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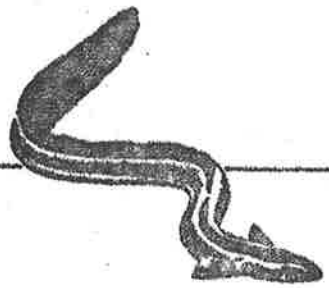

The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

VOLUME: 15. NUMBER: 3.

B. CRAWFORD

THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.

BULLETIN.

VOLUME 15. NUMBER 2.

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EDITORIAL.

K.RICHMOND.(By invitation).

As I sit in my tackle room writing this editorial I can hear the rain hammering against the window pane and the wind howling through the willows at the bottom of the garden. Yet only four weeks ago I managed to land my first eels of 1978. Not big, indeed a size some may say not worth catching, but in those dark and dreary nights of January a most welcome sight. Indeed, when I think back a year or two and recall my first tentative efforts at winter eel fishing, not expecting to catch anything, (which made the capture of several eel to 1:11½ even more of an occasion) I start wondering just what would be caught if eel anglers put in a comparable amount of effort to that which they put in during the summer months. Following correspondence with fellow member Keith Sykes the topic of winter eel fishing was touched upon and as Keiths occupation involves study of Anguilla A, I could do a lot worse than quote from one of his many letters.

"Winter eeling is, in my opinion, a worthwhile exploit. Undoubtedly their metabolic rate is reduced, but so too are all poikilo-thermic species. However, the average eel has not enough stored body fats to see her through the winter, so she feeds, and on a regular basis. Another interesting but very apparent observation, which has been noted both in the lab and in the field, is the increase in weight of fish caught in the cold months. Although we have recaptured but a handful of our many tagged fish it is evident that during October there is a definate increase in body weight in the form of fatty tissue. If the fish is not allowed to feed at very low water temperatures then this stored tissue is quickly used(as proven in our Lab). So, this again strengthens our belief in winter eels feeding more regularly than is thought".

We must remember that a few years ago winter carp fishing was said to be a most unproductive activity. If we look at the tremendous advances made in this area by the carp anglers is it not conceivable that winter eel fishing could follow suit ? However, we can only prove this. if we put in the effort. After all, how many members start eel fishing before April ?

Arthur Sutton made a point when he said that 'only if we have preconceived ideas of something new to try will we succeed.' Therefore, try an early start to the season, try new baits and new techniques and THINK about what you are doing. Remember that you are one of the 'elite' of eel fishermen and put in the effort that is expected from a member of the National Anguilla Club. Only if we all fish to the limits of our ability are we going to be rewarded with an eel over the present record.

1977 was kind to me. 137 eels to 4:05½ being my reward yet if I had not been able to correspond with other eel anglers my catches would have been significantly less. This year I intend to do rather better!

* *

Many thanks, Kevin, for your profound remarks. I have no doubt that more than one member will act on what you say.

Our member Keith Sykes has been mentioned in the editorial, and because he has an article in this issue I feel that a few words by way of introduction will not come amiss. Keith is an enthusiast - nay, a fanatic when it comes to furthering knowledge of the eel. I was corresponding with him for quite some time before he applied for membership. That he succeeded in his application is our good luck in the first instance although I hope, ultimately, that he finds the benefits to be mutual. That he can write well has been adequately illustrated in his first article. Keith has a PH.D. and thus strengthens our scientific side once more. I hope that he will keep us informed as to findings related to the natural history of Anguilla. Be it known that he is also a rod designer of repute, and I think that members will find his first article of great interest.

Keith is present Chairman of the North Gloucestershire Specimen Group and thus is well versed in how a properly conducted group is run, and I know that he will settle down to become an established Anguilla Club member in rapid time. Whether or not he walks off with our trophy for the best eel of 1978 is entirely up to you.

Editor.

POLE DEVELOPEMENT IN EEL ANGLING.

By KEITH SYKES.

Like so many things in A Specialist field, poles are increasingly on the change; for it was not too long ago that the trusty companion of the specialist was his cane MK1V. This was then slowly replaced by the introduction of glass fibre on to the market. It has tended to be a long process of developement, and one which has still to be fully exploited. We now have carbon fibre, a material which will either last or die because of its expense. However, the revolutionary carbon fibre cannot be made to do so much as its less expensive counterpart glass fibre. I will agree that the use of carbon fibre in game fishing is one of good use, particularly with long fly rods for salmon as used on the wide rivers in Scotland. However, the specialist poles in carbon fibre I have handled leave much to be desired. With such a great variety of good quality glass fibre blanks on the market there is no need to use the expensive version. I have no intention to enter into the physical properties of fibre glass, or carbon for that matter as that was not the intention of this article. What I hope to do is outline a few of the many permutations that can be imparted into a pole to make a very practical pole. Incidentally, I use the word pole rather than rod, so please bear with me in that matter!

Unfortunately, there is no ideal in pole building, nor is there any ideal in eel poles, or any other specialist pole for that matter, for an 'ideal' pole may be perfect in pitch A and yet completely useless in pitch B. So no doubt you will see that I often regard a pole for a specific purpose, or even for a specific pitch. For example there is no pole capable of casting feeders (yes I use them for eels now and then , in excess of 70yds and still capable of freelining lobs at minimum range, although I know a lot of people try to use the same pole with alarming results. It is not just a case of soft poles for close range and fast taper sticks for the longer range - poles are more specialised than that. This brings me to the point of why individuals build their own poles. Once upon a time it could have been said to be cheaper to build ones own poles, in most cases it still is cheaper than purchasing commercially manufactured poles, the main reason for building ones own poles is surely to extend those personal feelings into the pole. After all, that is what the pole is - an extension of the anglers body. Nearly all of my poles have some personal meaning, if they have no purpose, or are failures during their developement in which case they get sold. For instance, a pole which might be quite matching for me might well be useless for Brian Crawford. It is worth remembering that the personal touches in a pole include the individual length of the handle, the length and the action all depend on the body dimensions of the angler. Before you all get your hackles up and say that this approach is expensive - well so it is, but then so too is a Rolls! Obviously one can choose a range of poles to suit the greatest percentage of circumstances one is likely to encounter, unfortunately money does enter into it, but spent wisely the eel hunter can find himself/herself with a good selection of poles.

As I said, poles are personal items, built to suit the individual and so, before I go any further I would like to mention a few things that may serve as useful tips if you ever decide to follow this article and make your own specialist poles.

Basically the following pointers are connected with the anglers physique.
1. LENGTH. the length of a pole is an important factor to be taken into consideration if the angler is to obtain the maximum value from the pole. I don't know any eel man who uses poles under ten feet in length, but similarly there aren't many who use them over twelve feet. If I personally had to choose an ideal length for a pole then I would opt for a 12' pole. Even a fairly soft pole can cast and hook fish at fairly long range, simply because of the extra leverage involved. However, small and fragile people cannot handle the longer pole and so should find the length most suitable for their physique. Nevertheless, an angler who is capable of using this length of pole should do so as the length is definately advantageous. If you are six feet plus and have a good set of stomach muscles and biceps then longer poles can be used which naturally gives greater leverage and thus better hooking. One can take a tip from the South Africans here, not that it is essential to cast 200yds to capture eels - thank goodness! I have in fact been using 13½' ultra fast poles during the last season and have found it to be excellent for very long ranges. I do not advise most people to use such poles as they are difficult to master and to gain full tip compression takes a

lot of effort. As it is when watching most anglers using fast taper poles I see 80% don't obtain maximum compression during long casts. If you are interested in seeing what a pole is like under full compression take the poles optimum casting weight, wind up until a foot or so away from the tip then point the poles tip at an object to where you will hope the lead is going to go. Full the pole back and punch as hard as you can on the cast. If the tip bends the one third it should due to its tapering then you will be pretty near full tip compression. If you reach full compression with some of the thin walled blanks then you are likely to reach the breaking point of the glass fibre. So unless you can gain full compression from the pole when it is neccesary it is best to scale the pole down in power, as there is no benefit, in fact it may be a hindrance.

2. HANDLES: I am truly amazed at the length some anglers have their handles and commercial poles are no better. This is the area where the pole is activated by the angler, so it should be perfectly suited to the anglers physique(sorry to keep using that word). Again, it is all to do with levers and forces, but to make things simple let me use a formula which is the 'ideal'. Barrie Welham, the well known caster, bases his casting with fixed spool reels on the following formula; the width of ones shoulders plus the width of both hands give the total length of the handle for the pole.

The angler using a handle with a length of 36" would have to have a bloody big set of shoulders and hands, and yet there is at least on manufacturer who puts 36" handles on his 12' poles. Even 30" handles are a little long for tha average angler, the average is somewhere in the 26" to 27" region. The correct handle length should slot into the arm pit with the hand gripping the reel seat. If you don't believe me get a pole with any length handle on it, measure your shoulders and hands, add them up and put a mark on the handle, see the difference by going through thr rythm of casting. I can guarantee that you will obtain better casting results using this method of handle length than the 'any old length' handle. Combined with the total length of the pole the handle length goes to making the pole an extension of one's body.

Anyway, I have waffled on for long enough about two small points which are nevertheless often overlooked. I should now like to mention a few of the many permutations one can employ in poles specifically for eels. I will briefly put a category down which should cover most of the eventualities that we are likely to encounter.

1/ Close range poles for link legering or freelining.
2/ Close range poles for float fishing with small baits such as grubs and worms etc.
3/ Medium range work with lead and frozen baits.
4/ Medium range poles for use with soft baits such as lobs, mussels and pastes.
5/ Long range poles for leads and soft baits.
6/ Ultra long range work.

You might think that a couple of poles will serve to do all the above mentioned jobs - I disagree. Although I have worked in the trade, both selling poles and actually designing them, I hope I have a little practical experience to enable me to show you my reasons for the comment just made. Firstly, though I think the eel hunter has been neglected in the pole building world, as there is no pole sold intentionally for the sole use of eel fishing; this is being put right because I have got together with a well known specialist retailer and pole manufacturer and we will be bringing out a pole designed with the eel man in mind. I will mention very briefly at the end of this article what the pole will be like. Anyway, down to the nitty gritty:-

1/ Close Range(CR) poles are easily available in the form of soft programme carp poles, compound taper, with test curves ranging from 1¼ lbs to 1¾lbs in lengths of ten to eleven feet. Longer than this and you will have a pole that is hopeless because of its jelly-like action. Ideally the pole should have a parallel hollow glass(phg) or dural extension as this either softens or stiffens the action respectively, although only very slightly. Conoflex and Fibatube produce a good range of such blanks.

2/ CR Float pole, don't tell me none of you use floats for eels! All I can say is that if you haven't tried float fishing for eels in the marginal areas then you don't know what you are missing. There is no indicator more sensitive than a float(providing the weather allows) and to present a grub or lob(s) then this is a very delicate technique which is perfect for ensuring no deeply hooked eels or missed/dropped runs. I use a powerful beta light mounted in the antennae type float(plenty of which has been written in the angling mags) carrying about 1½ SSG, which when shotted correctly is not too heavy.(Incidentally, Alan Brown supplies beta-lights for floats which can be seen for

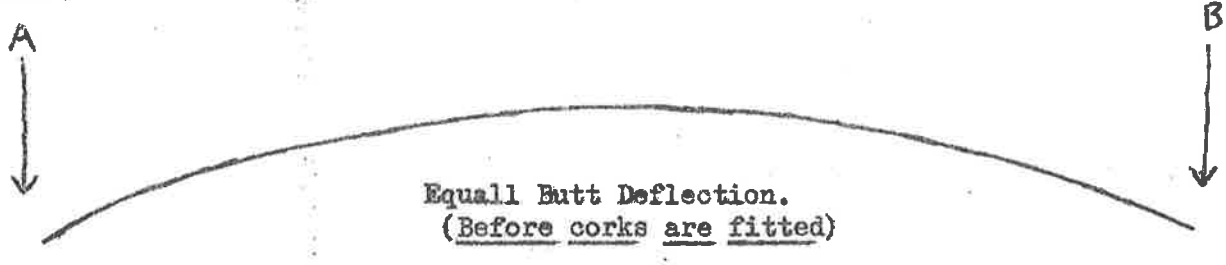
up to 30 yds)

The pole I wanted for this would again have to be soft in action and quite long, at least twelve feet. As I have just mentioned, soft actioned poles literally extended are too sloppy, so I resolved the problem by using a blank sold as a match blank. The blank was a Fibatube 14' medium action match blank(Ref SS25 in Goings catalogue) with a relative TC of ¾ lbs,obviously too long and not powerful enough. (I have found that another advantage with long poles is that one can get on top of a fish with the length, but it is only suitable where there is room to manouvre). I also wanted the pole to be as light as possible for instant striking. Firstly I shortened the butt section(phg insert) to the correct length for handle fixtures (26"), this meant cutting aprox 4" off the butt which immediately reduced the poles length to 13ft 8". I then carefully chopped 2" from the extreme tip of the pole, which left me with about 1½' to play with. So I thought about what was required again; a pole which would respond well to the bite with a soft action two thirds of the length and with a reserve in the butt. I then cut the middle section at 28" from the lower spigot and removed 8" from the middle - this stiffened the action up but the test curve was still a little short of what I wanted. I then cut the top section 19½" from the spigot and removed a further 4". When I had finished the splicing the test curve was 1½lbs and the action perfect with Fuji intermediate rings. The total weight was a mere 9 ounces.

3/ M.Range work can be adequately covered with semi-fast blanks, found in the Sportex range with test curves of 1½-2lbs. S.U. poles are also suitable for this type of fishing. Poles that fit into this category are Eustace carp poles, the Gibbinson Clooper, the Savage Carp etc etc.

4/ M.R. with soft baits can cause problems sometimes, the lobs flying off or whatever makes for bad angling. However, the simple remedy is in blank choice and butt type. I think it is quite commonly known that the butt without an insert produces a one-piece action, inserts such as dural increase the rigidity of the tip whilst a phg insert imparts a little softness into the action of the blank, all can be made to produce the correct action for the bait and range being fished. With soft baits the cause of flying off during the cast is the rigidity or lack of 'softness' in the tip. At close range this is easily rectified by using a soft actioned pole, one that reacts all the way into the butt, but when fishing at medium range(40 to 50yds plus) then there needs to be a degree of rigidity in the butt (unless the blanks length is increased, which isn't really practical under the blank type). So what is required is the following; a pole which will give a good 'reach' above the handle and yet allow a degree of softness to be imparted in the tip region to prevent bait fly-offs. Taking a medium action blank the following can be done to produce a pole capable of supplying the requirement listed. Total length 11' to 11½' maximum. Test curve 2 lbs. Butt section reversed to give equall butt deflection when under stress (see fig.1) (below).

FIG.1



Equall Butt Deflection.
(Before corks are fitted)

The butt section is either a length cut from a similar blank and spliced in to the butt or a piece which matches up in taper and wall thickness. This insert will impart the softness during the cast, and while it will reduce distance casting it has no effect on ranges in this present category. The insert can be varied to impart very soft tip reactions during the cast or only softer than the blank reactions during casting. Meanwhile it still allows the rigidity to be kept for striking at the range and playing the fish, hauling it out of any snags should it be neccesary. Poles can be made to produce the correct 'softness' for various types of bait ie; mussels, fillets lobs etc etc. Playing about with the insert will give the individual the results he or she is looking for.

5/ L.Range poles, by that I mean ranges in excess of 50yds up to about 80 yds, beyond which we enter into the ultra long distance range - more of which I will mention later. The long range pole is so often wrongly built with ultra fast blanks such as the Fibatube SS4 with Dural insert or the 132. Fast compound taper blanks aren't always the answer to the problem of fishing at long range, for, make no mistake, fishing at long range is not easy despite what is written in the press and mags. Embarking on the long range fishing can lead the angler into deep water(no pun,Ed) which can prove highly frustrating. We come back to the same old problem that is encountered with long range and the hard casting that goes with it, that of losing baits and obtaining the range. There are basically two problems - one is the weight of the pole being used, the heavier it is the more difficult it is to build up the neccesary momentum and thus tip speed to obtain maximum compression and therefore the long distance, and secondly if one can build up the tip speed and thus compression the bait will inevitably fly off! The compromise is one of two; either one ties the terminal rig and bait up with some type of dissolvable material such as PVA or one doesn't fish so far out. I ought to say that although I have taked about long range fishing I only fish at the distance where it is neccesary to enable me to catch eels - after all, that is what we are interested in - catching eels. I neither like the use of PVA unless it is absolutely essential or I wish to freeline a bait at long range(with only enough weight on to enable me to tighten up to the bait ie. a couple of SSG). By inserting a reverse taper into the blank as the handle length one can still maintain a high degree of distance whilst at the same time keep the bait on the hook. The ideal action for a pole with a test curve of 2 to 2½lbs is shown in Fig. 2 (below).

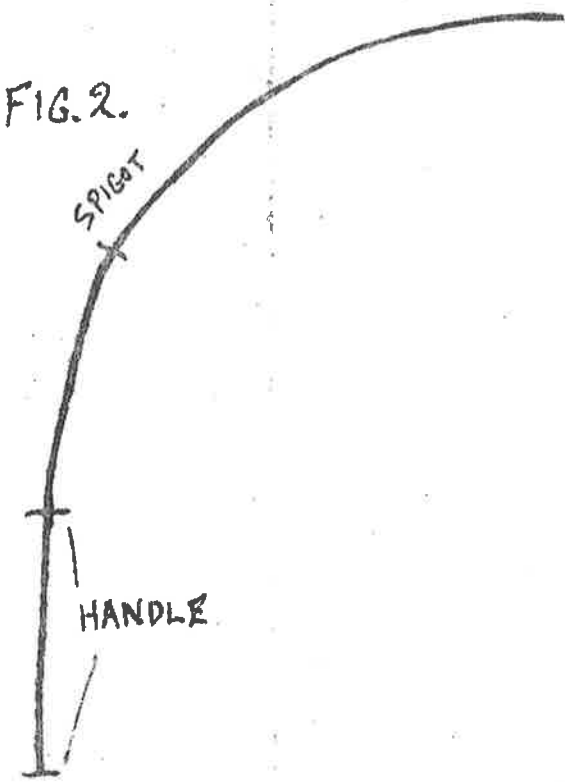


FIG.2.

If the weight is to be reduced one can use a lighter thin walled blank and cut a few pieces out(in the right places of course). Soft tip action during the cast, a light blank which has good 'reach' above the handle ensures correct bait presentation at the range being fished. This is very similar in design to the poles used by the TENCH FISHERS for feedering at long range, in fact it was Pete Jackson who helped put me on the right track regarding reverse butts. I will deal with splicing and splices after the final pole type.

6/ ULTRA LONG RANGES, which I call in excess of 85yds to around 120-130yds mark does cause a lot of problems, not least of all casting and striking. Because of this we have opted for the longest pole I am capable of handling from a technical point.

Before we had this blank made,(as it is specially designed from the weight and length point) I would use the horrible poles such as beachcasters. Combined with bloody great sea reels the total weight was nothing short of 3lbs. I hate playing any species of fish on too powerful/heavy an item of gear and that is simply one of the major reasons why I got together with Alan Brown and designed this pole. At 13½ feet of ultra fast tapered thin walled glass fibre there is a responsive tip, there is a tip which will push a lead of 2ounces over 100yds, and there is a pole that is not too heavy at one pound. This blank was designed specifically for ultra range fishing, and that is exactly what it does. The blank is 11' with 2½' of stiff phg inserted into the butt to give the total length. The handle is 28" long, with nylon winch fittings. The rings are Fuji spee one leg on the upper tip section with Fuji low stand-offs lower down and on the butt. Total ring number is nine to keep friction to a minimum but still allowing a guide for the line. The Fuji spee rings keep the tip rigid, alleviating the flat spots caused by conventional two leg rings, the Fuji inserts also help from the friction angle as well as being light. A specialist pole built for a specific purpose which it adequately fulfills. The maximum distances obtained by this pole in the field, and by that I mean by the water, were around the 150yd mark. With a test curve of a little over 3¼ lbs and being so long there is no problem with striking, the leverage is good and so is the reach abpve the handle. While it might not outcast the Moncrieff or the 484 it certainly gives the eel hunter a chance of lighter fishing and better sport with the resulting eel. Incidentally, because it is so fast(1.40" to .140") one can use a wide range of line strengths and weights. This pole will be on display along with others at the BAC in April 1978.

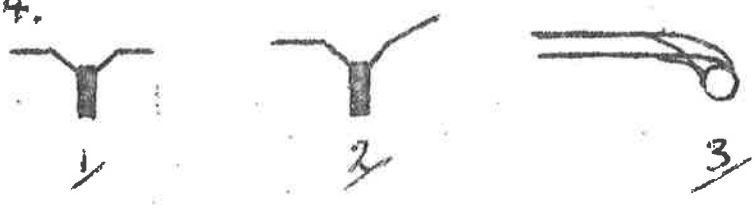
Well, there in brief is a range of poles which would see the specialist eel angler through most problems he or she would be likely to encounter. I now want to move on to the practical side of the pole, that of construction. I will briefly mention a few points about rings, splicing and cork handles.

1/ RINGS. Most of the numerous patterns on the market today leave much to be desired. 95% of them are rubbish! The one ring which comes anywhere near to being perfect is the Fuji hardloy ring in its various patterns. I believe the smoothness of the Fuji ring certainly reduces a high percentage of friction. Anyway, here are a few tips on rings which might be of some use in the future. Obviously, one has to be careful when using rings on the thin walled fast tapered blanks as it is extremely easy to punch a hole through the wall. There are several ways to overcome this problem. The problem is associated with the rigidity of the ring, so one could use the Fuji one leg spee, or for that matter hardchrome snake rings, both these types perform the best on the pole. The other thing to do is to reduce the 'flat' area by closing the gap between the legs of the ring (see Fig.3) At least by doing this the wall of the blank is much safer from damage and the 'flat' areas reduced to a minimum. I personally would opt ring wise for the Fuji patterns.

FIG. 3.

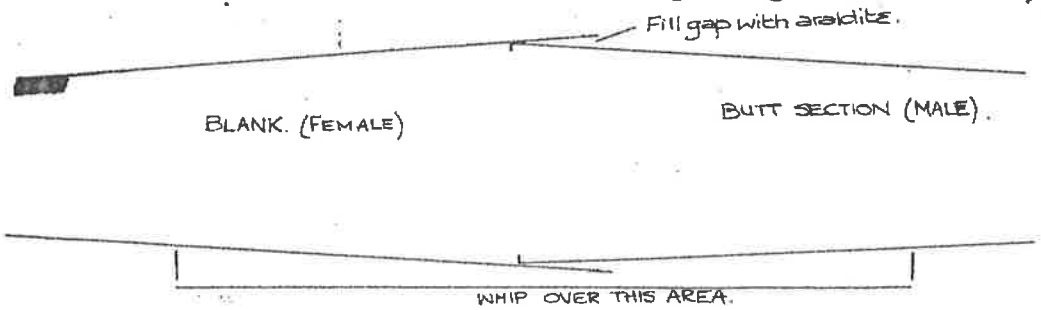
Tip rings are slightly better in construction being readily available in tungsten carbide, hardloy and hardchrome. Never use ceramic centred rings as the friction level is very high on such materials. Should you wish to keep the tip light, or make a large tip for distance poles then see Fig.4. Using a suitable size bridge ring, it is self explanatory.

FIG. 4.



2/ SPLICING; correctly carried out, the splice can unlimit the number of various permutations in a pole. It is always best to carry out splicing slowly, but carefully, as splitting the joint due to incorrect fitting isn't the essence of good pole building. Listed below are a couple of types of simple splices that can mend poles and construct newones. I use Araldite as my bonding agent.

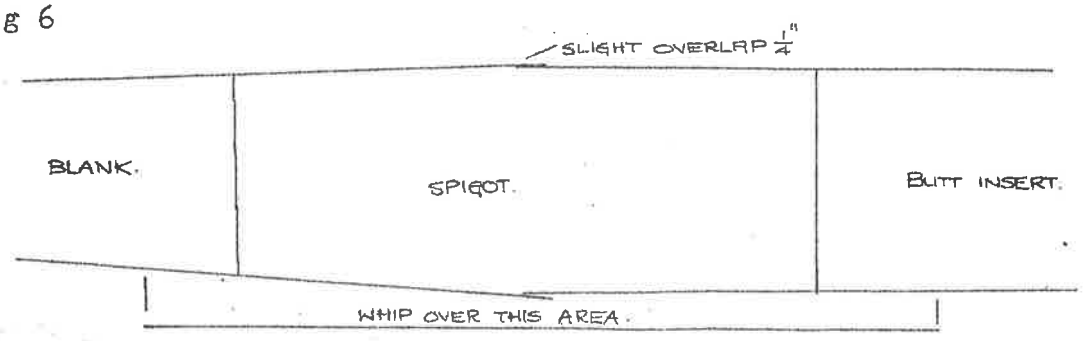
A. M to FM splice: is easily carried out using phg or dural, yet difficult with reverse taper inserts due to adverse tapers. This splice is one of the most reliable for handle construction.(By that I mean splicing below the butt). See Fig. 5.



The female of the splice is the main blank, whilst the insert is the male, in this case I am illustrating a reverse insert. Both the I.D. of the blank and the O.D. of the insert are required as the point of the splice must be neat and one of uniformity. The wall thicknesses of both blanks should be similar in nature - this prevents the splitting with thin walled blanks. The diameter of the male section has to be the smallest to allow for insertion in to the female section, so often gentle filling finishing with emery cloth is necoesary to obtain a good fit. At least four inches of the insert should be in the main blank, more if the pole is to be used for very powerful casting -(6"). It is essential that the diameters of the glass meet, and this is simple when using phg or dural but a little more difficult when using the reversed insert. Once the blanks have been matched applying a thin layer of araldite which has been lightly warmed, the splice is then completed. Extra araldite is pushed into the gap created by the adverse tapers(with reverse insert only) and a whipping over the spliced area should see the splice secure. The whipping should extend above the handle if the splice is under the reel seat as there is a great deal of leverage exerted on this region during the cast.

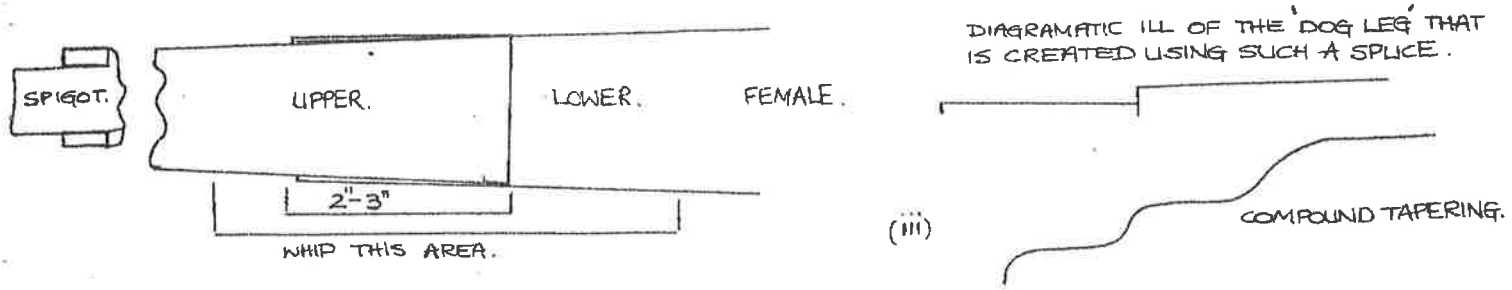
B. Dual Purpose Splice. This makes use of a spigot as the joining agent between blank and insert, and although it is easy and reliable it isn't as good as the M to FM splice as the spigot introduces an area of rigidity, which can alter the action of the blank particularly during the casting. The female blank is cut back until the desired splice position is obtained. Now the male insert is cut back until its O.D. will only just fit into the female section. An offcut of glass is selected which will fit both sections of the blanks, you will have to gently file down until a snug fit is acheived. Incidentally, the wall thicknesses of the blanks being used should be slightly less than the spigot being used. Araldite is then smeared over the spigot, which is duly inserted into the female section, the insert also has a small application of glue where it enters the female. A good whipping should then be applied over the area and above the handle if the pole is longer than 11' or very thin walled. See Fig.6.

Fig 6



C. Overlap Splice. is a very versatile splice, it can be used to repair poles, increase the test curve rating, and make the pole stiffer. If you don't wish to use the splice incorporating a spigot you may use this when a pole is broken(stepped on or suchlike). Refer to Fig. 7.

Fig 7(i)



The blank is best spliced before the insert butt(handle) is assembled as it makes for easy construction. Also any trimming of the blank should start at the tip and work to the butt. What this splice actually creates is a compound taper which is very exagerated - a dog leg in the trade. By cutting the blank at the spot and then pushing the upper section back through the lower section one is creating this difference in taper. The amount the glass wants to overlap is some 2 to 3 inches. Obviously, the position of the cut reflects on the final action of the blank, the lower the cut the more natural the action to the original. Because you actually remove a region of the blank you will see why it is essential to leave the handle/butt until last. By stepping or compounding the taper of the glass abruptly one stiffens the overall action of the blank, but remember that the final action can be varied by the type of insert used for the handle/butt. In this way this splice can be used to create 2 to 3lb test curve poles out of 1lb test curve blanks, which is obviously advantageous from the point of view of weight. The example of the float pole uses this splice.

I do hope you will see from this article that poles are not a cut and dried affair, but something which can become very involved and interesting. By splicing, removing sections of the blank, cutting the tip back and using various butt inserts one can produce a pole to suit ones individual desires, and that is what I hope this article will help you to do.

P.S. I hope I haven't been teaching Grandma to suck eggs; the handle construction will follow in another article. I should also like to acknowledge the fact that my pole building and writing owes much to Alan Brown of Hitchin.

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Editors note. The handle construction article mentioned will follow in the next issue of the Bulletin, so if you wanna see it then write a piece for the next Bulletin so that we don't have to wait for material before publishing.

I am sure that a lot of our members will find much to interest them in Keiths article, and we should thank him for same. But, a little word of warning. Keith does mention warming the Araldite before application.

Now let it be known by all and sundry that this is a very dodgy operation, unless the hazards are well known and precautions taken. Her Majesty's Inspector of Factories has come down very strongly against this particular operation, and will only allow it to take place where the neccesary precautions are taken and even then the operatives receive a medical check every three months. If you MUST warm Araldite, do have bags of windows open and take care not to inhale the vapours given off. They are not pungent, and to some people may appear non existent, but they can be DEADLY. If contact with the skin occurs, wash immediately using liberal amounts of soap and water. I have no wish to scare you off using Araldite or any of the epoxy resins. They are a first class adhesive when correctly applied, but you should know that a hazard exists. If you already use Araldite carefully, then by all means stick to it.

(Oh, what a sick pun)

CHEDDAR RESERVOIR

by Bob Croxall

As some members will know, I have been fishing Cheddar Reservoir this year (1977) with a fair amount of success, so the following report are my opinions and findings:

I first heard about Cheddar and its eels in the summer of '74 from fellow Birmingham angler, Mick Brown. At this time the Pike season was open, all of the course fishing season, and a fair number of Midland Anglers made their way to Cheddar each summer week-end to throw Mackerel at the Pike. Some of these members are included here: Mick Brown, Roger Baker, Stuart Hamilton, Terry Eustace, Chris Parish and Terry Fishlock.

Mick Brown's interest did not lie entirely with Pike, and he would fish with Mackerel strip for the eels. He had a fair amount of success landing fish over two and three pounds. Anyway, rightly or wrongly, the Bristol Specimen Group approached the Bristol Waterworks, and asked for a deadbait ban to be imposed in the summer months, June to October. It could be argued that this was for the benefit of the Cheddar Pike, or the Bristol Specimen Group.

When I was invited to join the South Staffordshire Specimen Group, our main objective was large eels, and to that end, we made a list of reported big eel waters, one of these was Greystones Lake of Jones and Climoe fame. We came to the conclusion that Greystones and Cheddar were one and the same, and so we made plans to fish it. These plans, however, were thwarted by the article in the Bulletin Volume 12, issue 6, by the late Nigel Jeyes stating, "One hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset", also "Guard dogs and trip wires". I hasten to state that the members of the S.S.S.G. did not see the bulletin, as this is not my policy, but they were warned by me that, due to information at my disposal, night fishing at Cheddar was taboo, and the idea was dropped.

My first sight of Cheddar was on the 5th October, 1975, in the pursuit of Pike. Some fish were caught, but I blanked. My next visit to Cheddar was 1st October, 1976. I was rewarded with a Pike of 14lbs 6oz. I did a further eleven trips to Cheddar with a lot of sessions ending in blanks, but in this time I got to know some of the Bailiffs and local fishermen. One of the rules of Cheddar is that the maximum number of rods is two. This, in my opinion does not seem to be strictly adhered to. Also, there were days in the winter when we would not see a Bailiff at all.

In the summer of '76, Reg Whitehouse spent some time at Cheddar with some success (this was mentioned along with Reg's results in the article of Cheddar by Bob Pountney, Volume 14, number 1).

In May, 1977, I applied to Bristol Waterworks for a season ticket for Cheddar as I had intended spending the first week of the New season down at Cheddar with my wife, looking at various other waters in the area. I had also joined the Cheddar Angling Club, and had been told of eels of 5lbs plus, coming out of these waters on baits such as bread. I must also state that it was my intention to fish daylight hours only of my weeks holiday (marital pressure).

As the opening of the New season drew nearer, it became apparent that I would not be alone at Cheddar. On the first week-end of the season both Ian and Kelvin said that they would be going down to give it a try. As deadbaits are banned, I set about collecting a plentiful supply of lob worms and, as it happened, I went out at about 11 o'clock armed with my bait bucket and red torch. (The worms cannot detect red light) I set off to my local park and sports field, and some three hours later, I was seven hundred lobs better off. The local constabulary went passed, eyeing me with great suspicion. I found out later that there had been a number of indecent exposures at night to young girls coming across the park, and I must have looked a prime suspect.

I arrived at Cheddar on the Sunday morning, 19th June, to be met by Ian and Kelvin, with grins like a pair of Cheshire cats. Apparently, they had fished through the night and had caught twenty-six eels, biggest of 3lbs 14oz, and six over 3lbs. Anyway, full of enthusiasm I set up my tackle and fished through the day. Kelvin and Ian left and I carried on fishing. At 22.00 the indicator on the rod twitched about two inches. I moved immediately to the side of the rod and the line began to peel off. I struck, and felt a good fish at about sixty yards; I began to walk backwards up the steps of the bank 'till I reached the lip. All this time the rod top had not stopped plunging down violently. The fish made efforts to swim backwards, so I began to gain line from the fish and eventually landed an eel of 3lbs 9oz, my first fish out of Cheddar. As soon as I had landed that fish I had another of 1lb 14oz and another of 1lb 12oz. By now it was getting dark - now it was decision time, whether to risk fishing through the night, or pack up?

Well, back in Birmingham we have so called night bans on waters, and this means you carry on fishing 'till everybody else packs up, and if any official looking person comes along, you tell them that you are just packing up. If it is getting on for two in the morning, the standard reply is, "I've come here early to reserve this swim"! If they happen to be in blue uniform with little blue lights on top of their cars, you just act very politely, and offer them a brew.

Well, whilst I was making the decision, I had another eel of 1lb 8oz, and five minutes later I had another eel of 2lbs 15oz. This made up my mind and I carried on fishing, keeping my eye open for any lights. I must admit that because of my experiences in Birmingham, the only light I permit myself is a pifco pen light which gives a very small amount of light in the area that you want it. This cannot be seen across the width of Cheddar. Anyway, I digress, I kept having runs with fish of 1lb 1oz, 2lbs 8oz, 2lbs, 1lb 4oz, 1lb 9oz, with the last eel of 3lbs coming at 03.00 a.m. I stopped fishing at 04.00 a.m. and took a long look at my keepnet; eleven eels with five over 2lbs. You could well imagine that I kept pinching myself to make sure that I was not dreaming.

After taking the normal photographs, I went and snatched some sleep. In the morning at about 11.00 a.m., myself and the wife were back at Cheddar having some bacon and eggs, (I think it was a late breakfast or early lunch), when an official of the Bristol Waterworks Company came to collect the permit money from the kiosk. We had a short natter and he asked me what I was fishing for. When I replied "eels", his immediate reaction was of interest. He said he had done a fair bit of fishing in the past, and his best eel was 7lbs 2oz, from a Somerset Pit. He told me of eels of over 6lbs and 7lbs coming from the Trout lakes of Chew and Blagdon. He said that the best eel I could expect from Cheddar would be about 5lbs, and I was wasting my time fishing in the day, the best time being at night. At no time during our conversation did I mention that I was a member of the N.A.C.

By 12 noon I was back fishing with two rods with worms. I fished straight through 'till midnight, and all I caught was a Pike about 11lbs 8oz. I then packed up, as I was shattered. I continued fishing 'till my week's holiday was up and I fished various week-ends through to August. In that time I met Bob Pountney, Nigel Jeyes and a new member, Keith Leeves who, in my humble opinion, is an ideal N.A.C. member. He is a proficient fishermen but is also willing to listen to advice from other members. As you will notice I stopped fishing at the end of July, due to receiving a letter from the Chairman (Brian Crawford) stating that complaints had been made to him about Midland Anglers fishing at night. Not wishing to bring the N.A.C. into disrepute, all Midland N.A.C. members stopped fishing Cheddar. In our defence, I hasten to add, that we were not the only Midland Anglers fishing there. Mick Brown and ex. N.A.C. member Bob Jackson and others were going down, using deadbaits etc., and they had got nothing to lose by saying that they were N.A.C. members. As far as the '78 season is concerned I think we will have to be very careful as to our approach to fishing Cheddar as it seems that someone has got it in for us. It might even mean not fishing there at all lest we bring suspicion on the N.A.C. I must state also, that to my knowledge no N.A.C. member has been approached by an official or non official person to speak about night fishing, or number of rods. How they say we are Midland N.A.C. members is a mystery without speaking to us, as we all speak like that famous television programme 'Crossroads' Ugh'

Anyway, back to the fishing. The tackle that I used was basically 11ft fast taper carp rod, Mitchell 300, 10lbs maxima, 2oz arlsly bomb fished on a two foot link, 16" seastrand trace with a 2/0 Lion D'or hook baited with three lobs. This was cast out to approximately 80 yards, and a silver paper indicator fixed to the line. The runs were sometimes absolute screamers or tiny plucks at the line. Bob Pountney seemed to dismiss these as "Oh, it's just Perch", but Ian Mann and myself have managed to hit these plucks and have landed eels. One thing that did seem to happen was that you could have a period of complete inactivity, then everybody was into fish.

To conclude my story, the results that I obtained from Cheddar are as follows:-

I had sixty-three fish over 1lb, thirty-two over 2lbs, forteen over 3lbs, two over 4lbs (4lbs 1oz) and one fish over 5lbs, which was 5lbs 2oz. In total I had sixty-three eels. It just leaves me to say that if you want to fish Cheddar next year, do so by all means, but be very careful as somebody does not like us catching fish, or is it just sour grapes?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.
Dear Editor,

As I am in possesion of the 1972 - 1974 session report forms, I feel that it is only fair if I 'throw them open' to our members.

If any member requires information concerning any of the following waters would they please drop me a line and I will analyse the relevant data and send it to them as soon as it is possible.

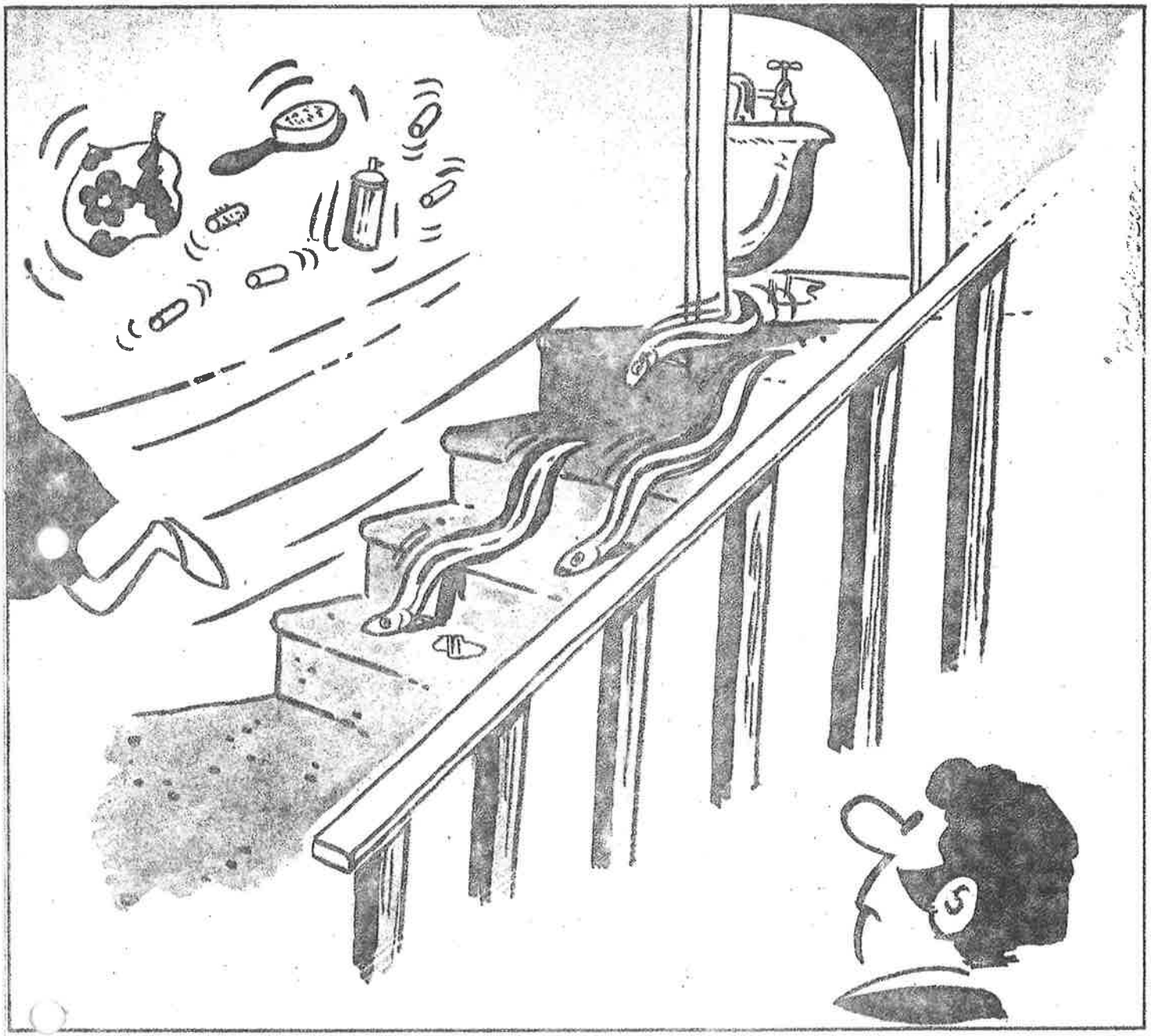
Yours sincerely, Kevin Richmond
(Club Analyst)

WATER	TOTAL EELS	WEIGHT RANGE.					
		0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
WRAYSBURY 2.	14	6	5	3	-	-	-
HAM LAKE	5	2	2	1	-	-	-
TREES POOL	17	-	1	5	7	3	1
R.THAMES.	72	19	29	18.	5	1	-
'SHALLOW' GRAVEL PIT.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
BELLMOOR QUARRY	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
CARTWRIGHS PIT.	5	-	2	3	-	-	-
COLESMERE.	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
BLAKEMERE.	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
WHITEMERE.	84	33	43	2	4	1	1
LANCASTER CANAL	8	4	4	-	-	-	-
STANLEY PARK LAKE.	162	28	78	28	24	4	-
SCORTON PIT.	5	4	1	-	-	-	-
G.U. CANAL.	32	8	15	4	4	1	-
BURROWSES PIT.	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
ABBERTON RES;	138	1	18	52	59	8	-
TOTHAM PIT.	46	13	17	8	6	2	-
KINGSMEAD.	32	3	11	13	5	-	-
R.LODDON.	11	1	3	5	2	-	-
YATELY.	38	10	18	10	-	-	-
WINTERS BRICKYARD PIT.	2		1	1	-	-	-
WINDMILL	12	1	3	5	2	-	-
BARTON BROADS.	42	11	17	12	2	-	-
NORTH BARROW BRICK PIT.	3	1	2	-	-	-	-

WATER	TOTAL EELS	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
BARROW HAVEN.	14	3	7	3	1	-	-
BUTLERS.	21	14	5	2	-	-	-
.WHYKE LAKE.	3	-	-	2	1	-	-
HYBRIDGE CLAY PIT.	16	13	3	-	-	-	-
R. OUSE	4	-	1	1	2	-	-
STANSTEAD ABBOTS LONG POND.	5	-	1	-	2	1	1
OFFORD WEIR POOL	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
KNOTTYS LAKE.	15	13	2	-	-	-	-
MEADOWFIELD LAKE.	9	4	-	4	-	1	-
ELLSON'S PIT.	2	-	1	1	-	-	-
MARSHALLS FARM POND.	5	4	1	-	-	-	-
LEAKS POND.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
NEWTON POND.	12	-	3	5	3	1	-
MARL PIT.	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
SCORTON GRAVEL PIT.	5	4	1	-	-	-	-
BOURBLES BIG PIT.	2	-	-	-	-	1	1
BLACK DIST.	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
FAWSLEY PARK LAKE	4	-	1	3	-	-	-
LOCH LOCKY	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
R. DELPH.	14	7	6	1	-	-	-
PISCES CARAVAN LAKE	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
ASHELDHAM PIT.	4	1	3	-	-	-	-
STAITS MILL PIT.	15	-	6	7	2	-	-
R. NENE.	3	1	2	-	-	-	-
FIVER PIT.	10	-	6	3	1	-	-
CORTBIRK PIT.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
FLAT PIT.	4	-	-	3	1	-	-
R. COLNEBROOK.	6	1	5	-	-	-	-
SALHOUSE BROAD	32.	13	16	3	-	-	-
BOURBLES SMALL PIT.	2	-	-	-	-	1	1

WATER	TOTAL EELS.	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
HOUSTON BROAD.	1	–	1	–	–	–	–
WOMACH WATER.	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
L. POND.	3	1	1	1			
PAINS POOL.	4		2	2			
BOOT LACE CANAL	3	1	2				
ELVINGTON POND	1			1			
CLUMBER PARK LAKE	19	15	4				
REDMOOR.	2	2					
GOSMOOR.	1	1					
BILBERRY POOL.	1	1					
FURNACE LAKE	1	1					
MILL POND	1		1				
ELECTRICITY POOL	4		2	2			
NEWTON ON DERWENT.	9		4	5			
HAXBY POND.	3				1		2
GUNSLOPE POOL	2			1			1
EARLSWOOD LAKE.	14		2	4	6	2	
HERON WATER.	5		1	1	1	2	
ELMFIELD POND	3				1	2	
LAKE BALA	120	65	22	23	9	1	
JAMES PIT.	3				3		
E. HALTON BRICK PIT.	25	4	12	8	1		
HILSON MOAT.	6		1	4	1		
DUNWEAR.	10	4	3	2	1		
GUNHOUSE POOL.	1				1		
LIFFORD RES.	1				1		
MARKET RASEN.	8		4	4			
WROXHAM BROAD	13	4	6	3			
SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL	9	2	4	3			
LAKE POND.	4	–	1	–	3	–	–

WATER	TOTAL EELS	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
BRA LAKE	8	2	4	2			
BRIDLE LAKE	2			2			
RIVER YEO.	18	10	7	1			
SUTTON SAND PIT	7	3	3	1			
IVY LAKE	2	-	1	1			
WESTFIELD 1	4	3	-	1			
WESTFIELD 3	2	1		1			
CHAPMANS PIT	2	1		1			
OTTER POOL	1			1			
BARLEY POOL	25	13	12				
BESTRIDGE POND.	6	2	4				
WILLOW PIT	10	7	3				
LAMBETH RES;	4	1	3				
WESTFIELD 5.	7	5	2				
RHYL BRICK PIT.	5	3	2				
SILVER END PIT.	2		2				
KNIGHT & BESBOROUGH RES.	2	-	2				
SMITHS	2		2				
GREBE POOL.	2		2				
WORCESTER CANAL	1		1				
HERON POND	3	3					
MARBURY MERE.	1	1					
HAWK LAKE	1	1					
HURLESTON RES.	1	1					
APPERBY POOL.	1	1					
BLACK PIT.	1	1					
WESTFIELD 4.	1	1					



Well, there you are. After all the serious stuff - a little touch of humour. I can't make up my mind whether that is Mrs Orme or Mrs Holman running away from those wrigglers. I know it cannot be Mrs Sutton, 'cos when I have eels in the bath she will not put foot on the stairs.

Many of you have written to me regarding our co-founder and first ever Chairman, George Moss. Thankyou for your letters. I have passed on your kind remarks to George and he, in return, wishes you all a very good season. He says that if you don't catch some whoppers you will be letting him down. So do your best, and I will keep you informed as to his progress.

Talking of letters, I have had more letters from our members than I can recall for some time. I am glad to be able to say that with but the occasional delay I have been able to reply to all the letters, usually by return of post. I know that you appreciate a speedy reply after you have taken the trouble to write, but please do bear in mind that for a period each month I am kept rather busy with Club work - hence the very occasional delay in reply. But do keep on writing, it makes for a lively Club and stops your Editor from going to sleep.

Do carry on sending in those articles for the Bulletin. I think you will agree that we do have an interesting issue this month, with plenty to get your teeth into. And, there is more to come in the next issue. Keep writing.

The Editor.