evidence is as follows. Years ago, when my interest in eel fishing was awakening, I fished in a brickpit called Kilpin pond, Nr Howden in E. Yorks. Using fairly light tackle (not size 20 as Ivan suggested!) with an 8 hook, I hooked an eel of about two pounds. Unfortunately, my tackle wasn't up to the beast and the eel broke off as I got it to shore by wrapping itself round some barbed wire upon which it gashed itself quite badly about the gills. However, wounded though it was, its getaway was quite swift. A few weeks later a friend of mine caught an eel which he released, which had a gash near its gills. He had been fishing in the same spot as I had. A week later a tench fisherman caught an eel that was promptly killed, fishing in the same spot. I saw the carcass and it had a partially healed gash near its gills. Coincidence?

I have learned that my Ditchford eel has been caught and killed by a pike angler. The tag (NAC-075-008) was returned to me via a local tackle dealer. It was, apparently, caught in the same swim as that which I took it from, and had put on another 2oz.

The topic of groundbaiting was another debate that featured in volume 12. This was probably the most popular debate, if contributions - four in all - are anything to go by. As a result, I am determined to try to find out the effectiveness of groundbaiting. I should be very pleased to hear from any other member who may wish to join me. We can then pool our results and knowledge to build up a general picture for an "in depth" article later in the year.

Having swung round to this season coming, there is another project that I should like to undertake with other members' assistance and that is to try to build up a picture of eel teeth. This is really related to the use of wire traces. Again, this was a topic aired in Volume 12 by Dave Holman (Bull, 12.4) and Alan Hawkins (Bull, 12.6). Dave pointed out that eels from certain waters had veritable fangs whilst others from different waters had hardly any. Well, lets try to find out what makes eels toothy. If you're interested, please drop me a line.

Finally, there is the topic for discussion in Volume 13: the "Day-Night-Twilight controversy". I have read Kevin Richmond's article (Bull 13.1) in which he gives a good argument in favour of recording twilight on the Session Report form. Obviously, Kevin and Dave Smith feel that this should form an important part of the session report scheme. I, however, have my reservations and, as such, have my reservations and, as such, am against.

Firstly, twilight cannot be clearly defined as such. With the variations in the weather that we have, twilight drags on for quite a while on some nights, whilst on others its dusk in no time. As we define dusk as being one hour after sunset, how do we define when day ends and dusk begins, and dusk ends and night begins? Before we think of including this on the session report form, we should define what twilight really is, as an inbetween for day and night is not on. There would be too much variation even between anglers fishing the same water on the same night.

Before we go any further, much discussion is required: for, as well as dusk, there's the semi-light period before dawn. Isn't that also twilight? And what about thick cloud during the day? Or a thunderstorm? For my own mind, simple soul that I am, I would prefer to see the "Twilight" controversy left off our session report forms. Members all have the option to specify twilight or not under comments.

Sorry, Kevin and Dave, but I think we may all over-emphasise and confuse ourselves with technical data and start splitting hairs over really non-essential items. Far better to confine ourselves to eels and the conservation of same. But let's not stop here. Let's have some more views.

### LOBWORMS

By Dave Holman.

Every angler uses worms at some time or another. They are an excellent bait for practically every species and yet, how often are we getting the best from our humble lobs? There is little point in collecting vast quantities of the worms, using fifty or so, then throwing the rest away. So, in this article, I hope to outline my own procedure for collecting, using and, most important of all, storing this most versatile of our baits.

Collecting worms is a simple enough operation on the right night; but having been gathered there seems little point in stuffing the whole lot into a tin and then wondering why they have degenerated into a smelly, slimy coagulate by the weekend!

Some anglers build huge worm compounds to store them in. Then, having laboured hard and long to make a store, they find that most of the inmates have escaped or been drowned in gallons of rainwater. What is needed for the job is not a pen for several thousand worms, but big enough to accommodate enough worms for two or three sessions, say 400, with the quantity it would be very difficult to find a better store than a small household fridge. Your first thought on reading this must be about the expense involved in buying one, or, alternatively, the rows you are likely to have with the wife over the use of the one in the kitchen. But, I have seen good second hand fridges for as little as £5, and my own only cost £9 and must have paid for itself several times over, having stored many varieties of bait for long periods.

The temperature must be kept above freezing point and, preferably, around 40F. In these conditions, worms will keep quite happy for quite some time. Just how long depends on several factors, the most important of which is the storage medium the worms are kept in. Mashed up paper is favourite with most people and, indeed, for many years I used it: until, that is, I learned that most fast drying printing inks are petroleum based. Also, the moisture content of paper is critical: too much water and the worm's lifeless, too little and they dehydrate. I wasn't very happy about the use of either sacking or cloth and eventually returned to that age old favourite: moss.

As soon as I tried that lush green marsh type - Sphagnum - I realised that this definitely was the answer. It keeps well, stored in plastic bags it will keep for many months, and can be collected in large amounts. Moss has the advantage of keeping worms in perfect condition, retains moisture and toughens the skin slightly, which is of great advantage to the eel fisherman. Tougher worms cast far better than normal ones but, more important of all, they will last up to five hours in the water before drowning. So, should our eel angler inadvertently fall asleep during the night, at least the bait will remain in good condition for some considerable time.

When collected, worms are best washed in cold water. This is easily done with a big floor sieve under the cold tap. Then sort out the rubbish and dead worms by putting the lot into a container filled with moss. Next day, unload them all on to a work top and sort into three separate batches:

1. Broken or rough looking worms
2. Normal whole worms
3. (With apologies to Dave Smith) Super-worms.

These super worms are best kept apart from the normal lobs and given their own special treatment. After all, on each session, it is probable that only 20-30 worms will be used, so why not fish with the best available?

Put each batch into a container of fresh moss and pop into the fridge.

Taking them out of the cool and on to a session is the real danger time. It doesn't take much to ruin all your preparation and finish up with a heap of dehydrated lobs again. Instead of the usual plastic tins, keep the lobs in a canvas bag or bucket. First soak the bag for a few minutes, shake out the excess water, more damp moss and then close up the top. This will keep worms happy and in top condition until required for duty.

If you are fishing for several days, then it will pay to separate them into two halves, keeping the spares away from any heat and, if possible, add a frozen cooler ice-pack, well wrapped up in newspaper, to the bag.

So, having arrived at your chosen venue with plenty of worms all eager to do justice to all your preparation, it is up to you to use them. How you use them is up to you: I can only outline the tactics I employ. Firstly, I forget the wire traces and those chunky type hooks of enormous size. What is needed is a compromise between a strong and a fine wire hook. Certainly, some of the hooks I've seen used are an insult to an eel's intelligence. Baiting also needs careful thought to hide the hook as much as possible without putting it into a worm's head, which quickly kills it. Use a hook to match the bait; normally, a size 8 is more than sufficient for singles and with size 6 for multiples.

Although good worms will last up to five hours in water, it does pay to change them periodically - say, every two hours. Old worms can be put back into the bait container holding the broken or damaged worms for future groundbaiting or as an emergency supply. The action of a fresh, wriggling worm will often attract an eel to it, especially when fishing over soft mud in which an eel

is likely to be hiding.

The scent of a worm also has a part to play, so it may pay to be cautious when baiting up by washing your hands first. Improving on natural scent with pilchard oil or something similar can be effective, but please do not do it with a needle as this will kill the worm. A better method is to place into a container some moss that has had a few drops of pilchard oil put on it. Leave the worms in this for several hours until required by which time the smell would have penetrated them.

Although I am dealing mainly with lobworms, it may pay you to search for other types, especially those large white worms with pinky heads that often frequent potato patches. This is a real "super-worm" and eel-catcher supreme. Alas, they are often difficult to locate.

There are times in summer when dry ground makes collecting worms extremely difficult and it may be necessary to water your lawn before attempting a raid. I have found that it is often better if you can cut the grass before watering. For some reason unknown to me, this does seem to make a difference to the amount of worms venturing out. Cultivating your own lawn as a wormery is a good idea, especially if you leave it as an emergency area where you can go when other lawns are too dry. Leaving off the grass box when mowing and an occasional small amount of lime will encourage activity, but unfortunately it doesn't do the grass any good!

My brother-in-law is no angler, but he always has large numbers of lobs to feed to his tropical fish. His collecting method is very simple: two long lengths of brass rod are pushed well down into the ground. One is connected to a live wire and the other to a neutral wire; both are plugged into the mains. When the switch is thrown, worms appear from everywhere. I doubt if you will find this procedure in the current rules of the Institute of Electrical Engineers, but it works well enough!

Certainly worms are not the easiest of baits to keep in perfect shape, but by looking after them in the fashion outlined I always have a bait which I know is first class. In my opinion, the most elementary fact of any type of fishing is to offer your quarry the very best available and in the end it usually pays off.

### THE VIRTUE OF BEING AN ALL-ROUNDER

By Alan Hawkins.

There have been rumours of late that there is a shortage of material for publication. One way to remedy this is to introduce a note of heresy, to attack members' cherished prejudices in the hope they will be stung into a counter attack. In my experience, this has only been marginally successful in the past. Perhaps the reason is that the heresy was not blasphemous enough. Well, here is a heresy that should stir the hearts of all; rule 1 according to Hawkins goes:

"Many Anguilla Club members would catch more, or bigger eels, if they did less eel fishing."

To justify this outrageous statement, I submit the following two propositions:

1. "The most successful eel anglers we know are also highly successful at many other forms of angling."

It could be argued, therefore, that:

2. "To be successful at eel-fishing, one should be a competent all-round angler"

Does statement 2 really follow from statement 1? Or is it simply that there exists an elite of talented anglers who succeed at everything they do; every now and then the elite has a go at eel fishing and succeeds there too. In other words, are good eel anglers born gifted, or is their ability the result of experience and training? I believe the latter and the rest of this piece is devoted to explaining why.

Eel fishing can be a highly mechanical business and, to some anglers, undoubtedly is. Compared to fishing for other species, the techniques available are somewhat limited. You fish on the bottom, with a choice of two baits, either DB or worm. If there is no current and you don't want to cast far, you free-line, otherwise you ledger. You use tackle strong enough to avoid the need for skill in landing a fish; you avoid problems of knowing when to strike by leaving the run so long that the eel is hooked near the anus; you avoid problems of knowing when to fish and where, by blanket fishing as many identical rods as possible, for as long as possible; you get round problems of swim choice, and water choice, by setting a programme of so many sessions at one spot, followed by so many at another, etc. You eliminate any need for concentration and skill in detecting bites by judicious use of electronics.

It is well within current technology to design a robot to do all these things.

So where does the human factor come in - the little bit of insight, serendipity or plain hunch which separates the men from the boys? The reason is rather simple - it is extraordinarily difficult to build up useful experience to help solve individual eel fishing problems, because the quarry is elusive and direct observation is impossible. There are two answers to this. One is the session report scheme, which, though admirable, has the unfortunate tendency to strengthen the robot approach. (The report says night fishing is best, so I fish at night; DB produces bigger eels than worm, so I use DB. What, alas, about swan mussel during the day?!)

The other approach is to use the behaviour of other fish as a pointer to eel fishing. This is a perfectly reasonable thing to do because eels eat almost anything. In other words, if you locate a hot spot for other fish there is a pretty good chance that it will be a hot spot for eels as well. If a shoal of bream has its head down in a particular area, or the tench or carp seem to favour particular spots, you can be sure this is not accidental. If you can locate the preferred feeding areas of other bottom feeding fish, and can read the water to know how the feeding areas change with different conditions, you can go a long way towards solving the problem of eel location.

For example, the best spot I know on the River Loddon, which once produced six eels between 2 & 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ lbs in 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, is also the spot where roach between  $\frac{3}{4}$  & 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs congregate after dark. The long distance effect at Whitemere is due to a particular weedbed a certain distance off shore. Observations of the water tells you it is a good area because of the signs of other fish activity there. On the Kennet, Barbel fishing on mild winter nights is excellent sport, but fish are not common: one every other trip is doing well. So how do you find the right spot? Simply by finding a swim where gudgeon, dace and small chub are continually worrying the bait. You have thereby found an area where fish feed, and the odds are that when a barbel decides to feed also, it will select the same region.

To use other fish in this way, one has to be better than average at catching

them. For an angler, this is the best possible way of learning quickly about the habits of all types of fish in the waters visited.

A further point about regularly fishing for other species is that one develops an awareness of the overall state of activity in the water at any given time. It is my experience that eels tend to feed at similar times to other fish, particularly bottom feeding species. One can often deduce that a night will be good or bad for eels by the intensity with which other fish are feeding; for example, the few nights (out of many) when Highbridge produced eels last year were also nights when the wildy-carp were going berserk aswell. On such occasions, lobworms produce a carp run every few minutes. You stick it out a) because the carp are fun to catch in their own right and b) because you know an eel is likely to turn up sooner or later.

Many of us can sense the perfect eel night - when all the climatic conditions seem right. Such nights do not always produce, and most such disappointing nights occur when there is little sign of anything moving. We can all remember apparently good nights when the water, inexplicably, seems quite dead. Conversely, given a climatically favourable night and evidence of a variety of coarse fish feeding, the prospects for catching eels are nearly always good.

Hence, a careful watch on the water, and a bait out for other fish can both enhance sport and also tell you whether to concentrate hard on eels, or to pack up and get some kip.

The next point about developing an aal round ability is that it shapes the wits and is very definitely anti-robot. By handling a variety of tackle designed for fish as diverse as roach and conger eels, overall competence in the use of gear increases. An awareness of the specialist rigs suitable for other species leads to experimentation with rigs for eels. One will, inevitably, try to adapt tackle to conditions because it is essential for other types of fish, and one gets accustomed to doing so. The ability to angle intelligently for any type of fish leads to a thinking and innovative approach, and, ultimately, I believe, to *Anguilla gigantea*.

Finally, the point must be made that to catch other fish is refreshing and pleasant. Given the right approach, most British species are a worthy quarry. Many of us, I believe, go a little stale on eel fishing by mid-season. The answer is very simple. Go and do some other fishing as different as possible - eg. stalking chub with floating crust. A change, in this case, is much better than a rest, especially on my automatically collapsing bed-chair, radio controlled by Sutton at a distance.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor and Fellow members,

As many of you are aware, I have been having my share of a lifetime's troubles lumped into a short period. To explain, my wife had a complete mental breakdown last year and was taken into hospital. She was let out for Christmas and is now back in again although she is improving steadily. However, she still has a long way to go. During this spell, I've had to stay off work to be "mum" to our three children. The only other bad thing to happen to me is that my firm has told me they no longer require my services.

So things can only now get better - I think!

I should like to thank members who have helped and understood my problems, especially the members who paid my subs and my two Santa Clauses who came with Christmas tidings and gifts. I don't think they want their names mentioned, but suffice to say the River Thames is a long way from Rushden.

To all of you, many many thanks. Its funny to think that in my situation neighbours don't want to know, but pals you only see half a dozen times a year rally round to help. It's going to be tough in the months ahead, but with friends like you all to hand who care, my burdon is greatly eased.

Thankyou all very much. What a good Club this is to foster such friendship.

Again, thankyou

Tony Hollerbach,

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Dear Editor,

I most heartily agree with the sentiment you express in the January Bulletin under the heading "The Anguilla Club Bulletin Xmas Poem Competition."

The response was very poor. Unlike yourself, I feel that members did have time in which to sit down and write - had they wanted to do so. Perhaps the time allowed was not as lengthy as we would normally wish - but there was ample time after the announcement in the Newsletter for November.

However, we did get some entries and those we received have strengthened my view that our members can write interesting and very witty poems. Maybe we will run the same excercise next Christmas, giving our members rather more time to respond, and from the result judge whether or not this kind of thing is worth the effort.

I would like to thank those who did take part in the competition. All entries were appreciated and those who did not reach the final should not be deterred from future poetic effort - they were all good, if not quite what we asked for!

Hearty congratulations to Kevin Richmond for his admirable article on the "Day-Night-Twilight Controversy" in the January Bulletin. Kevin presents his views in a factual manner which is hard to ignore. What a pity he could not have done so prior to our A.G.M. I sincerely hope that Kev will not let the matter drop and that he will put the matter to our next A.G.M. This time he can count on my support at least.

Last, but not least, may I express my sincere thanks to all those who wrote or telephoned following my recent bereavement. The kind word or two, and the wonderful spray of Spring flowers "FROM THE LADS OF THE N.A.C." really bucked me up. I've said it before and it bears repeating - THAT is what seperates the N.A.C. from other groups. Thankyou all.

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