

The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.

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I write these notes well before you will have read issue No 2, jotting down a line or two as and when I get the time. The next issue promises to be bigger than we have had for some time if articles come in at the present rate.

Unfortunately, our members write at the wrong times. All through this long winter with its restricted angling and numerous weekends with little to do, your secretary and I have been struggling to produce a Bulletin from thin air. The written material was simply not coming in. However, come the Spring, when Terry and I have an awful lot of Club work to try and get through prior to our meeting, and behold the articles start coming in.

Don't get me wrong, we do always appreciate any material for the Bulletin and I do sincerely thank those of you who have taken the trouble to write during the winter months. Domestic duties require that I start pasting and painting shortly, leaving me even less time to devote to the Bulletin. So perhaps you will remember next winter to get cracking with pen and paper. You will? Good show.

You will notice a form of continuity in this issue. Several of our members have taken up the subject of moonlight mid water or near surface eel fishing and I will try to get as much of this material into this issue. I am rather pleased about this for I am certain that we are on the right lines here. Articles, discussion through the Bulletin, arguments both for and against - they are the medium whereby we will learn. the feeding of eels near to the surface is very largely a 'virgin' subject. One into which we can really set our teeth. Hypothetical and theoretical discussion does no harm, for through it comes the occasional idea which is worthy of some attention. The one thing I dislike here is the argument that such and such an idea cannot be of any real value otherwise it would have been taken up long ago. What utter rubbish. One person spoke to me over the telephone in that vein. Asked if he had ever given midwater fishing for eels a good try he replied "no, because I do not think there is anything in it". I ask you, could we ever progress in our branch of the sport if we all felt that way? So do keep your ideas coming, and do not feel at all guilty if those ideas seem a little 'way out'.

Now I must ask a favour of you all. Several articles recently received at this office were very neatly typed on the correct size paper. Fair enough, for I have often asked you to do that if you possibly can, and it should make my life a lot easier. But PINK paper and YELLOW paper does not help me one little bit, for I have to type out all your hard work onto white A.4 before I can scan the work prior to duplicating. So please confine your pink paper to letters to the lady friend. I suppose that I deserve to get scented paper for having moaned at you, but having forgiven me do your best to help.

I was going to wax poetic about winter having gone, but as I look out of the window I can see that it is snowing like hell. Nil desperandum, for winter often has a habit of hanging on for as long as possible. I can recall one Easter some three years ago when Ernie Orme, Dave Smith, Mrs Orme and offspring and myself sat out a three day blizzard at Bala Lake. Tea or coffee and slices of toast were the order of the day every hour or so, with frequent recourse to the hard stuff for purely medicinal purposes only. I do not think that the temperature went above freezing during our three days (and nights) there and you could be forgiven for thinking that we came close to catching a very severe cold or worse. Not so, for we were surprisingly comfortable under our broolly covers with a good supply of blankets, food, and hot drinks. It was all very enjoyable and the excersize proved to me that one can survive for two or three night in conditions which can seldom be worse than we experienced that Easter. Not that you should try it on your own, for that would be folly. But a group of anglers all sharing the same conditions can stand almost anything. It tempts me to put forward the idea of a Club WINTER trip, but I will await your disgusting comments.

Nature always puts things right, and this cold weather will very likely lead to an April with above average temperatures. Anyway, I do look forward with immense pleasure to seeing many of you by the waterside this year.

A.J. Sutton.

MORE ON MOONLIGHT EEL FISHING.Andy Lister.

What an interesting article by Arthur Sutton in the last Bulletin, on moonlight eel fishing. I haven't been able to stop considering the possibilities since reading it.

As most, if not all members will agree, cloudless nights with a full moon are virtually non-starters as far as eel fishing is concerned and in fact this is so with most fish generally. But what happens? After arriving at our swim for the night session we stick dogmatically to traditional baits and methods i.e. legering or free lining with lobworms or deadbaits (or if you are a friend of exmember D. Smith it will be maggots or freshwater snails). Personally, I do not think that we can make any improvement regarding the bait used, neither do I feel it necessary at the present time. The vast majority of the eels we catch have never been caught before, consequently they will only be alarmed by the tackle we use - unlike the carp scene where the highly intelligent carp(??) is wary of baits, tackle and masses of anglers on the bank sending a constant stream of vibration through the water. Also in the case of carp they have been taken at some time during the previous season and in many cases in the previous few weeks. Unfortunately, pike fishing is heading in the same direction. This is especially true of reservoirs, where the same pike are being taken several times in one season, even on reservoirs of two hundred acres or more. However, I digress.

Most of us fish for eels with more than two rods, sometimes employing three or four. Now would it not be worthwhile to fish one of these rods in a midwater or near surface mode? Just consider, if you fish with four rods as I do whenever possible likely as not those four rods are being fished exactly the same except that the baits may be cast at varying distances from the bank. When it comes to river or canal or drain they will all be fished in an identical fashion. On a brightly moonlit night when a blank session is half expected what have you got to lose by trying something a little different. Another point comes to mind. Why not try dragging a swim on one of these brightly moonlit nights? Obviously there are limitations when fishing a lake, unless you can throw a drag some thirty yards or more. This method may be, I suggest, more suitable for canals, where a drag on a stout handle would be preferable to one thrown out on a line.

Looking back in my diary to the entry for June 5th 1977, I arrived on the banks of the G.U. canal and set up my usual four rod outfit. By midnight, with one eel of 2:1 already in the net, the sky started to clear revealing a rather bright full moon. By 2a.m. I was convinced that the sport was all over and relaxed into my bedchair, pulling a blanket over myself at the same time. A short while after this that all too familiar sound of a barge approaching disturbed my dozing and within seconds the familiar spotlight picked me up. Rapidly as I could I stumbled to the rods, reeled in and lay the rods on the bank as the culprit passed by - the two pirates at the helm giving me the usual "what the bloody hell is he doing here" look. By the time I had rebaited where necessary and recast the gear dawn was almost breaking. Within a few minutes of being disturbed I had a run on my end rod and consequently struck and landed a sizeable eel. The point I am trying to make is, did the passing barge disturb the bottom sufficiently to affect the clarity of the water so eliminating the effect of that bright moon? Did it have the same effect as dragging the bottom might do?

On several occasions I have taken eels (and other fish) while fishing beneath a full moon which was obscured by dense cloud but as soon as the cloud has dispersed so the fishing has deteriorated. Would dragging the bottom bring the fish back, if only for a short period? Last year on the Spring trip to the G.U. Brian Derrington had two or three runs while trying to fish during the morning in between the passing boats. I admit that these could have been caused by fish other than eels, but we cannot prove to the contrary. The week prior to the Spring trip I spoke to a lad of about fifteen who was fishing for eels just above Bugbrooke. He told me that he only fished from 6pm to around 10.30pm and had never fished through the night. All the same, he had managed a few eels including one of over five pounds the previous year and several of these had been taken from between the passing boats well before dusk.

Finally, on to tackle. Arthur suggests fishing with float tackle at mid-water or less, but this does obviously have limitations unless there be no drift or surface drag. A float incorporating a beta light would have to be used for bite indication.

However, if runs are few and far between they do tend to play tricks on the old eyes. In my opinion the obvious method is to leger either with or without a link, depending on the bottom, and air inject whatever bait you are using. A couple of air injected lobworms will remain bouyant for at least three hours in my experience, and probably a lot longer than this. They will also cast a long long way and still float. With dead baits the same trick can be used or you can resort to using polystyrene to make the baits tend to float. The one thing to remember is to keep the reel line quite taut from the reel to the bait, or your baits will become surface baits drifting about all over the place. I already have plastic clips taped to my rods between the reel and the butt ring and the resistance is quite negligible. I am quite sure that our more technically minded members can improve on this. Anyway, here are set out some of my thoughts on moonlight eel fishing, albeit rather short. Can anyone add some more.

* * * * *

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR. (Re MOONLIGHT EEL FISHING)

It has often been said that eel anglers are stereotyped. I now have positive proof that the members of the National Anguilla Club most definately are not so. Your Article (Vol 16 No 1) on moonlight eel fishing was tremendous! It was, without doubt, one of the best articles that I have read in ages and was a superb example of a thinking angler putting together the pieces of a problem and then offering a possible solution. It was also backed up by valid personal experiences and that of others.

I must admit that the article has certainly made me think a lot, especially about some of my past experiences and some about which I had heard. But it did show that in one aspect of eel fishing I AM stereotyped, this being the fact that all my baits are invariably on the bottom. This year I shall remedy this.

Blanks on moonlight nights have been explained by some as being due to the accompanying drop in water temperature, but as Arthur points out - the lack of action on a moonlight night does not in itself mean that the eels are not feeding. Merely that we are doing something wrong and thus cannot catch them. If our baits are all on the bottom and the eels are near to the surface it is not surprising the catch rate is so low during periods of moonlight. Although I would have thought that a bottom bait would easily be picked up by an eels fantastic sense of smell, unless the water be extremely deep, the attraction of an easy meal of surface feeding daphnia and small fish is so obviously far greater.

In the past I have taken eels on bright nights by using baits on the bottom (or should that be despite using baits on the bottom). They were not common occurances but they did occur now and again. One thing that all these occurances did have in common was that all the waters concerned were muddy and never deeper than about seven feet. Presumably the muddy water diminishes the effect of the moonlight. I did notice that Arthurs success with a surface feeding eel was on the G.U. This is muddy, is it not?

On a somewhat similar note, what about the 'perfect' nights when we all blank. Too often we put this down to using the wrong bait, perhaps in the wrong place, or simply that we have missed the eels feeding cycle. Could it not be that the eels were feeding off the bottom? Why should they be restricted to bottom feeding only? There is only one way to find out. A season or two of all members trying this sub-surface eel fishing could provide very interesting results and some extremely useful data.

As to what terminal gear to use, I intend trying a light float paternoster rig. The float needs to be small and would be fished sliding style. The paternoster link would be a light breaking strain (2 - 3lbs) so as to avoid snags and abortive runs. The lead used would be fairly small and a couple of swan shot may suffice. Anyway, there are my tackle suggestions, but I look forward to hearing other views. Clearly, here is a shining example where an eel angler (Arthur Sutton) has identified an area where Club knowledge is practically nil and is endeavouring to rectify this. We should be grateful to him and grasp this opportunity to take a long and serious look at this vital issue. Nice one, Arthur. Your article was a great success as far as I am concerned, it has certainly got me thinking about my future eel fishing.

H. Hansen.

CROSSMANS.

By P. Nunn.

Crossmans, to my way of thinking, is one of the nicest ponds which I fish in my small area around Colchester, in Essex. It is about three acres in size, approx; 200 yds by 60 yds. There are two small islands of about ten yds in size from which there is no fishing. The water at the deeper end is five feet, but there is about six inches of water over three feet of silt at the shallower end. The whole pond is badly silted and we are currently trying to clear some of this. The water around the islands is some three to four feet deep with tree roots and brambles hanging nicely around the edges. One of my favourite spots for fishing is at swim No 5, with one bait placed tightly near the island and another two baits at the rear of the island.

Apart from eels, other fish present are Bream to 9lbs, Pike to 18lbs, Tench to 5lb, Roach to 2lb +, Rudd to 2lb +, and Carp to 13lb +. The eels are to 5lb +. Most of these fish have shown up during netting operations. The head of eels is large, ranging from 4" bootlaces to 5lb+ snakes. My best eel so far is a 3lb 4oz snake which came from swim No 2 while fishing with Terry Jefferson. Eels of over six pounds have been taken in traps by trappers who used the lake some fifteen years ago. The shape of these eels is short, with large heads and mouths. Bait catching is no problem at all and a half hours tiddler snatching will produce enough baits for two anglers for the whole weekend. The bait fish are mainly roach rudd and bream from one inch to 6 inches in length.

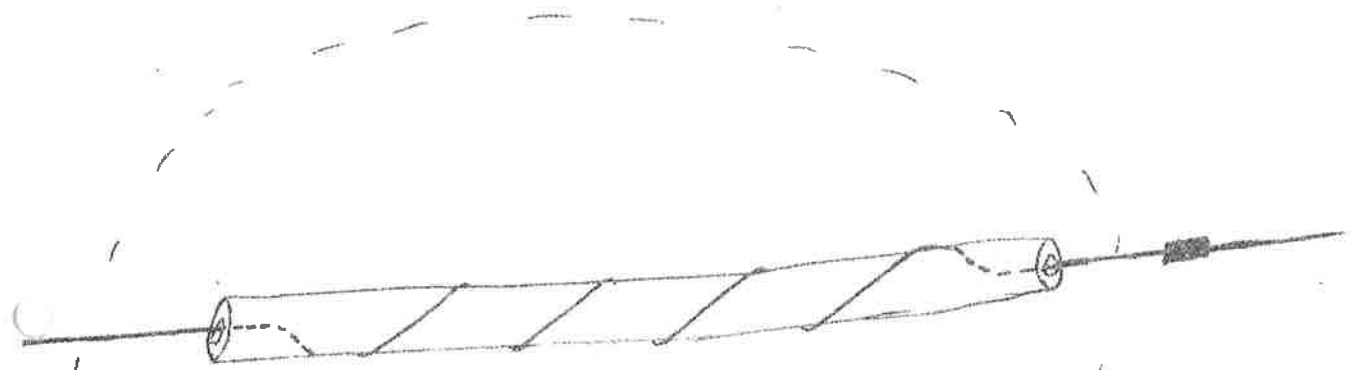
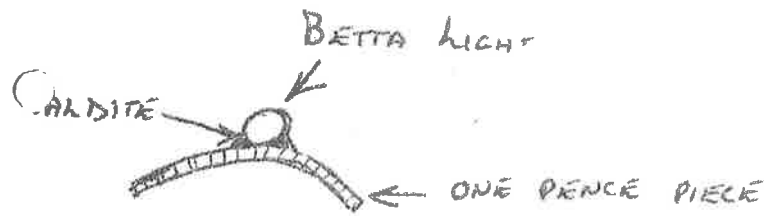
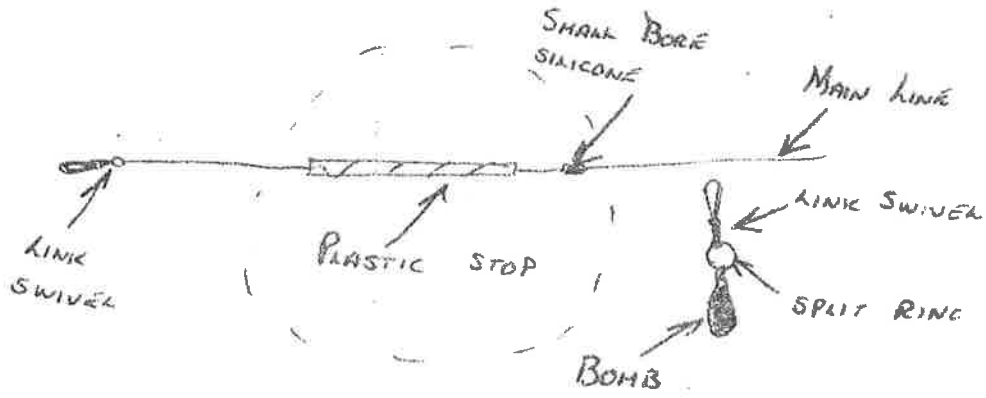
Terry Jefferson is the only other Club member to have fished the lake, and he must like it as he keeps on coming back for more (or for my tea). To be fair to Terry, he has taught me how to catch bream on eel tackle, and I have made a note of the successful bream bait in case I want to become a bream fanatic.

My gear for Crossmans consists of Mitchell 300s with roller bale arms fitted. Line is 9lb b/s Sylcast sorrel. Rods are 10' 10" SS6, 11' Bass 2lb T/C and a clooper carp rod. Traces are made of nylon for small baits or section baits and 18lb Marlin-steel for the large baits. Hooks are usually size two and Arthur Sutton alarms are used for bite detection. For night fishing I also use one pence pieces bent slightly so that they fit on to the spools. I also Araldite beta lights to the tops. The main advantage with these indicators is that when a run develops they fall free of the reel and are easy to find in the dark. During the hours of daylight I use an elastic band on the rod above the reel and trap the line under it. I always use a bomb on the line as I find, personally, that I get more positive bites that way. For a ledger stop I use a neat stop made from a $\frac{3}{4}$ " length of clear soft plastic tubing. This is taken from a 0.75mm electric cable.

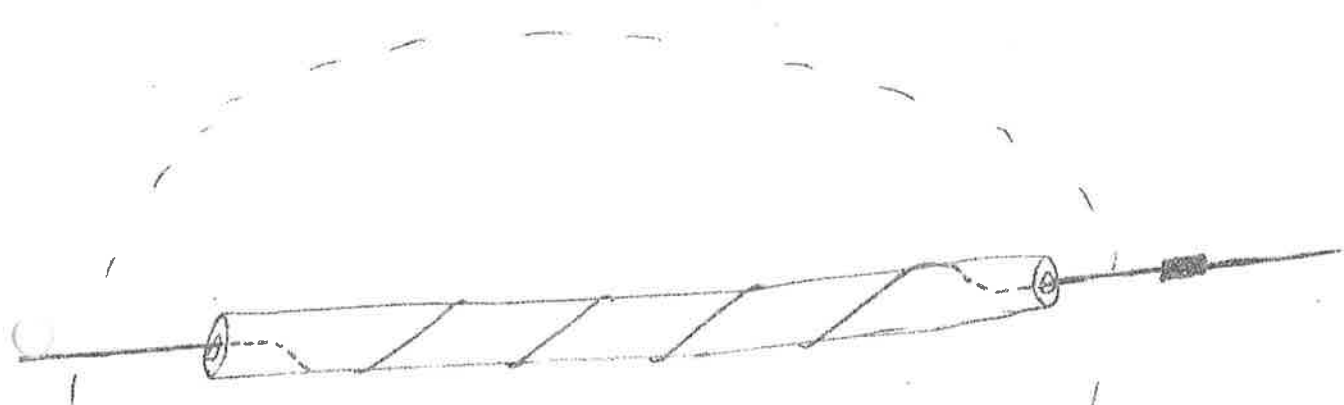
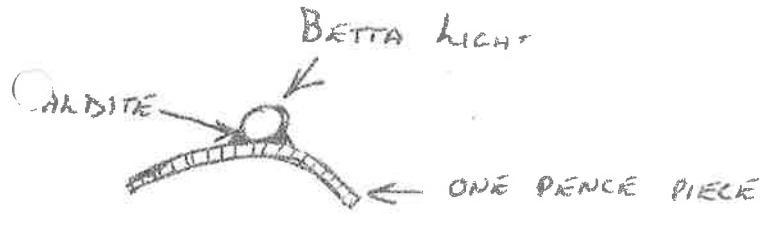
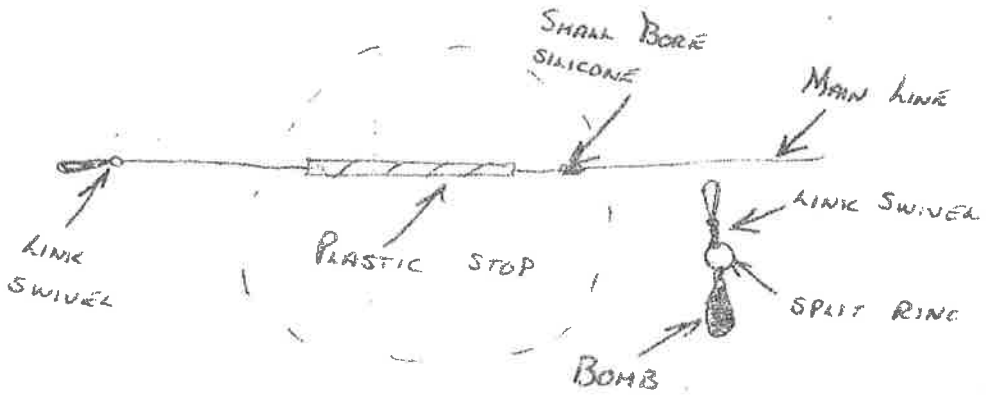
To make the stop you firstly slide a small length of silicone rubber on to your line. This acts as a buffer to stop your swivel fouling the stop. The stop itself is fairly easy although it may seem to be a little awkward at first. The line is attached to a needle and the needle pushed into the tube for a $\frac{1}{2}$ " and then out through the side of the tube. The tubing is now slid into place on your line and you now twist the line round the tube until you are about $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the bottom of the tubing. Now push the needle back into the tubing and out through the centre of the tube. Then pull the line tight (see diagram). For a leger weight I use a $\frac{3}{4}$ oz bomb which has a small split ring attached. Now attach a link swivel to the split ring and clip the swivel to the line.

One of my favourite methods of fishing Crossmans is to fish swim No 5. I place a small section bait or a bream head as close as possible to island No 1. A second bait is normally placed just behind the island and the third bait is placed on a small area of gravel near to the far bank. Runs vary from fast snatchy runs to nice slow and steady ones which are very easy to hit. The pond is virtually virgin water as far as serious eel fishing goes as I am about the only eel angler to fish there seriously. There are not many people fishing the pond at any time. I can get tickets to fish the pond and the cost is nothing at all, but you must be accompanied by myself. So if any member fancies a session or two when down this way, please do contact me and we shall have a good session or two.

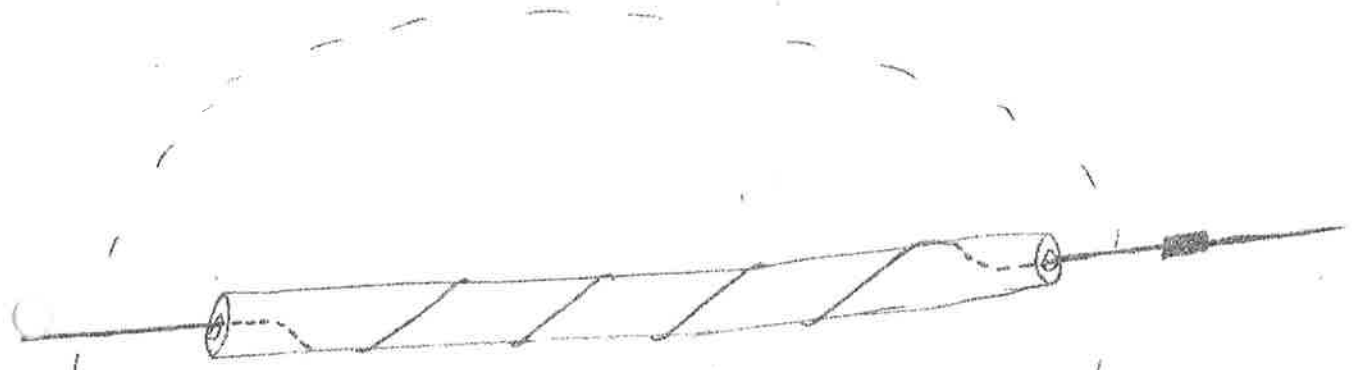
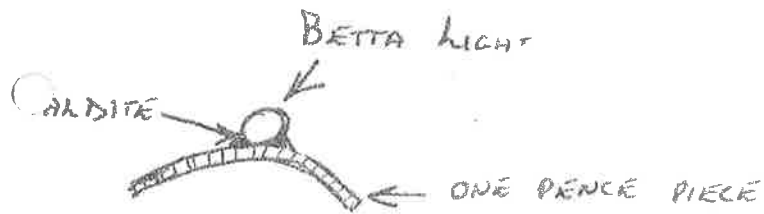
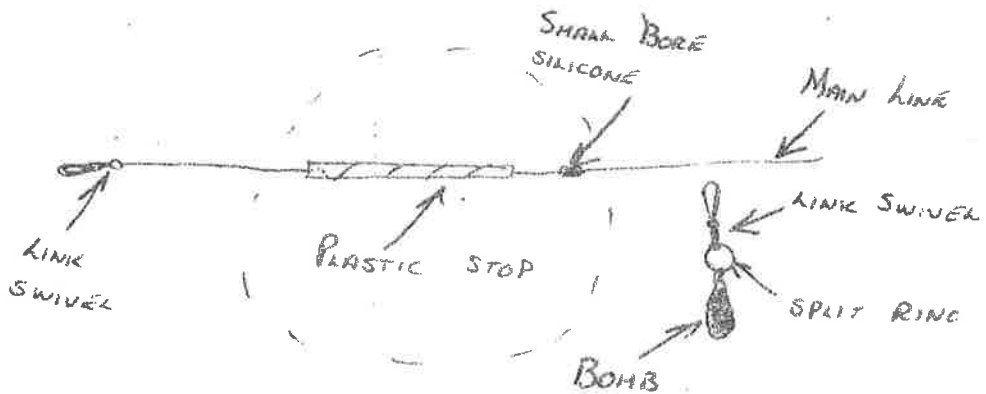
Thankyou Pete. Please see illustrations on next two pages. Ed.



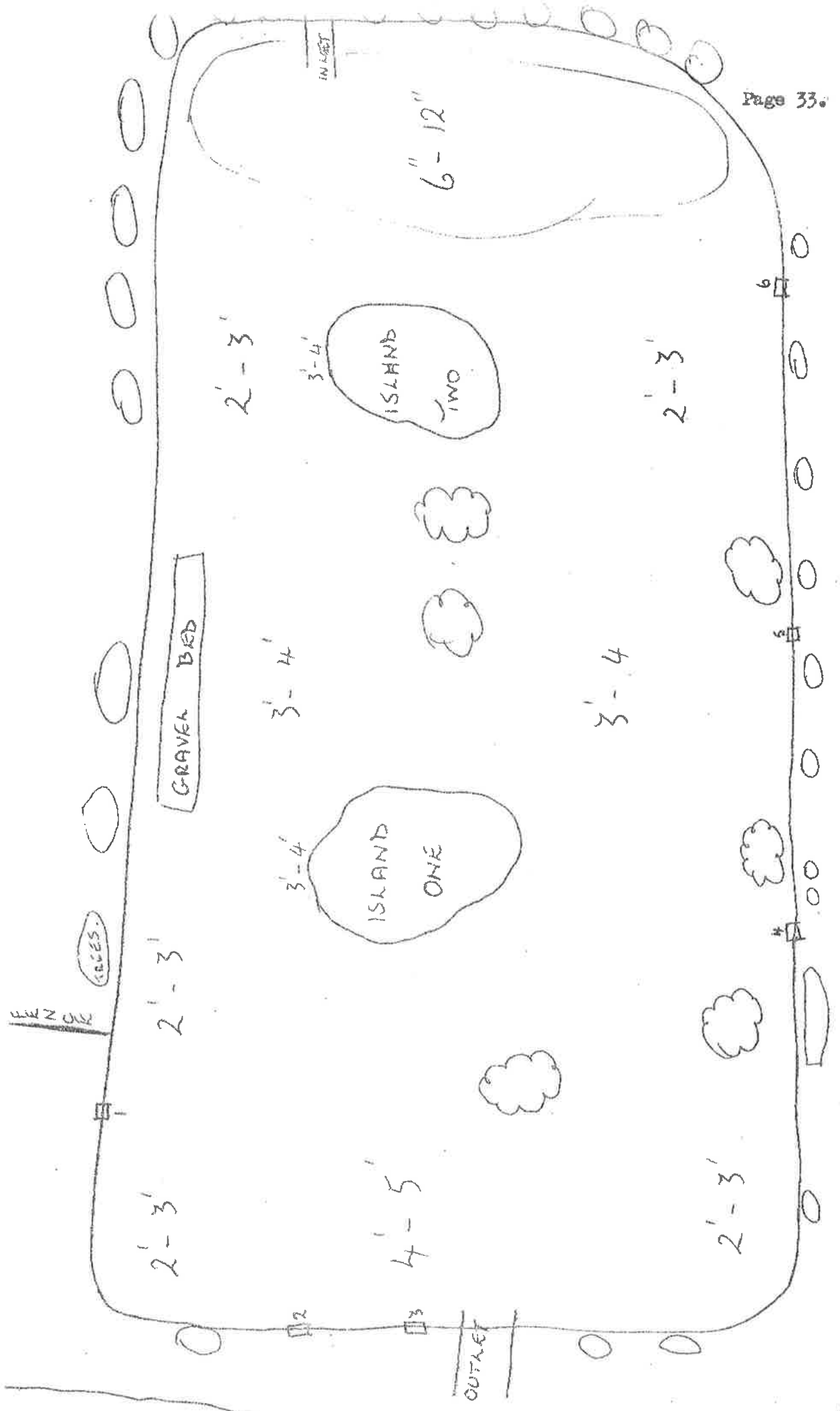
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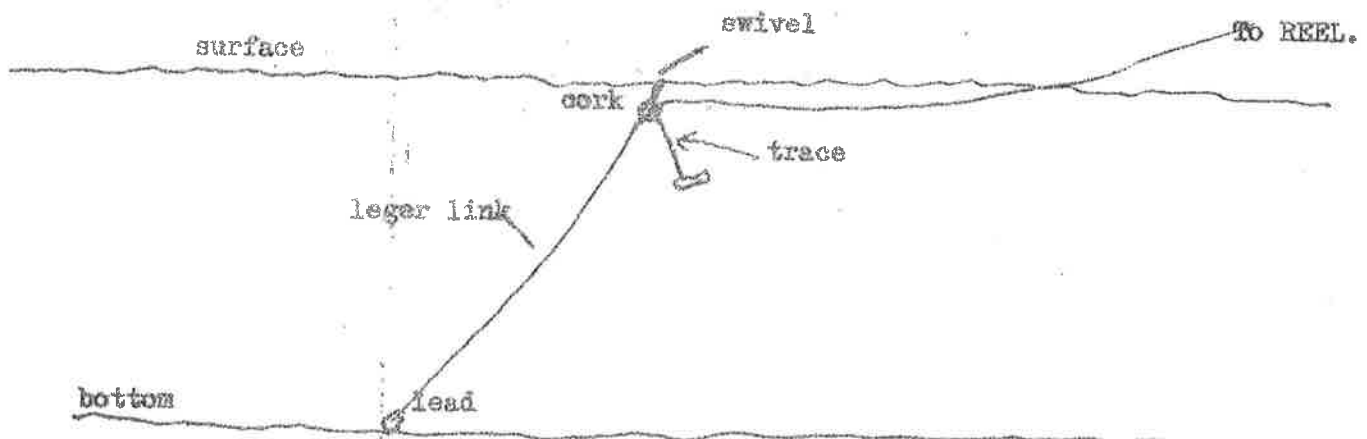
MY THOUGHTS ON SUSPENDED BAIT.Steve Hope.

I have been reading with interest Arthurs case for moonlight eel fishing. I think his idea could well be what we have all been waiting for - a new and very interesting way to catch Anguilla.

Some years ago I saw eels feeding on the surface. There were about a dozen eels and they all looked pretty big. Whether it was a moonlit night or not I cannot recall. I just heard the splashing and shone my torch to see what was the cause. Now this water is a very hard one and very few eels have been taken there (Barrow Haven brick pit) yet the largest eel weighed in at 7lbs 8oz. Normal eel fishing was almost impossible due to the luxurious weed which grew to within 2 feet of the surface. In the end I gave it up as a bad job and tried elsewhere.

This year I shall give it another try and I also intend using a suspended dead bait just on top of the weed. I remember catching tench with a bait just resting on the top of this weed, so why not eels?

Another instance for using Arthurs idea could be in waters which are crawling with bootlaces, as most of my waters are. I think that the suspended bait would give the larger eels more time in which to find the bait without it being torn to shreds. I have given some thought to the tackle to use in these circumstances and I have come up with my idea of a simple rig which allows the bait to be fished off the bottom but allows it to be anchored in one place. It has drawbacks in that it is only intended for rather shallow water (six feet and less). See below.

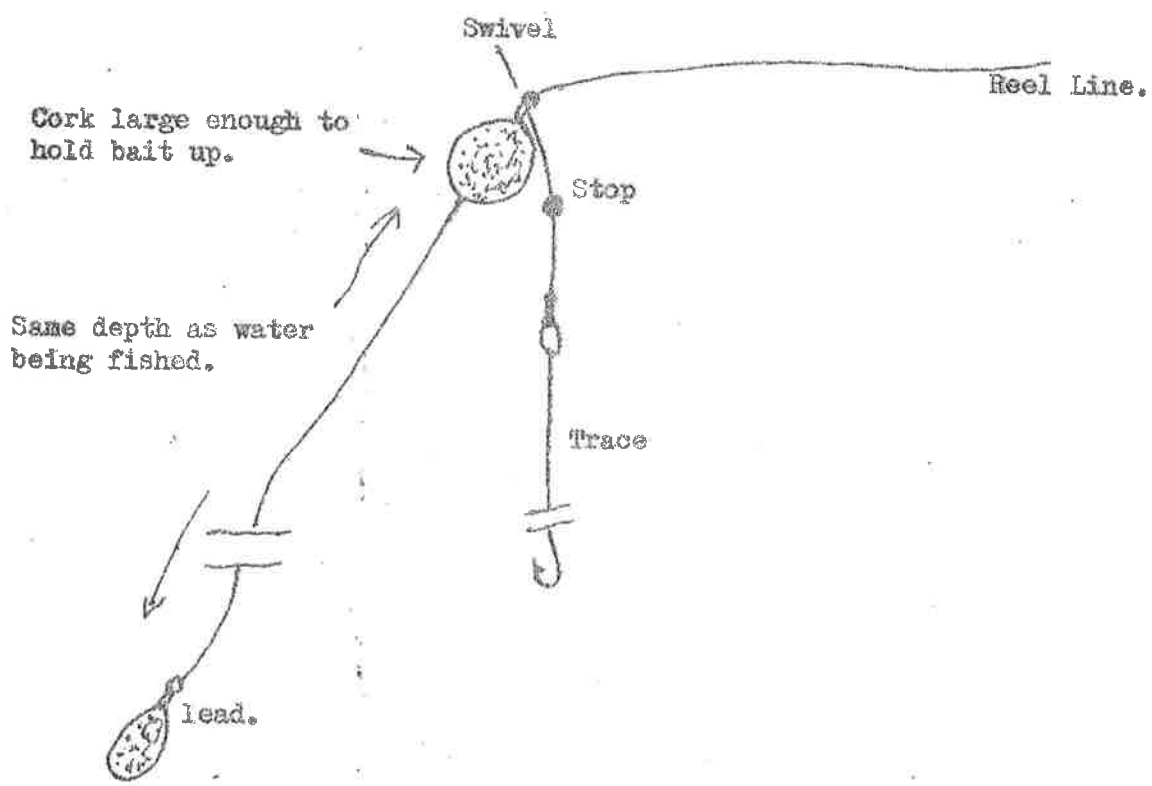


The tackle consists of a leger link made up to be slightly longer than the depth of water fished. A cork is fixed to the swivel - the reel line is then passed through the swivel and the trace attached. After casting keep the line tight and reel in a few inches and then put the line under an elastic band on the rod to keep the set-up taut. When an eel takes the bait it can run in the normal way and have no float to pull about after it.

Baits, I feel, should be on the small side to allow for quicker striking and worms might also be used in the same way. Anyway, I feel that we should all try to use a suspended bait this season just to give it a fair trial. If it does not work we will have lost nothing. If it does in fact work, we shall have gained a lot. Tight Lines to you all.

And tight lines to you Steve, and thank you. See further illustration next page.

Illustration used in Steves article previous page.



1970 - AND A NEW WATER.

By E.HANSEN.

For seemingly ages now, my fishing has suffered each year. This was due to my doing part-time studies as well as my normal work. I was not failing all the time, it was simply that there were one hell of a lot of exams. With these usually coming in June, my priorities were greatly confused. As you possibly know, Lincolnshire has always had still-water close season fishing(ask the A.W.A.) The period April until June is always a fairly productive one around here and to miss this is to miss the chance of a good start to the season. Last year saw the arrival of the last hurdle, my FINAL set of exams(or so I hoped). Bearing in mind the possible future that depended on it, I did no fishing at all between March and June. This represented a great personal sacrifice but, as it later turned out, it was well worth it.

In April I was fortunate enough to gain admission to a syndicate which has a water about eight miles from my home in Grimsby. I had extensively fished this water, Tetney Lock Pond, until 1969, when it went private. It used to be a ticket water and held a large head of quality tench and bream with the occasional large perch. It was also infested with eels, mainly boctlaces, and the water itself was very welear and full of weed. I had applied to the syndicate because I had heard that the water had been stocked with a large quantity of Carp, and carp around here are as rare as five pound eels. In fact the last thing I had in mind when I joined was eels.

As the name suggests, Tetney Lock Pond(TLP) is adjacent to a canal which runs into the sea about three miles away. In fact one end of this roughly three acre water is only 25 yds from this canal and I presume this to be the major point of access for all the eels.

With my very last exam finishing at mid-day Friday June 9th I decided to celebrate with a few drinks. Unfortunately, I overdid this a little(can't understand why) and by 3pm was not feeling at all well. In fact I would go as far as saying that my knowledge of the vertical and the horizontal was very mixed up. By the time I reached home my friend was there waiting for me to join him on a night trip to T.L.F.

The trip had been arranged some weeks earlier and I had completely forgotten it. My friend had also just joined the syndicate, him being a carp bod, and had just spent a totally fruitless week there after his quarry. Consequently I struggled to get my gear hurriedly together, and to blow the dust off it, and I bore this last piece of information very much in mind. Now that I think about it, I could not have been too intoxicated at the time, for my brain was making rational decisions. So as well as my carp gear, I also took along all my eel fishing tackle. This included my wide necked thermos flask filled with frozen baits. O.K., I know that they are not as good as fresh baits, but they do come in handy when baits are scarce. Although I have said that I didn't go fishing for some months, I do have a couple of young friends who are match boys, and they can be darned useful when they want to be.

When we arrived at the water I got a couple of shocks. First, there was nobody else fishing there, which is most unusual for this part of the world. Secondly, the character of the water, as I knew it, had completely changed. Gone were all the lush weed beds and crystal clear water - the place now resembled a mud hole in the ground. Granted there were reeds around the pool and one semi circle of weeds out near the middle. But my first impression was that it did not look too promising. With the place looking so uninviting and my friends blank week after the carp, I opted to fish for the eels. I must admit that I was fairly reluctant to do this at this particular water. With the proximity of the canal the place was alive with bootlaces and eels over one pound were exceedingly rare. At the time, the only baits I had with me were smallish rudd and roach and these figure highly on the menu of these small eels. If I was to run out of baits I could always use eel steaks, thought I.

I fished adjacent to one of the few reed beds and used three rodbaited with roach and rudd mounted on wire traces. All my deadbaits are now invariably treated with emulsified pilchard oil and if I do not mention it, should be taken as being treated so. In the past when using three or four rods I used to use only one treated bait so that a direct comparison could be made. I have since stopped doing this as its effectiveness and supremacy over other additives has been conclusively proved, at least in my waters. I have yet to try amino acid as bait additive either seperately or in conjunction with emulsified pilchard oil.

With the expected density of small eels I was rather surprised when I had not had a touch of any sort after a couple of hours. By eleven o'clock I was too tired to wonder what was happening, and also my head was beginning to throb. I think I should add that apart from such an extensive series of exams and the amount of work involved, I had slept for only eighteen hours in the past five days. Although I do not commend such a course of action to anyone unless they are really desperate, it does work. The one drawback is that you resemble a zombie for the next two weeks. At 0100 hours I was awoken by my oscillator which forced me to activate my leaden limbs. A jerky run and a subsequent strike from me met with the solid resistance of a good eel. I calmly pumped the eel to the bank, netted it at the first attempt, and estimated it to be of three pounds in weight. I was just getting my scales out when my friend came round. He had heard the splashing noises and was wondering what had happened. I told him of my eel and together we weighed it - it scaled 4:2 and measured 36" x 8". The water at the time was at 57F and the bait a five inch rudd. I was ecstatic - my first eel of the season, at a new water, AND it was a FOUR. Must have been a fluke, I thought.

Next morning after the fish had been photographed I chatted to the waters' owner. He lives in a house which backs onto the water at one end. I found him to be most helpful and it transpires that during the two preceding seasons he had extensively netted the water for the eels each Spring. He said that all the eels between roughly eight ounces and three and a half pounds had been removed and all the bigger eels had been returned. His reason was that the water contains no pike, or so he thought, and he wanted an efficient predator in the water. He even asked me politely, if I would return all the big eels I might catch so as to retain the balance.

Now knowing what the true eel population was supposedly like, I planned accordingly. If there were to be few eels but all quality ones I could safely use

small baits(which are easier to obtain). Obviously, I had to expect more blanks than normal(what is normal?) but if the better fish were there then I didn't mind the longer wait. My next session was in a swim adjacent to the first one I had fished and again I used 3 - 5" baits. At 0040 I had a nice run and netted an eel of 3:10. This eel measured 33" x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and took a 5" roach, the water temperature being 56F. Things were now looking very promising and this latest fish seemed to confirm that the water held few fish but that they were all specimens and any consequent effort would be very worthwhile.

For the third session at T.L.P. I opted to fish the West bank, the two previous sessions being on the North side of the water. With plenty of cloud and nobody else except my mate fishing, things looked favourable. At 0200 I landed an eel of 1:8 which had taken a 5" rudd. I had hardly got over the disappointment of taking this small eel when it happened! At 0250 I had a run on a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " roach and when I struck it was like hooking a demented kangaroo. The savage lunges and violent head shaking that I felt were absolutely incredible and had the inevitable end. I was hopelessly snagged round something before I knew what was happening and certainly before I could do anything. At the time I was using 11lb Sylcast and a powerful ten foot rod which surely again demonstrates that even the more robust tackle can be inadequate at times. It was now getting light quickly so I had to take the only course of action left open to me. There is an old leaking boat at this pond which we quickly launched only to find that there were no oars. Being resourceful (and desperate) we borrowed a couple of planks from a nearby fence and used these as paddles. By now a strong northerly wind had sprung up and we had to head into this. Actually, things were made very much easier when I simply wound down to the snag/eel towed both us and the boat there. Needless to say it was totally immovable despite applying leverage directly above and handlining. In the end I had to pull for a break. Before leaving I had a word with the owner about snags in the water. As far as he knew there was only one, and old submerged landing stage. It came as no surprise to learn its whereabouts - where I had been snagged!

The next couple of sessions produced nothing, not even abortive runs. At about this time my supply of small baits was dwindling so I tried a different line of attack. I stuck to smallish(less than 4") baits on one rod, a half bait on another and on the third rod I started to use large baits of some 6 - 8". I decided to stick it out with a small bait as the previous close encounter had been on one and also the first two eels had been on baits of that size. I reasoned that a half bait would not only preserve the supply but also assist in making a quick strike as well as being more attractive smell-wise. Perhaps I should mention that the capture of small baits from T.L.P. is usually a somewhat hopeless venture. Using this somewhat new approach I had three more fishless sessions. Admittedly they were blanks, but they were not without action of some sort. Fishing this time from the East bank I was getting abortive runs and only on the very large baits. All these runs were short(3 feet or so) and sharp. All the retrieved baits had large pieces taken from the dorsal area and was obviously not the work of small eels or pike. I have some excellent photographs of these mauled bait fish. It did not take me too long to work out the reason for this type of run. Prior to these runs I had been using a link lead in order to get out to the middle of the pool. All the previous sessions had been done on the East bank and meant a cast into the wind. The bottom of the pond has a coating of some sort of blanket weed which tends to break up fairly easily especially when windy. This invariably catches the line and travels down it until it caught the end of the swivel. Despite the fact that the swivel link was supported by a small cork, so as to be always above this bottom crap I am certain that the accumulation soon jammed the swivel completely. Such that when a run did occur the eel had to pull the lead about and aborted rather quickly.

The next session had perfect condition with cloud cover, temperatures in the sixties and no one about. This time I used my three types of bait but all were used with PVA and stones attached. Shortly after midnight I had a scorching run which resulted in a hard fighting eel being contacted. My pal who was again fishing for eels close by said that this was the first eel he had seen tail walk and then lash the water to foam while still ten yards out. It was netted first time and scaled 4:4. It measured 35" x 9" and had taken a treated 7" roach. As a matter of interest I showed this fish to the waters owner and without me telling him he put the weight at round 4 lbs. He also said that he had returned bigger fish.



Our Henry with the eel of 4:4 taken on a 7½" roach. The eel measured 35" x 9".

This totally confirmed my faith in the potential of this water. The following weekend I decided to fish the 'jetty' swim again. Just after midnight I lost what I believe was a small eel on a 5" rudd. This was due to my snap link doing its job exactly - it snapped! But at 0130 I had a nice run on a treated 7" roach and landed a superb eel of 4:10. This eel was 37½" in length and had a girth of 9", but put up a poor fight.

After this performance I really thought that I had cracked it and now that the longer nights were coming I really fancied myself to catch my first five pound eel. My best is at present 4: 13. Unfortunately, things did not work out to plan. Bad weather plus a lack of big baits resulted in my last five sessions being totally blank. Not even an abortive run or a twitch to show for my efforts. Consequently, my season finished on something of a low note. Now I can sit back and reflect on my last eel season, was it a success and is the water worth pursuing? I think that the answer is yes on both counts for various reasons. Some anglers may consider that the capture of only five eels in one season is not very good - especially for an N.A.C. member. But when you realise that three of the five were four pound fish and one of the others was not far off, then I think it is all justified. I put a lot of mental and physical effort into the capture of those fish - probably as much if not more than if I had taken a lot of fish. If I have set my sights on a small number of large fish and then actually catch them I can hardly complain can I? Another fact has emerged - about all of the fish I took there came from one area of the water. While I know that I have yet to fish the southern end of the water, I do believe that this area I have found does hold something which is attractive to eels. In the past this area used to contain not only a lot of lush weedbeds and an area of potamogeton surface weed but also several reed beds. It is my belief that the remains of this past growth provide both shelter for the eels and feeding for the smaller fish. So any eels in this area have it made, and all (save one) head for this area when hooked.

Now that I know the tactics to use and best bait size as well as possibly the best area to fish, I think that, given some decent weather, I could well hit the jackpot. Only 1979 will tell! As I told you previously, I was unfortunate in missing the April - June period which is usually productive. This year I will be able to devote a whole season to the place. My carp fishing colleague witnessed the carp spawning in the ponds largest weedbed and shortly afterwards a pal of his fished the area with luncheon meat. He caught two eels and lost a third. The two eels weighed 4:0 and 2:12 and were both witnessed and returned. My only worry is that the water contains only a few large eels. And that they may in fact have all been caught. But on reflection I do not think this is so (I am not that efficient or lucky). Another strange fact has been that the better eels preferred the very large baits to the small ones. The eels in this water have the typical large heads of the meat eating eels (hence the need for traces) but have only small mouths. In theory they should prefer to nobble the smaller food fish yet in practise they go for the larger food items. It could well be that their main diet is natural foodstuffs (weed, shrimps, molluscs etc) and that they supplement their diet with the occasional large fish. In short, they are greedy, but not overly so. This theory could explain the low catch rate not only of the eels but of the waters carp, and bream, of which there are many. So that the natural head of food is not all that great. The place has loads of micro bootlaces, but even these are rarely caught. Yes, I have tried eel steaks as bait. This year I intend to prebait with Kit E Kat, chopped worms and minced up fish. This may serve to attract the few large eels into one area. I have noticed that on damp mornings the bankside is infested with large black slugs. Consequently, it could be very interesting to try these as bait close in to the bank side weed growth.

In conclusion, I think that I can say that while T.L.P. may not be very hard fishing, it is certainly not easy and does present some interesting problems. Between us my friend and I had over sixty sessions there and while I had five eels he managed only four carp. These were 3:12, 9:0, 16:4 and 18:1. So he couldn't complain. Neither could Sid Mottram. He came as a guest and fished for carp, which he does once in a blue moon. We put him in the worst swim, gave him the worst bait and he had a carp of 15:4 before we had tackled up!

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FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY

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The University of Liverpool

March 6th, 1979

Mr. B. Crawford,
129 Banland,
Bretton,
Peterborough PE3 8EE.

Dear Mr. Crawford,

Thank you for your letter of 27th November. I am afraid that Dr. Jones is in bad health and so he has been unable to reply to your letter and has instead passed it on to me for consideration.

At the present time this Unit is not involved with any research on the eel and the last person to work on the eel was Mr. R. S. Pritchett several years ago.

I myself am not particularly conversant with the recent literature on the eel. I am sure that you already have a copy of Dr. Jones's book The European Freshwater Eel. A useful addition to this, and indeed a book which gives a fuller treatment of some aspects, is the book by F. W. Tesche The Eel which has now been translated by P. H. Greenwood and is published by Chapman & Hall, cost approximately £18.

I am sorry that I cannot be of more use to you than this. If you do require more information, might I suggest you contact Mr. R. S. Pritchett at North West Water Authority, Dawson House, Penketh, Warrington.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. K. O'Hara