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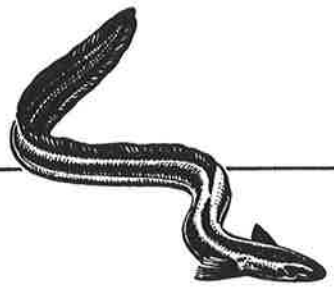

The National Anguilla Club

# BULLETIN

NOV. 1971.

Contents

## EDITORIAL.

There can be no doubt that the Club is at a major turning point in its history. In the space of one afternoon, we lost the services of a dedicated Chairman, who has been the main driving force behind the Club since its beginning, and at the same time, we decided to radically change the reporting scheme that forms the backbone of the Club's activities.

It is my firm belief that we are well equipped to meet this challenge. We are strong both in numbers and interest, we have a solid core of facts to build upon, and we are clear about what we want to try and do. For any sort of problem, such a combination of assets means that the battle is half won before it even begins.

So that we all know exactly what we are up against, let us restate the problem now. The current reporting scheme has reached a phase of diminishing returns, and cannot be expected to give anything like the same amount of new information in the future as it has done in the past. The scheme has, in fact, been enormously successful, particularly about the behaviour of the average eel in the average water. At the same time, we have made relatively little progress towards understanding individual eels in particular waters. Thus, although we have become increasingly expert at actually catching eels, we are not much better at choosing a good eel water. Not, at least, without spending a lot of rod hours to find out the hard way.

It is towards the characteristics of individual fisheries that we must now turn. Any new scheme we undertake must be designed to try and answer the following two questions.

1. Can we learn enough about individual fisheries to be able to predict in advance what is likely to be a good eel water and what is likely to be a bad one?

2. Can we learn enough about water types to be able to suggest useful modifications to tactics to suit particular circumstances?

The second point may require a little explanation, best illustrated by an example. If, as John Harris suggests in this issue, we discover that eels tend to feed during the daytime in cloudy water, then we have a very useful modification to tactics in the shape of a better understanding of when to go fishing in these waters.

That the emphasis should eventually turn towards individual waters was clearly recognised when the present scheme was set up, and the scheme was so designed to ensure that when the change occurred, we should by no means be starting from scratch. Nevertheless, it is clear to those who are at this moment wrestling with the problem, that a very substantial amount of co-operation will be needed from everyone if we are to succeeed.

Personally, I am confident that this co-operation will be forthcoming; indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that we are all thinking much more about individual waters these days, as may be seen from the contents of this Bulletin. We can, in fact, all make a positive contribution right now. Articles, theories and opinions on members' experience of the waters they fish would be a great help to the Committee in sorting out the best way to classify waters. Furthermore, we have a new Bulletin Editor, D.G. Smith, and it would be good, for once, to welcome him to his post with a steady stream of material for publication.

Alan Hawkins.

## "TWITCHING THE TWITCH".

by Nigel Frostwick.

Twitch bites have long been controversial matter amongst anglers, and perhaps more specifically amongst carp specialists. In my experience, and, I believe, in that of fellow eel specialists, twitch bites are not uncommon. Before going into the matter in detail, let me give my definition of a twitch bite -(the writer assumes that the reader is using some form of battery powered detector) - it is a bite that registers on one's detector but does no more; at best an almost imperceptible length of line may be sneaked out giving a series of twitches with no firm evidence of a run.

There is, however, one other type of bite that I would draw the reader's attention to, and that is evidenced by one's line peeling off confidently, but in a series of short, very fast, runs and pauses. Again, this is quite distinct from the conventional eel run. I am sure we will all agree when I say that both types of bite are frequently encountered both in still and running waters.

It was, in fact, the latter type of water that first led me to experiment in this field. I was fishing in the lower reaches of a slow running, wide, river with an ever-present abundance of bootlaces. My tackle was a carp rod with a ten pound line, a size eight hook and a single lobworm. After an hour's fruitless effort to catch the beasts - during which time I reduced both hook and bait size - I decided to experiment. The runs were numerous and they all followed the same pattern. About four or five feet of line would be rapidly torn from the reel, there would be a short pause of perhaps ten seconds, then another jerk and so on. No matter how long I left the run it would not deviate from "form", and no matter when I struck I could not connect. If the bail-arm was put in after casting the bait was not touched.

Previous experience on this stretch led me to believe that the fish were small but should have been capable of devouring a single lobworm. Considering the matter, I wondered if the pauses between runs might be the time when the fish were unsuccessfully trying to "down" the bait, and further thought raised the question 'what would be the fish's reaction if the bait "appeared" to try and escape?' Would the bait be gorged for fear of losing it?

What I then decided was that I would let the next fish run, pause, and run again. Then, on the second pause I would gently twitch the line and try to give the impression that the food was trying to free itself and would be lost; at the same time I knew I must try not to let the fish suspect a third party may be involved!

The result was that nearly every cast produced a fish. Small, maybe, but the method achieved the desired result. Another hour confirmed that the technique was entirely successful, at least on this occasion. It was interesting that every time I twitched the line I received a twitch from the fish in acknowledgement; it was at this moment that I put the bail-arm in and struck, irrespective of whether the fish was moving or not.

The next time I had cause to try this method was when I was fishing a still water and getting a lot of bites that did not move off. Twitches in the true sense of the word. I employed the same 'modus operandi', but with a slight modification. As there were no actual runs, I allowed the fish four or more twitches to ensure that a genuine run was not forthcoming before twitching the line myself. The replying twitch was felt in all cases and the fish were hooked without exception.

I have since tried this technique on a variety of still and running waters over a couple of seasons,and am convinced of its worth in practice. The fact that my early experiments only yielded small eels was due to the

environment and not the application of the technique. I have, in fact, accounted for fish of better quality with a regularity that is encouraging.

There may be a number of readers who believe, as I do, that the larger the eel the more sensitive it becomes, and would question the reliability of my method on that basis. Obviously, we are all fishing primarily for the larger specimens (apart from the odd pot-hunter!). My answer is that I have not yet encountered a three pound plus fish that has not given the conventional eel run, but I have caught a number of eels up to that size that have certainly not been offended by my twitching tactics. On this evidence, I have no reason to doubt that it may work successfully with larger fish, should they be twitchers proper.

I would point out that this method has also been successfully used by Alan Hawkins and Geoff Swailes, who remarked that they were intitially intrigued and, perhaps more important, pleased, to record that it worked. I would like to make certain that I would not dream of using the method except in circumstances where it seemed the only way of contacting a fish. The results to date have been based on worm bait; although I have encountered twitches on DB, runs on this in my area are a rarity and I have not had sufficient opportunity to investigate this in detail. Perhaps those adventurous readers who are fortunate enough to live in areas where DB runs are more commonplace may be able to offer further information.

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Comment.

Apart from plucking the line like some strange nocturnal harpist, Nigel has another remarkable talent that fully deserves mention. He is far too modest to admit of it himself, so I hope he will excuse me for bringing it to your attention myself.

Nigel has some of the legendary qualities of the 'Pied Piper'. Should he lose an eel in a weed bed or snag, and reel up a broken line, there is no sign of the despair typical of us lesser mortals. Instead, he prowls the bank in intense concentration, muttering strange incantations that he will not divulge. Twice I have known the offending eels, trace, snags and all, crawl out the water to lay at his feet. They then find the conventional dustbin in double quick time.

Alas, he has only been able to call up fairly small eels so far. But he is a diligent lad, and we all have great hopes for the future!

On a more serious level, 'twitching the twitch' does appear to offer a possible solution to very frustrating experiences, and I am sure other member's experiences would be most welcome on this subject. Mind you, it must be admitted that the first time I tried it, I came rather horribly unstuck. Having a classic twitch bite on a classic twitch water, I summoned up my courage and tweaked at the line as gently as I could. The response was incredible. The rod was nearly torn from my hands, and the line was bitten clean in two! I have been broken up on the strike before - haven't we all - but to be broken up before I struck was something else indeed!

..... (Editor).

# THE OCCURRENCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN EEL, ANGUILLA ANGUILLA, IN INLAND WATERS HAVING NO ACCESS TO THE OPEN SEA.

by David Smith.

The European eel, Anguilla anguilla, is a teleost fish. Its nearest relatives are the other members of the Elomorpha, Anguilliformes, eg. Conger. All members of the group are characterised by having a leptocephalus larva, which metamorphoses into the adult. The European eel is peculiar in that it breeds in the Sargasso sea. The leptocephali are carried to Europe by the Gulf stream, and the metamorphosis occurs before the animal ascends rivers to spend the growth phase of its life in fresh water. At sexual maturity, the fish returns again to the sea, and crosses the Atlantic to the Sargasso. Despite this origin from the sea, Anguilla is often to be found in totally enclosed still waters.

The occurrence of fish in land-locked waters may be accounted for by one of three ways. Firstly, they may be introduced naturally by the transportation of spawn attached to the feet of aquatic birds. This can be ruled out in the case of the eel because a) the spawn is laid in the Sargasso sea at a depth of 300-400 fathoms (Cunningham, 1935), and b) the metamorphosis from larva to adult, and corresponding changes from a marine animal to a freshwater animal, occurs in the sea. A second method of introduction is by man, but since the eel is not regarded as a stock fish, this too may be discounted. The third method is by natural migration over land.

Aristotle, unaware of the true mating habits of the eel, believed it came out onto the land to mate with the grass-snake. To have come to this conclusion, albeit wrong, eels must have been seen on land, or at least in company with snakes. There is, in fact, a fairly large overlap between the habitats of both, for examplewdeciduous woodland surrounding a lake, or marsh adjacent to a waterway.

Indeed, the biology of the eel is such that it is able to live on land for a limited period of time. Eels can respire through the mouth so that the animals are able to breathe on land, and copious mucus is produced which helps to prevent the animal drying out too quickly. The eel is also constructed in such a way that it is capable of locomotion out of an aquatic medium. There is no lateral compression of the body, typical of the streamlined fishes, and the eel has a circular cross-section. This enables the animal to remain upright and not fall over onto its side as do most other fishes put onto dry land. Locomotion is achieved by throwing the body into a series of lateral waves that pass down the body, increasing in amplitude. This method is suitable both in water, where the animal achieves foreward movement by obtaining thrust from the water, and in grass, which will also provide the thrust.

Apart from observations made on eels in grass, evidence for this method of locomotion may be drawn from an analogous situation found in the aquatic larvae of some biting midges, These live in filamentous algae, and to propel themselves through the dense vegetation the body is thrown into a series of waves. Although their method of locomotion is inefficient in water, they are able to proceed very rapidly in their natural environment.

The limiting factor to the terrestrial existence of the eel is one of metabolism, and physiological pressures ensure the animal's dependence on water. Locomotion and other metabolic activities require energy. This is derived from the oxidation of food. Since the animal is able to breathe on land, the problem of obtaining oxygen is solved. If the animal is unable to

feed on land, however, the food must be obtained from reserves in the eel's body; until more is known about this the point must be left open.

The greatest single factor limiting the eel's terrestrial habits must be the problem of water-relations. Unlike most terrestrial organisms, there is no mechanism for the conservation of water. Water will be lost from the mucus covering of the body and from the mouth. Furthermore, water will be lost through the process of excretion. The main component of the urine is ammonia, which is highly toxic and must be diluted with water. In freshwater, this problem is of no consequence. The kidney is designed to expell water from the animal which enters by the process of osmosis, and as a result, there is always an excess of water with which to dilute the ammonia. This brings us to a third point; the kidneys are unable to reabsorb water.

If we accept that eels do in fact come onto land, their range will be restricted to certain times and places, i.e. damp areas on humid nights, thus avoiding the physiological pressures of land. However, this does provide us with a mechanism by which the animal can be found in totally land-locked waters. What we must ask is "Why does the eel foresake its natural environment and leave the water in the first place?" It is doubtful that the eel knows that if it heads in a certain direction it will come to water, and I am sceptical of any suggestion that it can smell water, since it would be much more likely to smell the water that it has just left! The factor that persuades it to leave is probably physiological, probably one of the following reasons.

1) The secretion of sex hormones producing the 'urge' to return to the sea. This accounts for the animal leaving an enclosed water, but not for it arriving there.

2) A food deficit. The animal leaves the water in search of food, and happens to stumble on a new water. However, this raises the problem of "Do eels feed on land" again.

3) An oxygen shortage. A lack of oxygen under experimental conditions induces animals to do strange things, such as try to escape.

4) Overpopulation, resulting in not enough space for each animal. An example of overpopulation leading to mass migration is shown by the Lemming.

A factor that must be taken into account before postulating any mechanism by which eels are able to find a 'home' in a totally enclosed water,is one of distribution. One cannot say for certain that a lake or pond adjacent to a river will hold more eels than one further away from the same water source. All one can say is that there is a discontinuous distribution. However, future work may prove that conditions in lake A are more suitable than lake B, but at the present time all we can presume is that there is a discontinuous distribution.

Taking into account the above information, the following hypothesis can be put foreward.

When the eel leaves the water, it wanders about aimlessly. Internal physiological mechanisms will enable the animal to know how long it can remain out of water before returning (by means of a biological clock), so that when it feels the necessity to return to the water it simply retraces its steps back to the water of origin. However, should the animal arrive by chance on another water, it may stay there

Furthermore, the larger the eel, the further it will be able to travel, because the effect of the terrestrial pressures will be delayed. The animal will have a greater amount of muscle, and will be able to travel a greater distance because of this; the body surface will be proportionally less compared to the volume (surface area$^2$ = volume$^3$) so that there is relatively

less surface area for the evaporation of water; and finally there will be a greater food reserve within the animal if it is unable to feed on land. This would account for eels in totally enclosed waters

This is no more than a mere hypothesis, and without any experimental work to support me I would not be foolish enough to claim that this is the reason for the occurrence and distribution of eels in totally land-locked waters. But the evidence will fit - mainly because the hypothesis has been engineered to fit the available evidence.

The biggest rival to this hypothesis is that concerning elver migration overland, so it will be necessary to compare the two. If elvers were able to make use of the film of water in damp grass, they too would be able to migrate overland, into totally enclosed waters. This would mean that there would be a range of sizes of eels in these waters. My own hypothesis would suggest that only the larger eels would be found in land locked waters remote from a point of access to the sea.

There are undoubtedly many holes in both of these hypotheses, but only experimental data could turn either one into an acceptable theory, and the other into an 'also ran'.

David Smith NAC Bulletin 8:3 November 1971.

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## ADAPTING THE HERON BITE-INDICATOR SENSOR

by Brian Crawford.

Members will be aware by now that there is a growing body of innovation within the Club in the bite-detector field. I would now like to add a further item for your consideration.

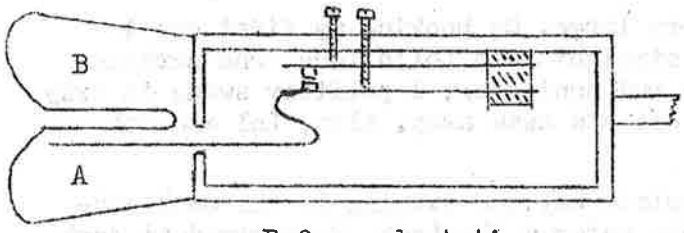
I, amongst certain other members, prefer the grip type of sensor, and with the help of Alan Hawkins have got away from putting the line between the actual contacts Carp-Catcher style, to the strictly Anguilla type using a flexible arm with the contacts enclosed in a waterproof box. My adaptation of this idea to the Heron Sensor may help those who have Herons but are not satisfied with them. With a very simple operation, the sensor can be changed from a vertical, side moving, type, to the horizontal grip type, with the advantage of being easy to set and may also be placed near the reel to prevent excess line falling off in high winds.

The details of the modification are illustrated in the 'before and after' diagrams opposite. All that is required is for section A to be carefully sawn off with a fine hacksaw, and then stuck back onto section B, after any ridges have been filed off. The arm C may require to be bent slightly, also the bank stick needs a right-angle bend in it.

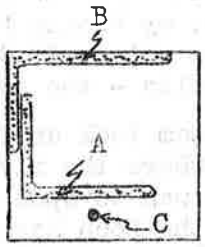
The adapted sensor now has several advantages:

1) It is easy to set in the dark without using a light.
2) It is waterproof.
3) It is sensitive and adjustable.
4) There is no resistance to put off an eel.
5) It helps to prevent coils of line from spilling off the reel

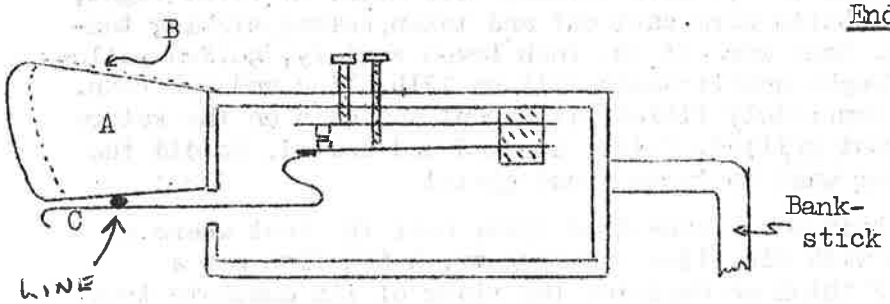
A modified form of this adaptation can easily be made from a block of plastic or similar material, and further adjusting screws may be added where desired for even greater control. In extreme conditions, a small polythene sheet may be placed round the box for added protection, but I have never found this necessary.




Before adaptation




End view




After adaptation

I hope this modification may help some members, as it has helped me, and that it will not shock people by the butchery and cannibalism involved.

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## THE LOCH MORAR SUMMER TRIP.

by Ray Brown.

Taking the wheel in turns, Bob Ivey, Lol Derricot and myself raced the 510 miles to Morar on the North-West coast of Scotland.

On our arrival at midnight, we inflated air-beds and attempted to sleep in a lay-by near the huge loch. Our sleep was restless, owing to a loud squeaking noise constantly emitted from the direction of the loch. At first light this was found to be Alan Butterworth's 12ft. rubber dinghy rubbing against the pier stanchion in the swell, but we later had cause to look gratefully upon this boat.

Alan Butterworth and the Morar survey team made us very welcome in their splendid residence, which was the old abandoned village library, complete with shelves of mouldy books.

We later erected our tents in a sheltered, fairly shallow bay, within easy walking distance of the deeper fishing areas. Reaching the pitches was a mountain climbing exercise, often terminating in a small rocky shelf the size of an ironing board, about five feet above the water, which was crystal clear and very deep. Nevertheless, we managed to arrange our tackle by jamming the rods in rocks, and securing ourselves in crevices in the rocks. To be sure, dropping off here was more lethal than on the GUC.towpath!

Eels caught were few and not very large. On hooking my first one I excitedly swung it over the rocks - straight into Lol's face, who screaned with terror - so, my Dennis Pye pike rod bent over, I politely swung it away from him over the water. It dropped off and swam away. Alan, Lol and Bob laughed hysterically - the swine!

The Morar team took us to a desolate bay one evening in the outboard-powered dinghy, where the river Meoble entered the Loch. We arrived at dusk, and as the place was so spooky, fished about 10 yards apart. During the night, Bob said he saw the Loch Morar monster, and as bushes were becoming menacing figures in the gloom, we sat in the rain talking till dawn. At first light, the trout invaded us! Deadbaits were cast out and taken before sinking ten-feet, by trout of 2-3lbs. Some were of the Loch Leven variety, golden-yellow deep bodied fish which fought unbelievably well on 12lb. line and eel rods. The plastic dustbin was completely filled with trout and eels on the return journey. We later ate trout grilled, fried, steamed and boiled. So did the Morar survey team. I never want to taste trout again!

The only source of bait was a canalised river near the tent where we 'stalked' trout of 2-4oz with 2lb. line and maggots. A 6oz fish was a specimen for the water. I think we depleted the river of its complete trout stock during the week.

The week was thoroughly enjoyed by all, even after the disappointing eel results. The crowning touch was provided when a rear spring on the car broke just as we were setting off for home, and we travelled 500 miles on the edges of our seats supported by an iron bar hammered through the shackles, strapped to the broken spring remains with 50ft. of nylon guy-rope.

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Comment.

After some probing, Ray admitted that the total eel catch at Loch Morar amounted to a dozen or so eels to something over two pounds. Clearly, one is rather up against it in waters like this; as Alan Butterworth comments, "The eel catches were not much better than last year....but I did keep on getting my stainless steel traces bitten through. I think my main failing was the sheer size of the place - where the hell does one start?"

# EEL FISHING IN SMALL PITS.

by John Harris.

1. Daytime eels. Many Yorkshire waters are small pits between 1½ and 6 acres in size. Frequently, these pits seem to hold a prolific stock of eels, and the water is normally dark in colour, sometimes of a dense, cloudy, nature. These three features - size, number of eels and colour - are the main reasons why Yorkshire waters are so productive to the daytime eel fisherman.

In my experience of daytime eeling there are three types of feeding pattern, i.e. 'Morning crawlers', 'Evening rompers', and 'Afternoon strollers'. As most anglers class the evening and morning feeders with the night feeding eels, we will restrict our attention to the 'Afternoon strollers' as true daytime eels.

Several types of bait can be used for daytime eeling in these coloured waters, but without doubt lobworms are the best all-round bait. Of course, when it comes to catching eels over three pounds one must be careful to suit the bait to the particular water. Where few eels are anticipated, lobworms are a wise choice for the first try, but where large numbers of eels are expected dead baits usually sort out the better fish.

A big problem with 'Afternoon rompers' is that they are often very shy takers, frequently dropping the bait, be it lobworm or dead-bait. To anyone fishing with lobworms for these eels, my advice is to strike as soon as possible (Single lobworms are best for a fast strike). With dead-bait, any hold back of the line jamming on the reel will undoubtedly result in an abortive run. Of course, this also applies to night feeding eels, but eels in the dark tend to be a little bolder than the 'Afternoon stroller'.

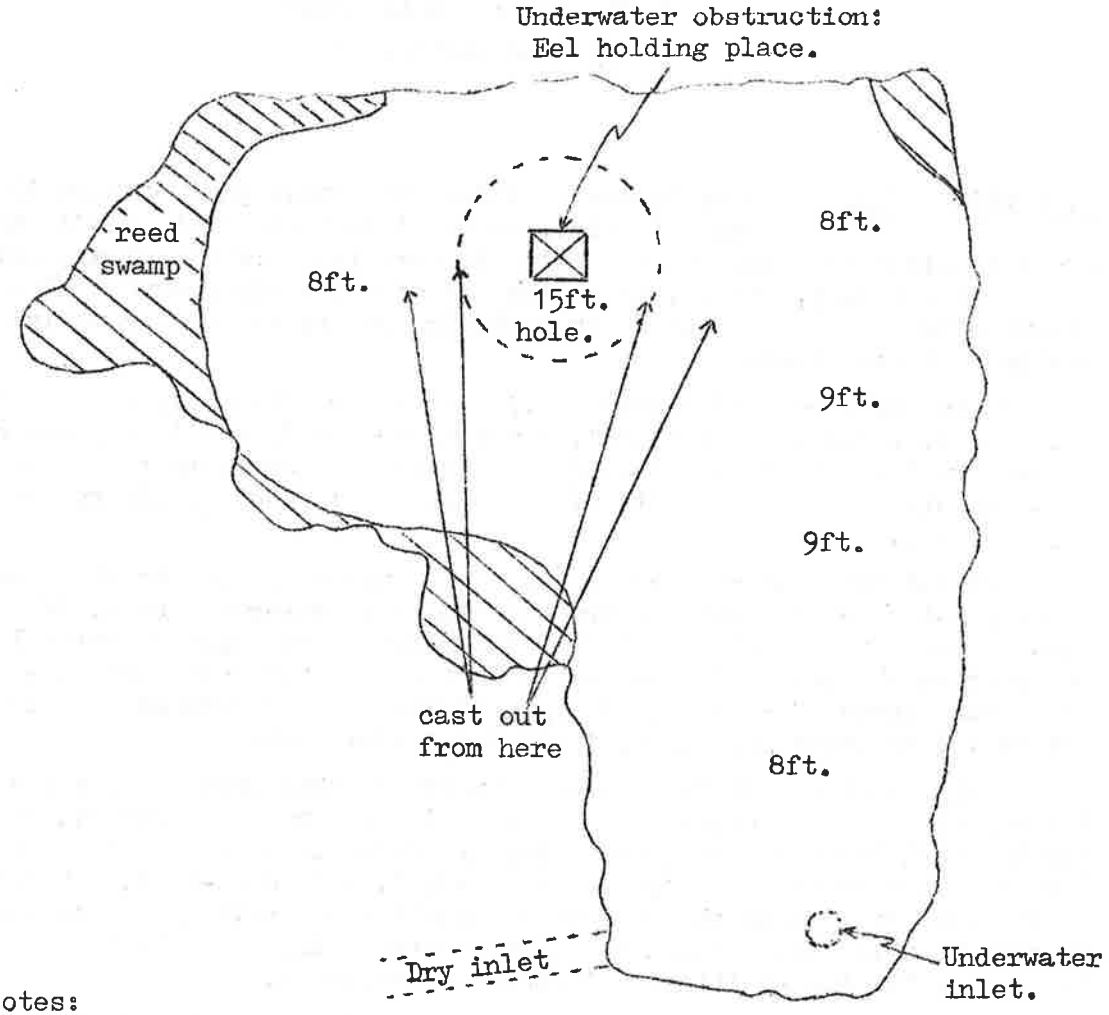
Never be put off if the weather is hot and sunny - I have had some good catches in the afternoon sun.

Having made a few general points, it is time to admit that I have yet to catch an eel over four pounds in the midday sun. Still, I have had several eels over three pounds, and witnessed the capture of a four pound fish and a five pound fish on worm. These two eels were taken on the first afternoon the pit was tried, and so this water seems a suitable place to start looking at a few fisheries in detail.

A map of the water is shown in Fig. 1 (overleaf). It is a two-acre clay pit with dense, cloudy, water, and the eels were taken on the rod cast nearest to the obstruction. The pit contains a large head of eels, ranging from - at this point in time - from a few ounces to five pounds four ounces. Strange water this; lobworms produced the big eels, and dead-baits produced only two fish of 1½lbs. each. This just goes to show that you never can tell and it always pays to keep an open mind.

We could not hit normal runs here; only when we struck at twitch bites did we contact fish. Still, is it not true that confident bites from any fish are slow, or hardly noticeable, and that a fast run or take means a frightened fish?

In pits like this, eels are never out of casting range. Add to this the fact that the bottom consists mainly of smooth clear areas (lack of light prevents weed growth) and it is easy to see that a feeding eel has little bother in finding one's bait.




Notes:

3 acre clay pit: Class 2:2.
Clean sandy bottom
Day water; no night fishing
Very cloudy water

Figure 1. A Day Fishing Water.

Some of the small pits I fish are coloured not by nature, but by man's handywork. Consider the situation at one small pit, a very fast water for 3lb. plus eels (Fig. 2, opposite). Here, work on the gravel plant clouds the water at the start of each working day. During the night, the suspended sand settles out, and the sun penetrates the clearer water in the early morning. So there is a small amount of weed growth in the margins, but most of the water is weed free.

Dead-bait was the successful bait in this water, partly due to the reluctance of Yorkshire lobs to do their love-bit at night round here. All night long, one catches only pike - and plenty, too. Eels by day, Pike by night; queer things, fish, aren't they?

Other waters I have found conducive to daytime eeling have again had dark murky water. Most of these are gravel pits. The depth of such waters is normally greater than the sand or clay pits, averaging about 10-12ft. with odd deeps of 20ft. or more. Making a gravel pit normally starts with a 'test dig'; sometimes the 'test dig' is the whole pit and then we have a lake not unlike a large bath. Sometimes the digging is extended at a higher level; then, after nature has taken its course, we find a pit with a good average depth plus a channel down the centre or offset towards one side.

One such pit, named'Farm pit, trees pool' is illustrated in Fig. 3 (overleaf)

Even though some of these pits are a fair size (up to 8 acres) eel location is normally no problem. (I believe eels move about far more than some people would have us believe, anyway). So long as one has picked the right water, baits presented in, not near, the gully or any similar feature will produce eels in pretty quick time.

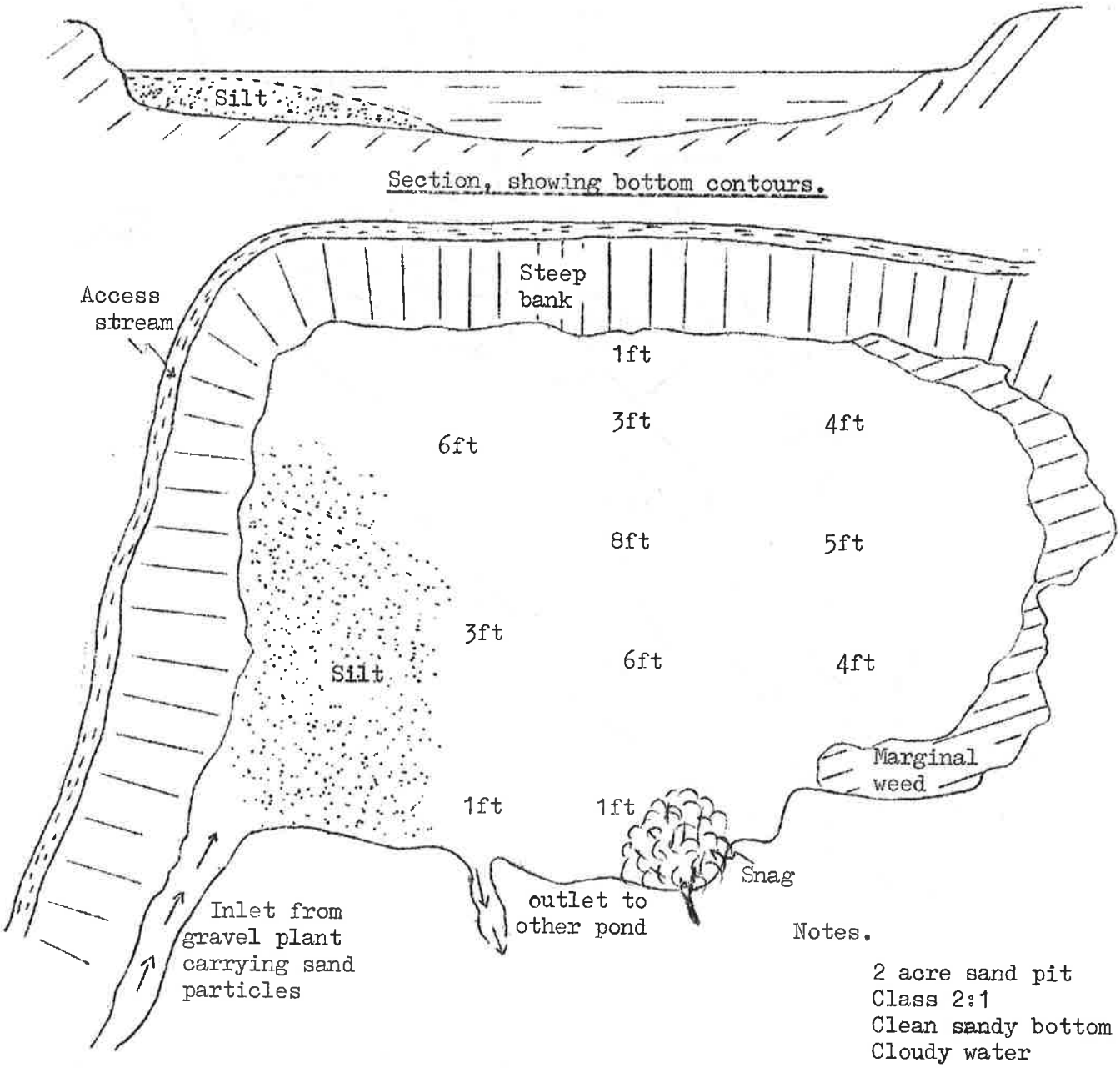



Figure 2.

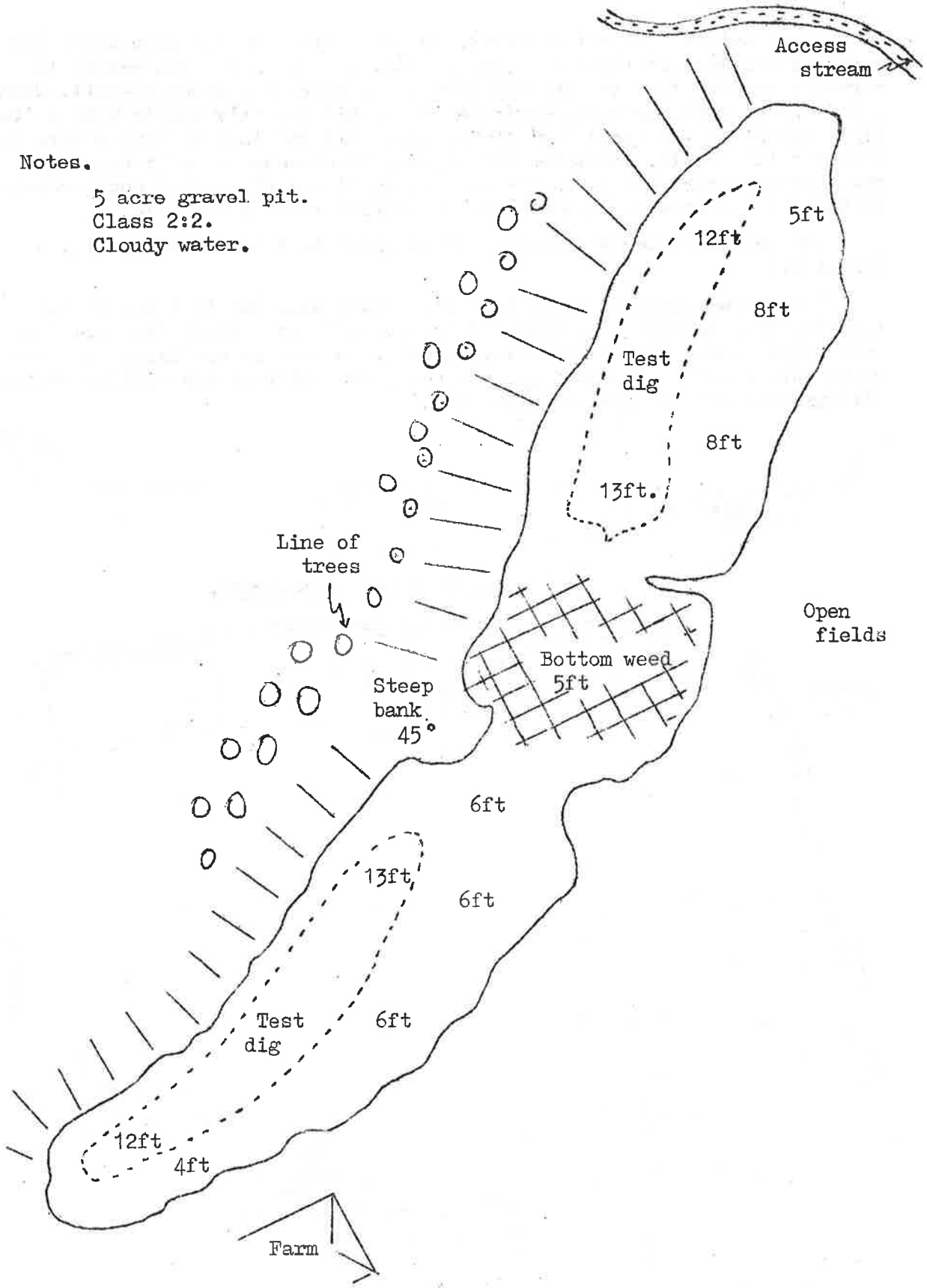



Figure 3. Farm Pit (Trees Pool).

2. Swim choice. Although some points about choosing a good swim have already been made in the previous section on daytime eeling, there are other factors worth considering when fishing small pits.

Usually, eel location in our small Yorkshire waters is easy, because the fish have only a limited area in which to hole up and feed. Even so, we have found that eels in some waters appear to feed only in certain small areas. Most times, this 'feed area' is quite some distance from home (at least, in terms of the water size).

On some waters, there appears no way of locating such 'feed areas' other than by a process of trial and error, using as many rods as the establishment will allow, and covering as wide an area as possible. In other cases, a number of features can be picked out to help locate feeding eels.

A definite hot spot in any gravel or clay pit is a small area of sandy bottom. Of course, not all such pits have this feature; in these, channels, or places where the depth increases sharply can be tried with confidence of success. Where the bottom is mainly covered by blanket weed etc. an area of clear gravel can also produce excellent results. In this instance, however, fishing is normally more productive at night, the reason being, of course, that such waters are normally gin-clear.

In midsummer, I have found it no more productive to fish near surface weed beds than in open water. Early in the season, however, the situation is rather different. I have found that, in waters heavily weeded from June through until winter, by making an early start and fishing over the still decayed weedbeds, success was assured. Indeed, baits fished away from the remains of last year's weeds produced no eels. An early start for me means as soon as the water temperature rises above 60 F, normally about mid May; of course, this can only be done if close season eeling is allowed.

One water that produced fish early in the year from decayed weed beds is illustrated in Fig. 4 (overleaf). The eels ranged in weight from 1½ to 5lbs. plus, taken from an old weed bed growing in shallow water in the middle of the pit.

3. The age of the water in relation to the size of the eels.

How old does a water have to be before its been there long enough to produce a large eel? This depends on a number of things, but one factor that is always worth finding out is whether the water has ever been polluted. Not only that, but one needs to know how long ago the pollution occurred, how bad it was, if there were any eels killed, and how big those eels were.

Don't forget this pollution factor when making enquiries about the potential of a water; it can save one very valuable thing - time!

One has to be very careful to obtain reliable information on the age of waters - I know from personal experience that faulty gen can cause a lot of wasted effort. As to how old a water needs to be, let this be your guide: an 11lb eel netted in Ireland was 34 years old.

4. The fished out theory. Since I began eel fishing nearly two years ago, I have been surprised by many things, but nothing has surprised me more than the number of anglers who keep on flogging a water that is obviously fished out.

The time a water last depends on many things. Contrary to what one might expect, waters do not have to be on the big side to last the longest; indeed I have known several small pits that have produced large numbers of 3lb. plus fish, far more than one would have thought they could possibly hold. In fact, at this point in time, there seems little evidence that these

waters are anywhere near 'fished out'. Indeed, in one such pit, the better eels are being taken in the second season of angling at the water.

Now this is really interesting, because, on most waters around my end, the better eels are invariably taken on the first few sessions, sometimes even on the first one. In fact, further fishing in these 'first time' waters produces either lesser fish or nothing at all.

One can only distinguish between a 'laster' and a 'fizzler' by keeping a careful check on the results over successive visits. If catches are good at first, but quickly dwindle, then it is time to call it quits and move on.

After all, a move often brings fresh thoughts and ideas - and surprises too, like a dirty big eel first trip. It only did it for me once, but that once was enough, for this season, anyway.

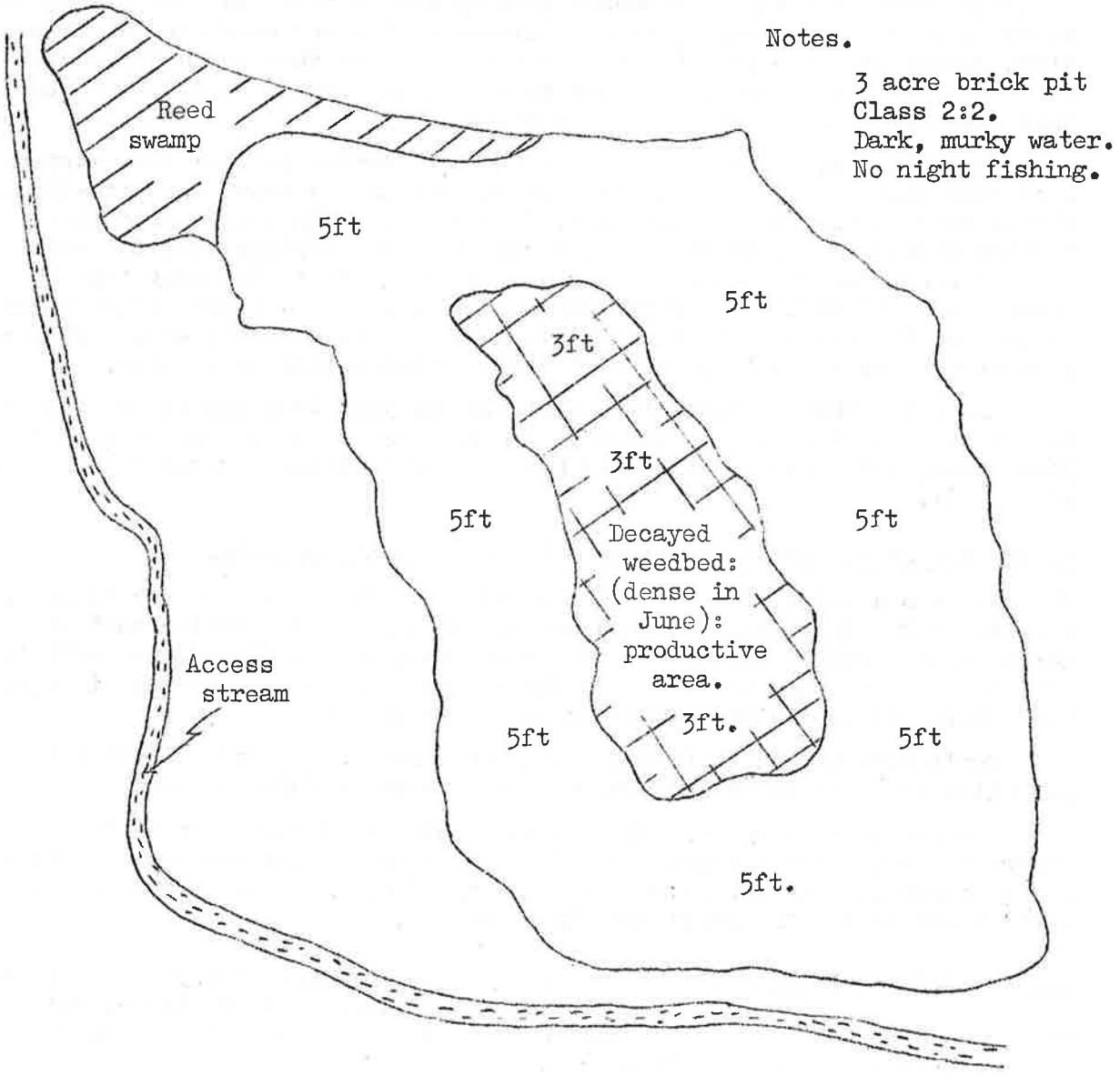



Figure 4. 'Hatty' Brick pit.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

**Proposed Book on Eels.** The following letter constitutes the only reply received so far on the interesting subject of an NAC. book on eels. It appears that a definite policy already exists on this matter, but that it has largely been forgotten over the years. I, for one, see no reason to question the decisions of the past, and wish the writer below every success in this venture. (Editor).

With regard to the question of a book raised by Brain Crawford in the last issue of the Bulletin, I was staggered - until I realised that there is no particular reason why Brian (and indeed many others) should know about discussions that took place several years ago. Anyway, to set the record straight, let me say that it has been my clear intention for many years to write a book about eels and eel fishing, and by 1966 I had assembled quite a lot of the material I intended using in the book. In that year, however, I worked out the basic idea behind what is now our set of reporting schemes and in order to explain the schemes to the Club and lay the foundations for actually running them in 1967, I wrote a series of massive pieces for the Bulletin, in which I did not hesitate to draw freely on the material I had been collecting.

As the scheme got under way, I deferred work on my book; partly because running the scheme monopolised most of my spare time, and partly because it was soon apparent that the schemes were producing lots of fresh and important information. Then, in 1968, I raised this whole subject with the Committee of the day, explaining that it was my intention to write my book eventually, but that there were now two alternatives: either I could write it as a purely private project using my own personal results and experience; or I could involve the Club using the total results with full acknowledgement. In either case, I had it in mind to invite various people to contribute items, rather along the lines which were later used by Jim Gibbinson in his book on Carp. I also said that, although several people had suggested to me that I ought to be writing an eel book, I expected that at least five year's results would be needed regardless of whether I used my personal results or the Club's, and that there was no point in rushing into it.

We discussed the whole subject very amicably as always, and the general feeling was that I should plan on using the full results, to the mutual benefit of the book and of the Club; I remember one member summing up informally with the words, "You've done the work, mate; it's up to you!" and it is on that basis that I have been working since then.

We touched upon financial aspects, and the impression I got of the general feeling was that if I wrote a book, then the income from it should be mine; however, I rather cut across this by saying that I doubted whether such a book would result in much revenue (indeed, it might have to be published privately, in which case it would probably be a cost rather than a profit) but that if there were to be any income then my intention as always would be to see that the Club benefitted appropriately.

At any rate, that is the basis I have been working on, and I would like to propose that if further discussion is needed, it should take place at our AGM rather than in the pages of the Bulletin.

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London, W.6.

T.M. Coulson.

New Race of Eels in Loch Ness? One interesting thing did turn up (at Morar), I went over to Ness for a couple of days and met a Professor Roy Mackle from the Academy of Science (or something) in America. He has been catching eels and measuring just about everything on them, and he has found several differences between the eels in (Loch) Ness and the 'standard eel' - including the point of origin of the dorsal fin. He reckons, without a great deal of justification or real evidence, that the eels in Ness may be a sub-race - how they can be I find difficult to see unless the depth of water allows them to breed. This is treading on very thin ice, but I did notice that several of the eels I caught did have very large gonads - but then again I found no males. Still, this is all very interesting, and I will try and get hold of some statistics.

A.J. Butterworth.

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St. Annes-On-Sea,
Lancashire.

More Than Just Fishing.... This season, I have savoured the delights of canal fishing for the first time. It was soon brought home to me that there was a highly specific problem associated with canals around my part of the world; I could go on about it at great and bitter length, but it is all summed up in the following extract from a letter from a fellow sufferer. (Editor)

Was rudely awakened by a dirty great barge at 04.30 hrs this morning; the shock of the manner of awakening (searchlight in face at 6ft) was traumatic in the extreme, but shortlived as my adrenalin soon told me that within a few seconds all of my rods would be taken away if prompt action was not taken.

I really did not know that four rods could be reeled in and laid out on the towpath in 10 seconds flat. The sound of my oscillators and sight of my rapid emergence and subsequent action must have pointed that bloody bargee's joviality to unheard of heights. Only to be elvated still further when he realised that a completely dormant Frostwick lay a few yards further on.

Indeed, I could only stand in horror (or so I shall have to say) as he ploughed straight ahead through Nigel's rods, miraculously missing them, and was disappearing into the distance before the very sleepy, somewhat incredulous and finally very annoyed Frostwick crept from his hovel.

The best that can be said for it was that it inspired Nigel to brew up coffee, I have often wondered what it was that was needed at that unearthly hour, now I know.

G.N. Swailes.

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