

"Anguilla"

**THE BULLETIN OF
THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB,
"BUMPER CHRISTMAS EDITION" 1999.**



"Looking Ahead to the Year 2000"



VOLUME 37. ISSUE 1.



'ANGUILLA'

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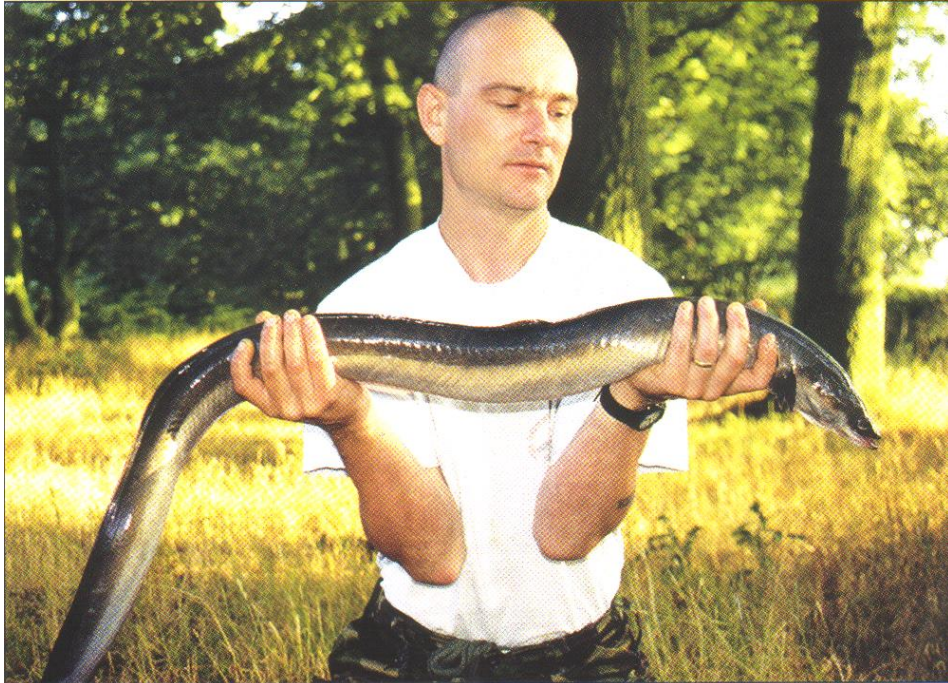
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I most appologise for the poor quality of the photographs in this issue of
"Anguilla".

Firstly, because of the limited time we had to produce it
And secondly, to try and keep to a reasonable budget.
Steve, Stuart and Jimmy.

By
Stu ac-e-man' Dean.

You could call it the dawning of a new era. After all we will soon be entering a new Millennium. You should have all noticed that **ANGUILLA**, for this issue at least, is in magazine form. This step forward is one that Steve and I had always wanted to take and hopefully all future issues of **ANGUILLA** will be in the same format. This will be dependant on how much this issue has cost the club and whether or not the club can afford for us to produce 3 issues per year in the same format. The reason we have been able to produce **ANGUILLA** as a magazine is down to Jimmy Jolley having the use of an A3 printer and him joining the production team. Both Steve and I are happy to welcome Jimmy onto the team, to share the workload with.



Before we look forward it might be a good idea to have a brief look back over the years. It was 38 years ago that the NAC was formed and we are lucky enough to still have some of the founder members (Arthur Sutton and Dr Terry Coulson) still within our ranks. These were the first pioneers in eel fishing and went a long way in establishing some of the things we now accept as fact about our quarry. There is an article by Peter Stone in this issue, which was written in 1969. Although Peter has never been a member of our club, we have included this piece to give you some idea of how eels were treated not only by anglers but also by people who actually fished for eels. Indeed it wasn't too long ago that the NAC had a rule that members should kill all the eels that they caught so that their Otholiths (a bone in the eels ear) could be read. I think we have John Sidley to thank for his "Put eels back alive " campaign for the sea of change in this clubs attitude. This is just one of the things to thank John Sidley for. He was the angler that proved beyond doubt, that with time and dedication, fishing for and catching specimen eels was a viable and worthwhile pursuit. His book, to many of our member's, is still "The Bible". There are also other members in the club who deserve credit for keeping it going when it was probably easier to give up. These are Brian Crawford (President), Kevin Huish (Chairman), Steve Richardson (Secretary) and Nick Rose (Products officer). All have held various positions on the committee over the years and have given many hours of work to the club, for the reward of seeing the club survive.

As we look forward to the future, we are in the fortunate position that there seems to be a small but dedicated group of eel anglers in this country and most seem to be members of the NAC. OK we lose a few members every year, but it seems that there are enough people interested in eels and willing to join the NAC that we maintain a steady membership. We have consistently had a membership of around 80 for the last 4 or 5 years. I see no reason why in the next few years our membership will not be a healthy one. I suppose what I am saying is, that we are here and we're here to stay.

I wonder if there will be, in the near future, another "John Sidley" in our club?

By this I mean someone who will make a breakthrough with the methods and tactics eel anglers use. I am sure that we all have the potential to do it, but it all depends on how dedicated to the pursuit of Anguilla Anguilla we are prepared to be. Some of us don't have the time, some of us don't have the inclination, but I am sure that someone in the NAC is more than capable of making the breakthroughs that we all long for.

The same can be said for committee positions. We all have the potential to come onto to the committee and move the club forward into the next Millennium, but it's only certain people who seem to have the time and dedication to do it. It is these people who have built up a respect for our club within the specialist-angling world that make it the envy of many other specialist groups. Our good reputation carries before us and long may it stay the same. Anyone who would like to come onto the committee would be made more than welcome and it would be your chance to shape the future of the NAC.

In short, just what does the future hold for the NAC and it's members? You decide!!!!

EARTHWORM PRODUCTION.
(Last week of November 1999)
HOW TO TURN BRANDLINGS INTO DENDROBAENA.

By
Barry McConnell. (Only the lonely)

Earthworm production can seem to be very complex when practised on a large commercial worm farm. My knowledge comes from a few years I once spent developing systems for breeding, picking, packing and selling small brandling type redworms for the NorthWest fishing tackle trade. In order to cover the subject thoroughly, a massive book would have to be compiled, but, due to the fact that earthworm farming is a scarcely practised business in this country, (because the maggot rules in UK), there isn't enough demand for such a book. Therefore, I shall abbreviate this piece of work from a book to a single article in which I will reveal a tried and tested feed formula. This can be used to produce a massive head of very small redworms, or it can be used to fatten on larger worms, which will gorge on the feed until they are massive. These massive worms are often sold as dendrobaena, loblings, hybrids and an array of other fancy names which are so often mis-used for the purpose of marketing the worms. These larger worms are of interest to eel anglers so here I will reveal how to turn brandlings into dendrobaena by controlling certain variables of a simple heap in the garden and feeding with home made artificial manure.

When I established a worm farm, I gathered different looking types of redworms from different sources in an attempt at hybridisation. That was before I learnt that you can't hybridise worms and that anyone producing a true hybrid would attract much publicity and acclaim from the world of science. There have been many claims of producing a worm hybrid but what has actually happened, in all cases, is exactly what happened with my own worm stocks. I put several different types of redworms into the breeding beds, yet, when I harvested the worms, their appearance had altered from that of the original breeding stock. Even so, these were not hybrids. I went on to discover that worms will change their appearance - size, shape, colour - to adapt to the given feed, bedding and moisture levels. Furthermore, one type of redworm will model itself on another type so that they look alike. (This point reminds me of the similarities between The Anguilla Guerrilla and his quarry).

I learnt that it is possible to alter the appearance of some brandlings and, miraculously, turn them into dendrobaena. The dendrobaena does exist, it is not a contrived name of some supposed hybrid worm. However, one type of redworm looks very much like another. Common brandlings (*Eisenia foetida*) from a manure heap can be fattened on into exactly the same dendrobaena that are being imported, as supposedly another species. To prove the point, I took a tub of small red worms from the local tackle shop - few of these worms had collars, any stripes or banding was either indistinct or none existent and their bodies were a uniform healthy pinky red colour - like all healthy immature brandlings should be. I fattened them in isolation then returned to the shop where they were, then, compared to a tub of the larger 'dendrobaena' that were for sale. All present had to agree that I'd proven the point. There is absolutely no visible difference between UK fattened brandlings and the Belgium fattened dendrobaena. They all had breeding collars, known as the clitellum, which all redworms develop between 60 and 90 days. They had all gorged on the feed resulting in swelling which had stretched their skins to reveal definite red and buff tiger striped bands and a different body shape, which is exactly what happens to all mature redworms when they gorge on rich food.

A lot of redworms are imported along with bloodworms from Belgium and Holland by dealers who supply to the match fishing fraternity, bait retailers and the aquarium trade. These imported redworms have been fattened on human sewage, which packs weight onto worms because it contains a lot of cellulose converted to a form which is easily assimilated by the worms. The sewage has been processed into dehydrated sludge cakes which are supposedly safe, clean and environmentally friendly. However, this may not go down too well in this country especially in your own back garden, neighbour friendly system. It was with both richness of feed and health/hygiene in mind that I developed a feed using synthetic manure which is produced by simulating the conditions as found in a cows stomach. This manure is richer than

anything that comes out of the back-end of a cow because a cow would never be able to eat or digest large quantities of pure, high protein, chicken layers mash.

Before I go any further I must stress that worm production is not an exact science and what works for one particular system may not work in another system so that things often have to be done from a gut feeling. It is not difficult to rear some worms in any back garden with enough space for a compost heap in one corner (even the Anguilla Guerrilla can grow worms on). If you have a go you should soon establish your own successful system. I will provide a few tips to help you on the way by briefly telling you what has worked for me. I say briefly, because such a lengthy subject would be better covered by a whole book yet I will cover it in one article, then I can spend all my spare time hunting big Zander and eels rather than writing a book. Firstly, I will give you the feed recipe; then, discuss a system specially adapted to fattening worms on the feed. Finally I will take a look at a basic compost heap for rearing worms from your own kitchen waste. After that, the rest is up to you, its not hard, so why not give it a go?

Put 8 gallons of layers mash into a dustbin. Mix water with it until it becomes a soupy consistency (in cold weather it is best to mix warm water with the layers mash). Add 1 pint of 5% hydrochloric acid and eight teaspoons of dried brewers yeast granules (it is best to mix the yeast in a small amount of warm water). Stir the mix then allow it to stand in a warm place - it is warm enough outdoors in summer. It will soon swell and harden on top. The warmer it is the quicker the feed will be prepared. It must be stirred at regular intervals - 2 or 3 times a day - to break the crust and release the trapped gases (otherwise the crust will form a plug on top and the whole lot will rise and spill over). The mix should be ready after three days when streaks of clear water should start to appear in it. If it is too thick, the water will not be apparent. Warm water can be added at any stage if the mixture seems to require thinning. Once the mix is considered to be ready it must be treated with calcium carbonate (crushed limestone). This can be applied liberally, since the worms appear to be quite happy living amongst it. 20 cups full or more should be thoroughly stirred into the mix. This will prevent refermentation for a while.

It doesn't matter if the mix starts bubbling up again, once it is put into the bed, heap or wherever the worms are. Providing there is plenty of calcium carbonate mixed in, the worms will still gather to feed around the edges of the mix where the liquid has seeped into the bedding. Eventually, the worms will eat their way through the mixture leaving only a cake of limestone and grain husks, which will mix in nicely with the numerous worm casts that have been produced by the feeding worms. This residue can be used to start a new heap or added to another one nearby.

The worms must be placed on to the mix under conditions that will encourage fattening rather than reproduction - low stocking densities, heavy feeding, heavy shade and damp or soggy bedding. Bedding material can be almost anything organic that has been well rotted down. One of the best mixes for the job consists of aged farm yard manure mixed with well dampened peat moss, rabbit hutch waste is an ideal material on its own, also, crushed leaves, rotted down cardboard, well rotted sawdust or tree bark and many other materials can be added to this basic mix. Certain bedding materials such as horse manure, and especially comfrey leaves, may promote breeding. This will cause the worms to spend all their time and energy reproducing, which will only increase the numbers of worms, rather than fattening, which will increase size of the individual worm.

For fattening purposes I have found old bedding material to be the most suitable, especially when it has been used a few times until its organic food value has been exhausted, leaving pure worm castings. However, it is necessary that the castings are pure and free of worm cocoons, which, if present, will hatch in great numbers to provide undesired competition for the space and food needed for worms to grow large. I will therefore hatch and remove the many cocoons and tiny worms to be found in the bedding. The cocoons can lie dormant for many months in dry conditions then hatch when conditions are more favourable and the drought is over. I like to encourage these cocoons to hatch by lying out the bedding, watering it, then adding a slurry like mix of the fattening food in a long narrow strip on top of the bedding where it is allowed to sit for a couple of weeks. All the small worms and tiny new hatchlings will be attracted to this strip of feed so that they can be removed from beneath every few days where they will gather in concentrated batches.

Worm castings act as an ideal conditioned bedding medium for fattening the worms in. They provide and maintain adequate levels of moisture, temperature, acidity, shade and aeration. They are light and loose enough for the worms to move through without any need to ingest the material which has no worm feed value left in it. The worms can be forced to feed on the fattening mix, as they can't find any other food in the bedding mix or any suitable conditions for extensive breeding. A bucket full of rich feed mix should be placed in the middle of a pyramid shaped pile of these castings on the ground in a shaded corner of the garden. Mature worms should be added. They will have little interest in breeding and will tend to gorge on the food to fatten rapidly. The pile should be kept moist and in the pyramid shape which allows maximum aeration. It can be given an extra boost by covering it with a piece of black plastic sheeting to absorb heat from the sun, thus gaining extra warmth. The feed is applied in one big glob and kept that way rather than

mixing it extensively with the bedding. In this way the worms can move on to the feed, yet still find space away from the feed if they want to. This open plan pyramid heap allows the worms to escape if conditions become unfavourable. It is for this reason that I like to make several small heaps close to one another. If one heap becomes unsuitable the worms will crawl to a safe area nearby - another heap - and I will not lose the worms.

I have always made my feed by the dustbin full. This may be too much for many back garden systems which may prefer to make a smaller mix using 2 gallons layers mash and a 5 gallon bucket. I have experimented with this feed by adding a variety of food materials such as molasses, alfalfa, dairy cow nuts, maize husks, crushed oats, chopped vegetables, chopped hay and a few more. I found the alfalfa, oats, cow corn and molasses hard to handle as it broke down too fast. The vegetables, alone, would have been more suitable as bedding than as fattening feed, so I spiced them up with some oats and a small amount of molasses. At the end of the day, I found the safest and cheapest material is chicken layers mash which is available in 25kg sacks from any agricultural food suppliers.

I have tried a few non-food additives over the years. Terramycin chicken antibiotics were used to kill the bacteria and stop the working of the material so that the feed would be suspended in the stage of decomposition most suited to feeding worms. These proved too costly for regular use. I always used to add a couple of teaspoons of pepsin powder (as this digestive enzyme was considered a necessary part of the recipe). However, one time I was unable to get any, so I went ahead without any, the worms grew massive anyway and I've never used any since.

In order to produce worm castings you merely have to breed lots of worms which will devour every bit of food and bedding you throw at them. All organic matter will eventually, during some stage of its decomposition, be in a form that worms can eat. There are many leaflets around selling fancy overpriced systems for producing worm castings. These are primarily aimed at gardeners, who may want to obtain worm compost because it is one of the best potting composts going. The fact is that you can produce castings quite easily in an ordinary plastic dustbin with drainage holes in the bottom or in an open compost heap with no bin at all. Start with a few worms and a bit of compost in the bottom then just keep on adding household rubbish and powdered limestone. The worms will eat almost any organic kitchen, household or garden waste such as tea bags, egg shells, vegetable waste, bread, dairy products, salad, fruit, coffee grindings, grass cuttings, garden weeds and so on. They don't seem to like onions and citrus fruits. It is best not to add any meat products because of offensive odours, mice, rats and maggots.

Not everyone will be able to acquire pure cocoon-free castings to use in a special fattening system. Instead it is possible to rear plenty enough brandling type worms to last an eeling season from a large open compost heap made up of kitchen, garden and pet waste. The worms will rarely attain the obesity and massive size of the type of worms often referred to as the dendrobaena form but it is possible to grow plenty of medium or large brandlings. Sometimes, by careful use of fresh bedding and feed, it is possible to obtain massive dendrobaena type worms directly from your compost heap but it can be difficult to maintain control over numbers and size of worm. If it is really massive worms that you want then it is better to take some castings from the heap and set up a separate controlled fattening system to grow on a few super worms.

The aim of a compost heap system is to provide all the variables, at assorted levels, so that somewhere within the heap, the worms will be able to find the optimum conditions they require. The large heap will be wetter at the bottom and drier at the top, as water drains to the bottom. The worms can move up or down the heap according to the conditions. The heap has to be watered during periods of drought, otherwise mother nature does the job fine. Temperature and acidity (pH) will vary according to localisation of feed or bedding mixes which will give off heat and form acids as they decompose. An enclosed system on a commercial worm farm can become a death trap if total souring occurs. This can happen through overfeeding or from protein poisoning. The large, open heap system has the advantage that the worms can move out if the bed sours floods or overheats.

The compost heap is unlikely to experience total souring if the feed is added to different areas of the heap in rotation and turned frequently in order to fluff it up and aerate, thus releasing gases that get trapped on the bottom. All your organic kitchen and garden waste can go on the heap to keep its worms working and growing. This waste alone will generate plenty of worm baits from the system. It may prove beneficial to experiment by top feeding with a scattering of dry layers mash mixed 50:50 with crushed limestone (this should be done after the bedding has had a good dampening). It may be worth putting a big blob of the fermented fattening mix in one area to see what happens. The idea is to provide a patch of food in the right stage of decomposition for the worms to eat. This is done by hedging your bets and adding each batch of food to a different area working in rotation around the bed so that different patches of food will be in different states of decomposition in different parts of the heap. The acidity and moisture in one area may be suitable for feeding while another area will be suitable to retreat to for resting. Each different size and type of worm will find its required habitat within the heap. For example, small worms will mass together beneath

the feed while big worms tend to lie up to rest around the edges of the heap where it is well oxygenated and well away from any souring caused by old feed.

The main factor governing the growth rate and size of worms in such a compost heap system is the competition for food and space, which is in turn, governed by the reproduction rate. The older more mature worms will reach the maximum size possible in the given circumstances, then as the numbers of worms builds up in the beds, they will shun the company of the masses of smaller worms and retire to the base of the compost heap. Adding new unpopulated bedding material encourages movement and growth. However there is only one inevitable outcome - a population explosion. Even regular harvesting can't keep up with this because you end up with millions of tiny worms that are too small to pick out by hand. The fact is that every time you move worms into fresh unpopulated bedding they will increase their size, so, with plenty of spare bedding material and a bit of careful juggling, it becomes possible to grow some very big worms.

It's a pity there aren't any 'grow the heaviest worm competitions'. I would definitely be up for that one. My favourites for fattening are the mature brandlings such as can be found around the surrounding edges of most compost heaps. They are already big enough to use for eel angling but I like to use really big worms to form a massive big Medusa's head on the hook. The fattened on worms I use will make quite a thud if you drop one on the floor - that is how gorged they are - massive.

Videos for sale (only eight copies left)

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Amateur camcorder productions.

**** Warning**** The video contains some strong bankside language.

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SEASON ON THE LEEDS AND LIVERPOOL.

By

Damien Wood.

I've been fishing the Leeds/Liverpool canal for about five years now and very fortunate to live within walking distance from it, so I could put some serious hours in to try and unlock it's potential. I had heard all the usual "big eel rumours" of 5's and 6lber's caught in matches.

Three seasons had come and past and I didn't even have a run to show for it, (I mention this so that you can make some comparison between previous seasons, and this season) I was starting to get tired of watching silent rods night after night, then one night something unusual happened I had my first run on the J.S. rig using a roach-head. Even though it was a short burst and very abrupt I knew that I had finally located one of these elusive eels, it took a while for it to sink in that I had a take. I re-baited my rod and casting to the same spot again, missing a further two runs.

So I decided to call it a night and packed up to try it again the next night. When I got back to the canal, low and behold, the place I had the runs from was taken up by a narrow boat. Cursing as I walked past the boat, I decided to go about fifty yards further on and set the gear up. Some time had past and looking at my watch 12:30 am was about to chime, then out the blue I had a fast take on a roach-head. This time connection was met with reasonable resistance.

The eel started to head down the canal with that distinctive banging on the tip. Soon I was level with the eel giving full compression to get it's head to break the surface for the first time and what a sight that was, after missing it a few times with the net I finally got it in and carried my trophy back to my swim. Putting her on the scales she went exactly 4lb's ,my first four and my first and only eel of the season. I knew that even though I had achieved my goal after three years of blanking, deep down I had a feeling that I was just skimming the surface.

Winter had come once more and plans were being made for a new approach to the up and coming season ahead. At this time Jimmy Jolley had just joined the N.A.C, after years of persuasion to fish for the "elusive eel". So for the first time I had a permanent partner to share ideas and theories on these particular canal eels.

At first Jimmy went fishing with his brother Tony (B.T) on a different part of the L&L and caught a few very good eels using the Dyson rig with dead-baits, while I fished locally due to the fact that I don't have any transport. The area I decided to fish was a mooring basin, mainly because it was the end of April with the boating season just starting and probably the only chance I could get to fish it.

Usually on canals, there are three types of basins. First of all is the above mentioned. A mooring basin is usually a basin with a towpath or paths on both sides (if there is a bridge), with the same shape (like a mirror image) this has an entrance in and out joining straight on to the canal. The second is a lock basin, which is basically the same as a mooring basin except there are operational lock gates at one end of the entrance, but can vary to two sets of gates. With the last being a turning basin, this only has a towpath on one side with the other side wider than the normal canal (shaped like a letter D).

All are either regularly fished by tourists or locals, and hold large shoals of bait size prey fish. On some canals you will have what we call a "recess". This means one side of this stretch is about two yards wider than the other. They are roughly about fifty to a hundred yards long. These "recesses" are mainly on narrow stretches, so the boats can pull into them when there isn't enough room for the boat traffic to travel simultaneously, these are also likely areas to hold bait fish and visiting eels.

On the 6/5/99 I chose the mooring basin to fish that particular night, at some stage of its life it was also a "lock basin", but due to mining subsidence these lock gates were removed. With the basin being about a hundred and fifty yards long (give or take a yard or so).

Placing one rod set-up on a Dyson rig baited with about six large Lobworms on a size two E.S.P Raptor hook roughly about halfway across the canal. The second rod was placed in the boat channel, in the opposite direction to the first rod, fished on a small roach-head. The weather was changing for the worse, with dark clouds forming in the skies with a gradient wind getting progressively stronger. At about 9:30 p.m. the rain came with a vengeance and I must have drifted off for a while. Only to be woken by a good screamer on the first rod at 11:30 p.m. Picking up the rod, I struck into a good fish and soon it was under the rod-tip with an awaiting net, she went in first attempt .

At first she didn't look that big considering the tussle she gave me, but on second glance she had an impressive girth for her somewhat lack of length. Putting her on the scales at best I thought " two and a half " and was very surprised to see her go 3lb 11 oz's and a great start to my season. And one fish away from my goal that season (two eels from that canal).

I went back to the same spot the next day to see if anything else was passing through that night and managed another eel of 1lb 8 oz's. Not exactly what I was looking for, but still appreciated.

On the 10/5/99 Jimmy joined me for a stint on a different stretch of the same canal. This night was absolutely terrible with gale force winds and rain that pierced the soul. We got to our pegs at about 8:30 with the first rod only going out at about 10:00 p.m. in between a break in the clouds and then back to hanging onto our broolly's until one of us got a run.

The stretch we decided to fish is between two bridges roughly about three hundred yards apart, with a gradual bend. On one side is a natural banking with a long length of brambles, some bull rushes, with over hanging trees separating the rushes. As you travel further on, it changes to more trees while the banking converts from old wooden slats to corrugated metal and back to wooden slats again. A shelf of 3ft runs along its length, dropping into the boat-channel of about 4ft, this constantly changes position closer to the near banking and visa-versa (due to the barges manoeuvring through the bridges).

The near margins are probably between 6" to a foot deep with a slope a metre out from the side into the channel, this has corrugated metal all along the length. With old tufts of sedges protruding from the gaps between the banking. Here there is ideal cover for bait fish and it is also a frequented spot by pleasure anglers, receiving plenty of free offerings mainly to the far banking in front of the bull rushes, and the gaps between the over hanging trees. Over the years narrow boats have washed away the far bank to create an under-cut banking, giving the fish over-head cover from the elements and predators (creating a possible transitional route) or a temporary lair for an eel during day-light hours before moving on.

Placing one rod to the far bank, tight up at first in a tiny recess about a foot square, where the brambles met the protruding bull rushes on-top of the shelf, gradually drawing the Dyson rig back so the lob-worms were just hanging over the drop-off into the main boat channel. My second rod was cast to my own marginal drop-off on the same set-up, baited with a perch-head positioned next to some over-hanging vegetation, that had forced its way through a crack in the bank.

While Jimmy placed one rod on Lobworms to the far bank, near a sunken log and repeated the same process. His second rod was cast to some flotsam and jetsam (floating debris that collects near an obstacle: e.g. branches, weed etc.) on a roach-head to the near margins at the mouth of the bridge. The rods were out and all we could do know was to sit back and wait, watching the bats dart in between the rods (with my collars turned up just in case.) The rain started to ease off a little, but the wind was still billowing up the canal following the charge of white horses in its wake. Just as quick as it started, it suddenly stopped with an eerie silence.

Jimmy got the first take at 11:30 p.m. on the margin rod, which he bumped and couldn't stop shaking for about ten minutes afterwards. Re-baiting with half a Gudgeon, he put the rig back into the same spot, only to miss another screamer between 11:45 p.m. and 12:00 p.m.

Then I had a take to the far rod at 1 p.m., which was very quick and came to an abrupt stop. I went over to the rod, picked it up and pulled back on the line to feel if anything was still there, as I did so I could feel the eel “ moving about on the bottom. I started to gain the slack line frantically until the rod hooped over, with the fish already in front of me, it must have hit the bait and dropped straight into the channel, heading straight towards me.

The eel was giving my forearm some real stick now, sending up black clouds of silt as she span and twisted in herself trying to through the hook. I was stood behind Jimmy and couldn't see very much, just the odd glimpse as she came to the surface to show her annoyance at the pair of us, lashing sprays of water in Jimmy's direction with her thrashing tail. Only then did we notice how small her head was, Jimmy must have thought at that time what all the panicking was about, due to her head looking the same size as a two pound eel. Her head dipped back into the dark depths, showing an enormous width across her shoulders. Then all I could hear was Jimmy screaming “*wow, wow take your time with this one its bigger than we think*” at me. She was now tiring on the surface, with Jimmy welcoming her into the net, his eyes bulging from their sockets.

We both just sat there composing ourselves, looking at a large eel in the folds of the mesh. She went 4lb 6oz on the scales and set a new personal best at that time. With a length of 38.75 inches and a girth of 8.25 inches she was a very impressive eel to look at and yet abnormal, the head looked out of proportion compared to her massive frame. She was solid muscle and angry! The cameras were going off like a catwalk show. Then we returned her back to the darkness from whence she came, while I was doing this my other rod hurtled off, only for me to miss it, but I didn't care.

On the 19/5/99 I went to a straight length of the canal, fishing both rods in the centre of the boat channel, one rod on worms, the other on a roach-head, both over a large bed of over-dosed “Scopex maggots”. At 12:30p.m. I had a pullout from the clip, presuming a bat had hit the line, I clipped it back not thinking anything about it, to my surprise the line whizzed through my fingers burning them in the process. I struck into a resilient advisory, soon dragging her over the net-cord and another good eel of 4lb 3ozs, lay in front of me regurgitating maggots all over the place, what a mess. The eel must have been feeding on the “Scopex maggots”, then took the worms, resuming position to carry out her feeding on the flavoured maggots, not knowing she was hooked. I couldn't believe the season I was having!

On the 28/5/99 Jimmy and I decided to go on a small local pond. The weather was totally unbearable it must have been in the 90's and well into the 70's at night. The sweat was poring off the pair of us walking down the canal, with our eyes shut, determined to not to fish the continuous “likely eel-ly” features of the canal.

Soon we came to the entrance, that lead through the woods to our hidden destination, our perspiration was attracting every horse fly with in ten clicks. Eventually arriving to the sight of our lily padded and bull-rushed pool, which took over it like a contagious plague, a place that time had forgotten. Then voices violated our temporary state of euphoria, there was somebody else on! I didn't want to fish the lake just in case something came out, it wouldn't be kept quiet and the population would be under threat of being killed or eaten (also these two characters were notorious “smack-heads”). So we walked back through the woods, , back through the horse-flies for dessert, back onto the canal and fished were we fell, due to the fact that we were carrying our tackle at the time. “*This is an omen Jimmy*” I said, with Jimmy looking at me with some bemusement (As Jimmy is usually the one with the eerie predictions that usually come to pass!) replying “*I should bloody hope so, I'm not carrying my tackle any further*”. Or words to that affect.

The pegs where chosen and it was decided who was fishing on the right and so on. Camp was set-up and we both overdosed ourselves with “jungle juice” awaiting for the mosquito invasion. All four baits were cast opposite to each other. Now it was just a “sit back and wait” affair for the first take. Jimmy didn't have to wait that long, with the first screamer at about 10:45p.m. Which he missed, casting it back into the near margins, only to get a second bite of the cherry at 11:30, with me slipping the net under a 3lb 9oz eel. At about 12:10 the heavens opened up and showed us how insignificant we really were, with flash lighting illuminating the night sky and the whip cracking thunder that put the fear of God into you, this storm loomed above us until first light. By this time I was giving it the “zeds”, but Jimmy had trouble sleeping due to the constant buzzing of mosquito's. At about 4:20 a.m. he noticed my back bank-stick rocking and swaying like mad, with the rod tip banking around to the rig, this went on for about three minutes. Suddenly the line escaped from the clip, giving me a single toner.

Bouncing out the shelter, still half-asleep, looking like “elephant man” (the mosquito's didn't starve that night). I picked the rod up and struck into it, only to be met by a ‘brick wall’, which decided to take line off a tightened clutch. When this happened my ‘bottle’ went and Jimmy looking at me in disbelief, accompanied by a blank expression. I darted down the bank, with Jimmy in tow, eventually getting level with her, giving her some real “welly” at this point.

As she writhed and thrashed the surface, trying to break free, Jimmy was poised ready with the net and one last heave on my part, she glided in first time. We carried her back to the swim and weighed her. She went 4lb 9oz on the scales and another p.b. eel, I sacked her, until it was light enough to take photo's. On getting her out the sack Jimmy noticed me drooling and slavering at this moment, with me saying " *look at the colours on this Jimmy!*". She was dark green in colour, but it looked as though she had been airbrushed with metallic gold paint, patiently and meticulously, this continued all over her long, sleek length, even down to her eyes, no artist could get so much detail in such a small area. Her pectoral fins were variant colours from greens to blues, with a vivid scarlet red tipping the edges. Even today I regard this eel as my "best eel", she is the most beautiful and impressive creature I have had the privilege to witness to date.

On the 31/5/99 Tony (BT), Jimmy and I went to a part of the L.L that we couldn't get to without transport. It was a full moon, a clear sky and quite nippy to say the least. Tony was in the middle of the both of us, so we congregated in his swim to have the usual "chin-wag", with a drink of coffee in hand. At about 11:40 I had an absolute screamer on the worm-rod, positioned in a recess, about three quarters of the way across. Throwing my cup of coffee, I made a fifty yard dash faster than Linford Christie (including lunch-box), when I got there the rod was still rattling in the rest. Picking it up, I connected into an immense power I've never experienced before, this was definitely a big fish, that carried on doing what ever it liked, regardless of my interventions, with me following the eel, as it ploughed through the canal. Tony was ready with the net, but I couldn't lift it off the bottom, pulling the rod tip under the water, transmitting every thought and movement through the braid.

Tony did the honours, squeezing this leviathan in a forty-five inch net, it was the biggest eel anyone of us had seen. She was hooked in the lip and probably already hooked before I got to the rod, on weighing her, there was an anticipation of silence, with the scales resting on 5lb 8oz. At 38½ inches in length, with a girth of 9½ inches, she was, short, completely solid, and another p.b. An hour before hand Jimmy had marked his scales at the five pound mark, he new something special was going to happen that night. All the photos were taken and I returned her back to the canal watching her cruise away, in the moonlight. Congratulations went all round, but I just sat back on my chair, intoxicated with all different kinds of emotions. The hardest part I couldn't come to terms with, was the fact that I had just scraped into the "Top 50 List" at the time. It was also suggested to me to get a bigger net "politely", which I did, a sixty inch "cat" net was purchased the same week, just in case.

On the 5/6/99 I had another eel of 4lb 2oz, whilst out fishing with Ken, this eel was unusually marked also. All along her length, she had "tiger stripes", slate grey in colouring, with a dark brown collar at the back of her head and a white under side. Completely "stealth" in design.

On the 28/6/99 Jimmy and I decided to "Guest" on a water, which we had to be off at first light. It was about 4:30 a.m. and we were only getting picked up by Jimmy's good wife Jean at about 8 a.m. So we decided to do a few hours in the hope of a large perch (4lb 4oz best fish reported) on the canal, with the likely chance of a last minute eel. The sun was out in full force, chasing away the early morning mist, considering the rain we had the previous night. It started to drizzle again so I set the "Titan" back up, only putting the first rod out at about 5 a.m. Followed by the second rod.

I had just got back to the bivvy as Jimmy was still preparing to throw his rods out, hearing a "single bleep" behind me. On turning round, I could see my "channel rod" tip almost pulling down to the water, then the line soared from the clip, with the line racing off the spool, followed by sprays of water. I jumped to the rod, picking it up and just bending into the fish that just kited up the canal oblivious.

"*I think that's a carp Woody,*" said Jimmy, "*You could be right It doesn't feel like, or behave like an eel would*", I replied. Could you imagine playing a big "Double" carp, with no clutch, or back-wind! Twenty yards down the canal I managed to keep it subdued under the rod tip, but the fish still bored itself deep in the murky water. All I could see was the line cutting through the surface, as it propelled itself from left to right. Eventually I was starting to win the first battle, but the war wasn't over yet!, we got our first glimpse of this unknown advisory, you've guessed it a "massive" eel, with my other rig in tow! She came to the surface length ways, holding herself there with ease. She wasn't satisfied with that, oh no!

It then decided to fight like a salmon, shooting across the surface, almost tail-walking at one point. I gradually eased her towards the net, but she came in sideways, with one whip of the tail, she went across the net, then underneath it, pulling my arm straight in the process. Jimmy quickly moved the net out the way, until I could get her to the surface again. "*I think you need an even bigger net woody,*" Jimmy said jokingly, (but he was right, modifications were needed to be done, they may have 60" arms, but they are only 28" wide at the mouth) The second attempt was more successful and in she went. She went 6lb 1oz and yet another P.B. with a length of 40¾ inches and a girth of 9¾ inches all across her length. With two eels in the "Top Fifty" at the time. It was a season to end all seasons, plus everything else I had, it felt like as if it was somebody else, I wouldn't have dreamed it ever happening to me

On the 6/7/99 I managed to whittle another eel of 3lb 4oz and a welcomed fish that was, after doing some serious blanking. Also a bonus fish, a perch of 1lb 14oz, which I was happier about than the eel (I also like fishing for "big perch")

On the 27/ 8/ 99 I had another good eel of 4lb 5oz, that fought like it was possessed and a great end to a great season. The most impressive thing about this eel, was how tiny its head was compared to the rest of its body, having the head of a two-pound eel. With a length of 36¼ and a girth of 8¼, from head to tail, she was very impressive in her own right. I know not many eel anglers like canals, but the potential is there to be "unlocked". So if you live near one, or have the transport to get to one, give it a go. You may be surprised at what may be lurking in its depths.

ELVINGTON REPRISE AND A SHORT SEASON.

By

Martin Dorman.

At last ! I've managed to get to a N.A.C. Fish- In and in so doing realised one of my ambitions, as specified on my extremely hastily put together 'profile', from a couple of years ago.

Firstly I must apologise for the un-topical nature of these few lines; I guess you are all talking about the second Elvington session now. I have only just had the Summer Bulletin sent out to me; a very enjoyable read as usual. By the time of the November Meeting, which I also hope to attend as my first one, I should be back in the UK but I will still be well behind with topics of discussion. Perhaps it was the sight of my "handsome" visage in the Elvington article that has inspired me to write another article, or perhaps more likely getting 'Gunged' (perhaps the new motto of the Gunge page could be 'never let the truth get in the way of a good story', eh ?). Although you're somewhat adrift on my 'dimensions' (fnarr !); I'm only about 6'7" and 22 stone, I really cannot remember who carried what to my swim (we found the low hedge at our end of the lake especially useful though !). Surely, though, delegation is the sign of a potential leader? I was getting over that Flu that everyone was being flattened by..... Alright, guv', it's a honest cop and I'll come quietly!

Luckily I read about the Elvington Fish-In early in my leave – attacking my usual mail-mountain with unusual keenness. The day was ringed and a prompt 'phoner' to 'B.T.' secured a much coveted place for my son, Darrach, and I. Now the Lad has only recently started Fishing with any real (i.e. not from me !) enthusiasm and I have not had much chance, over the past Four Seasons', to fish much myself, in my new Norfolk 'habitat'. Knowing I was due to leave the UK in May / June again I didn't hold out much hope for this Season either!

The 'van' easily held all our tackle and with a plentiful supply of mail-order worms we set off 'up North'. My sister-in-law lives in Rothwell (near Leeds – the one 'up North' and not in Kent!) so my wife, Joh, dropped our daughter, Ellie, off for a weekend at Auntie Brendas whilst Joh went back to Norfolk for a "wild" weekend of studying. On arrival the rain had cleared away and we soon bumped into "B.T.", who gave us our allocated swim. We were at the 'road-end' with Jimmy Jolley, who kindly gave us a hand with the tackle. I think I ended up chatting to Jimmy most of the night; hope this didn't annoy anyone (judging by some of the snoring audible right across the lake I don't think it did!). The tent was soon set up for the Lad. It was only 20 pounds and identical in all but colour to some 'bivvies' costing nearly 100 and I stretched out on my industrially strengthened Bedchair – I always prefer to sleep 'under-the-stars' rather than in a tent as you get to bites quicker, miss less bites and it is more comfortable. As we settled down a bit before Midnight I was expecting my usual "all-action" session of the last few years i.e. no need to worry about missed sleep! How wrong could I be.....

For all you 'rig-enthusiasts' I'll just say that you ought not to read this paragraph as it might offend! You see my rigs are ones from 'the - fishing – book – that – time – forgot!'. So anything after about the early Eighties is an object of awe and wonder to me. Only, on this 'Fish-In', Jimmy did show me how to use the anti-tangle Silicon Tubing I had invested in on adventuring into 'the brave new world'! I thought I was getting 'hi-tech' with the Green trace wire I have just started using. So my "complicated" rig was a running ledger (with anti-tangle tubing on, no less) on one of those low-resistance black plastic ring & ball affairs, 15 lb Big Game Line (well you can hope can't you?), green trace wire of 25 lbs and a # 2 strong carp hook. I had just invested in a Third Leeda carp rod of test curve 2 ¾ lbs and three new cheap'n'cheerful Mitchell Free – Spool predator reels; so at least if I was doomed to an embarrassing failure I would still look 'pretty fly for a white guy'.

My bait was the usual 3 or 4 Lobworms, mounted in a myriad of ways depending on how low the batteries were on my head torch! Bite indication was from my old 'original' optonics – now only audible to dogs, together with monkey climbers on needles (still fighting off The British Museum for ownership of these). I also did a little bit of groundbaiting with some bread and catfood mix that caused havoc with the

food processor. I later found out we were n't supposed to be using groundbait and had to severely reprimand myself. Not guilty m'Lud!

I only pay moderate attention to rig-finesse as I am a firm believer that when Fishing for Eels the most important things are to select the right swim on a water that actually holds some good Eels and then fish it all you can. If you put in enough night, or daytime, hours with decent bait then you should soon be catching – or at least getting the runs (or is that verbal diarrhoea?). As those brilliant photos' of those Eight & Seven pounders in the Summer Bulletin show, many waters do contain monsters but it's down to the Angler to put in the hours and hard work to catch them – it helps being a bit lucky or 'jammy' like I occasionally am as well! Although I am well satisfied with my new Personal Best, I won't rest until I get a 'Five'.

I set two of my rods in the rests', and one for the Lad and off the indicators' started going.

The first night was a bite every few minutes, even though the Lad managed to hook a nice fish, probably a carp, he unfortunately didn't catch. He turned – in at about 0100 hours after a valiant effort to stay awake (he was only Ten years old, just).

After missing a few and Jimmy starting to get runs as well I left the runs as long as I dare and started to get carp. One of these was a new P.B. at 15:08, netted by Jimmy for me – Ta. The others at 12:10 and 11:09. Next to me, on my left, Chub were being caught and although I suspect some of the 'butt-ringers' I had were from these I also think small Eels were also to blame – I had a couple to the net but they flipped off (luckily as it wouldn't look too good on a score sheet!). I then returned the favour to Jimmy and slipped the net under his new P.B. of 3:07. He was really over the moon and it was great to see. He also had one of about 2:08 which he was equally pleased with, having only started Eeling this Summer I think? I believe he has now bettered that and has probably overtaken me, and most others, the way he's been catching this season. It wasn't long before I had another take and had my first 'good' Eel on in Four Seasons or so. It was the usual hard fight which I was more than a little determined to win and eventually Jimmy netted it for me. Luckily it was lip-hooked and I said I "it's about a four and I'll weigh it in the morning". It turned out to be 4:12, my new P.B. and a lovely creature. What with the excitement at Jimmy & I's 'road end' and news of the other catches and the continuous runs we didn't get a wink of sleep (well I didn't anyhow).

Then the Lad woke up and wanted breakfast and to start fishing again. So off we went again and caught 3 nice Tench (4:05, 3:06 & 3:02) and a Bream of a pound or so. Although Darrach hooked another couple he still did n't have any luck landing them. All the bites were from fish other than Eels, I can almost guarantee, so it looks like Elvington may be a 'night-water' only (has the Second Fish-In dis-proved this).

The next night, with a long 15-minute kip under my belt, I felt well rested and ready to fish – not! That night it was the turn of people Fishing along the other banks to catch whilst the P.B. producing 'road-end' was much quieter. Apart from when I got another personal best Mirror of 18:07 stuck in a tree – my hero Jimmy to the rescue again. Another Mirror of 8:12 was also added. Again Darrach did n't catch although he had several bites; I'll have to take him on a session where I'm not fishing myself or he'll go off this great sport of ours. I managed another 'boot' of about 0:12 or so and that was about that.

The next day, again with no overnight sleep, saw Darrach and me scratching around for a few bites but no more Eels. I explained to the owner that our 'lift' wasn't due for a few hours and could I pay to fish on a little longer; he said not to worry as there wasn't much happening anyway, what a nice chap. I actually had a bit of a chat with him later, he turned up just as I was about to nod-off, but never mind. He told me how he came by the Lake and how it is a spring fed one that has always been there apparently. How a matchman had two Eels for Ten pounds once and, in a separate incident, how a genuine Ten pounder i.e. ONE FISH (!) came out and the Angling Press snubbed the story, for reasons best known to themselves.

Eventually Joh turned up at 1500 hours, well she did have to drive back up from Norfolk, bless, and off we went to Auntie Brenda's for a welcome shower, bar-b-que and lashings of Red Wine; it was a lovely end to a brilliant weekend. We stayed at Brenda's for several hours but time passed very quickly; mainly because as soon as I sat on a comfy chair my three days with only 15 minutes sleep caught up with me and I fell asleep!

Once again thanks ever so much to 'B.T.' for arranging Darrachs' and my first ever N.A.C. 'Fish-In' and one of my best, if not the best, fishing session I've ever had. I should be back in the UK next year for the whole of the Summer and hope to drag Darrach on a few more 'Fish-Ins'- for those who, shame on you, haven't been on one yet they really are worth going on and you get a really warm welcome..... right up to the point when you get gunged anyhow !

Two days later found me trying the small lake, of my new local fishing club in Norfolk, expressly for Eels. It's only an acre or so but has fish of several species in to good sizes (carp, bream, tench, roach and crucians mainly) but I was intrigued by one locals story of an Eel he caught "as big and round as your arm" – I know we've all heard a million of these tales but as I was now a member and the lake is on Joh's route to work I gave it a bash. At about 0100, after no other runs, I got an absolute screamer, which tore off

towards the wider part of the lake. I thought it was one of the carp (they were in a very hungry pre-spawning mood and I managed to catch one a few days later in the afternoon on pink-peppermint dog biscuit on the surface of about 15 lbs – we now hand you back to the main story.....) but after a while I recognised the fight and sure enough a large Eel slipped over the net. I was very pleased to catch on my first time from “my” new lake – unfished for Eels before I believe. It went 3:00 dead but that’s not important. I managed another couple of night sessions there but only caught Bream from the wide end of the Lake, it’s ‘keyhole’ shaped and only 4/5 feet deep, mind you even they gave me a new P.B. of just under 6 pounds so I was n’t moaning. Yes, I was still using the same archaic rigs that I used at Elvington, but was especially surprised catching a 1:00 Roach on a trace wire!

The club also has a beautiful Lake, hidden away in a Copse about ten miles away. Few people fish it, not being bothered to traipse across a couple of fields to try it. But this was no real hardship as I used to walk for miles with tackle and pushbike over gravel to reach the pits I used to fish in my youth, on Romney Marsh in Kent. The mosquitoes at this wooded Lake were the worst I’ve ever seen and I’ve seen bad times! I used my usual rig and tried some cat-food groundbait again. Although I had lots of bites I only caught a handful of fish. My two Eels went 1:10 and 1:03, but I had a nice Tench of 5:08 and even a jack on worms. Although the Eels weren’t massive it has given me food for thought – the banks are pretty steep so I am pretty sure that there are a few decent sized Eels there and who knows, this could be the new Kingfisher Lake. Talking of which I saw a Kingfisher there early morning – it’s a sign!! Either way, with lovely surroundings and a host of other quality species there, I can’t go too far wrong. For the two lakes it’s only 20 quid for a ‘Family’ Season ticket anyway. I can’t wait for next summer and I might even try a late session or two in October when I return.

There’s also a lovely little pool only fifty feet or so across and surrounded by Weeping Willows, just off the Wensum, where an acquaintance fishes for 3 pounds a day for 2 pound plus Roach and in the middle of an afternoon session he caught a 3:08 Eel on bread! Or another ‘lead’ to investigate of a very private Lake where Eels up to 4 pounds or so can be seen swimming about ‘under the boardwalk’! Could it be true? It’s certainly something to day - dream about over the winter months when our chums are ‘mudded’ and not biting.

Anyway, I hope this comes in useful as ‘Filler’ sometime, Mr Editor.
Merry Xmas, have a great Millennium, and may the only bootlaces you get be for your footwear!

The Eelsnapper.

Available on ‘ johdorman@martindorman.freeserve.co.uk’

HOOK SHARPENER. (REVIEW)

We all like to think our hooks are nice and sharp but most of us know that once we have used a hook for even the shortest period that it can become blunt or acquire a beak on the extreme point of the point. I used to use a stone hook sharpener but whilst fishing with ‘The Baitswisher’ I rummaged around in his tackle box and came up with a superb tool for keeping the hook in A1 condition. It is called the ‘Diamond Knife Sharpener’ and is made by GERBER. It is triple diamond plated, has a retractable blade (Closed 5³/₈ inches --Extended 8 inches) and has a pocket clip for easy accessibility. It also come with a life time warranty. I bought one and when ‘The Eeling Hedgehog’ saw mine he got me to buy him one. What more can I say. The price is £7.99.

TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS.

By

Jimmy Jolley.

(Illustration by Damian Wood)

Before I go any further, I would just like to make it clear to anyone reading this article that what follows is only my personal thoughts, theories and observations regarding our quarry's senses and how I interpret them within my own fishing experiences. If any member has any thoughts and theories, either similar or total different to mine please let myself, and the membership know through an article or the letters page of the "Anguilla" magazine (I'm sure that Steve and Stuart would love to get a letter from any member, about anything at all regarding Eels and Eel fishing in general.)

At this point I should also mention that I could possibly be totally wasting your time and mine, because someone, at sometime could have written an article about all that I'm about to relate to you in this one. I could be stating the blatantly obvious or opening a "Pandora's Box" of verbal and written "abuse" from the more experienced members of the National Anguilla Club for my lack of knowledge on the subject of Eels and Eel fishing. However, since I have not been a N.A.C member very long, I have no way of

knowing. Therefore, if this is the case, then please accept my sincere apologies for my "crazy" ramblings.... if not.... then here we go!!!!

It seems that a lot has been written about how Eels feed..... or rather what Eels feed on. Having done some research for this article using my collection of old, and not so old fishing books it occurred to me that the further back in time I read.... the more it seemed that anglers regarded the Eel more of a scavenger... and not a predator. I would rather "label" them as opportunists, being very capable of hunting it's pray as well as taking advantage of any easily available food source such as maggots, worms and ground bait after a match on a canal, or picking up discarded dead baits after a piking session on a lake or gravel pit.

Therefore, let's look at how *Anguilla anguilla* is "built". For a start, to me the Eel is built for speed, because of all the species of fresh water fish, the Eel has the longest tail and dorsal fin. In fact, as we all know the dorsal and anal fin is one, giving it great power and extreme manoeuvrability. The Eel as also got the longest lateral line of any fresh water fish...so it is possible that it would be able to detect any small vibration from it's prey over possibly great distances. As I stated in the opening paragraph, I can only use my own personal experiences in coming to these conclusions.

This power and speed was brought to my attention in a most unexpected way, by something that happened whilst fishing the Shropshire Union Canal on our way back from the Milton Keynes Fish-in this summer.

It was about an hour after sunset and I had just cast out a live roach, fished on a penal rig in conjunction with a Dyson set-up. I had just put my rod on the rests when I noticed that my braided line was at the side of my alarm, and not running over the wheel as it should. As I lifted the rod from my alarm, and took hold of the braid to place it in the correct position I got an almighty thump as something "hit" the live bait and stripped it from the hooks. As a result the braid burnt my finger and the rear bank-stick was dragged forwards. I have been told by many Eel anglers since I became an Eel angler myself just how hard an eel can take a bait, but until this happened to me I couldn't comprehend the power of a hungry Eel. I have touch ledgered for Carp, Tench and even Pike in years gone by, but I've never, ever felt anything as powerful as that take and I don't suppose I ever will again (I hope).

The Eel has a highly developed sense of "smell", possibly because it has 4 nostrils, 2 near the tip of the mouth and 2 in front of the eyes. It has been scientifically proven that an Eel can detect as little as 3 molecules in a "nose" full of water. Which translates to 6 drops in an Olympic sized swimming pool....(as I mentioned in my article "*Eels and Oils*") so it should be able to find any item of food, in any circumstances, whether it be worms or maggots lying on the bottom, or small fish swimming near the surface.

Now lets look at the eyes.... These are placed well forward, and to me this would indicate binocular vision, much like a Pike's eyes (and we wouldn't label Pike as being scavengers). They are large, in proportion to the head, so I would presume they would be well adapted to seeing extremely well in very low light conditions, a sense needed for hunting prey at night or in very muddy water during day light hours.

Next lets take a closer look at the mouth of the Eel...the Eel has possibly the most powerful jaws of any species, in comparison to its size, swimming in our waterways and still waters to-day and it as a formidable set of dentures to match. Surely this combination would be what is needed to grasp and hold any unwary prey fish that found itself being an Eels next meal.

The Eel also has a set of five pin-like holes running along the underside of each side of the lower jaw (just like a Pike has). In the case of the Pike, they are possibly used to detect its prey at the last minute before grabbing the fish and devouring it (this I would presume is because as a pike opens its mouth wide to take a fish it cannot see its prey.) So why not in the case of the Eel?...and if "Mother Nature" had intended the Eel to be a bottom feeding scavenger then wouldn't "She" have given them a really good, big set of barbules like the Carp and Barbel or possibly even whiskers like the Wels Catfish?.

The next section of this article could well be sub-titled "Close Encounters of the Eely Kind" (*Doo - Dee - Doo - Doo - Doooo*), because during my fishing career which spans some 40 years, (I started fishing when I was 9 years old and I've almost reached the "Big 5 - 0") I've seen some strange things. Things that can only be put down to being in the right place, at the right time, on the right water ...much like many of the angling successes I've had. However, not being an Eel angler at the time, these "encounters" were filed away at the back of my mind and didn't really surface until now.

The first one happened some 23 years ago on one of my local Tench waters of 12 acres in size. It occurred in the middle of an extremely hot July afternoon whilst waiting for the evening Tench feeding time to commence. I was sat on my fishing basket when I noticed an enormous Eel appear from under the staging I was fishing from. Now this Eel was BIG, VERY BIG, it was approximately 5 - 6 feet long and had a girth of possibly 12 - 14 inches, but at the time I didn't appreciate just how significant that Eel was ("what a plonker," I hear you say but that's the honest truth), only now could I possibly put any kind of estimate as to it's weight, because of all the photographs and video evidence I have seen of big Eels by courtesy of Mark Andrews' superb slide show and Barry McConnell and Pete Drabble's riveting video, both of giant

New Zealand Eels. All I can say is that that Eel would have broken the current British Record of 11lb-02ozs by several pounds!.....so what's all this got to do with Eel biology (for the want of a better term)?...well, that Eel was swimming on the surface in 3 feet of water for possibly 40 - 50 yards then I lost sight of it in the glare of the sun, with noticeably VERY little effort, and I thought that Eels did not have a developed swim bladder... so how did it manage to keep its self so near the surface for so long without the aid of this organ? I have no idea, but it did.

I bet your thinking "why is he not fishing there for Eels now ?"....well the answer is that this water is now a bird reserve and fishing is strictly prohibited.(Ha well...one day I'll acquire some sense)

The next Eel encounter occurred in the mid-eighties on a well known Lymm A.C carp lake that my brother Tony, better known by the moniker B.T. and I were fishing at the time.

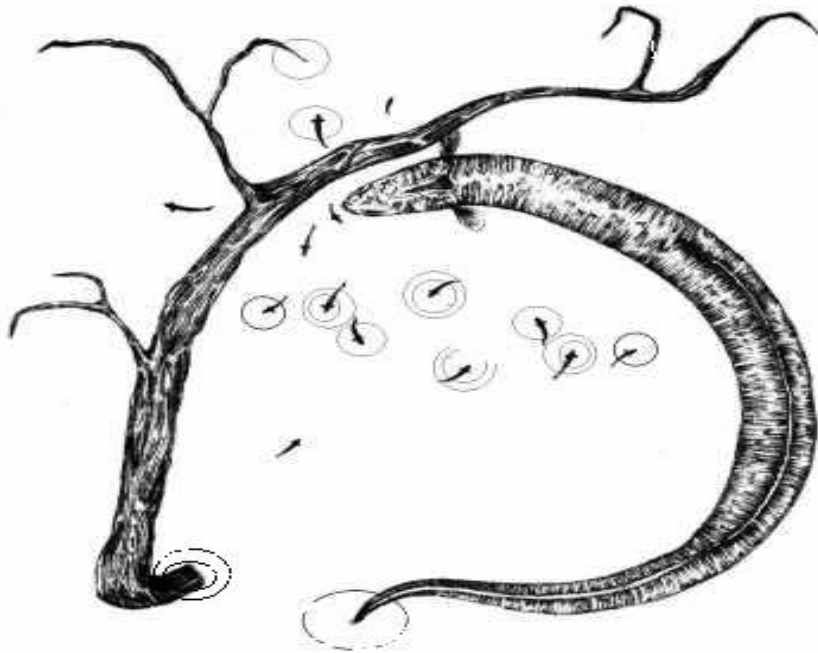
One summers evening we had set up in adjacent swims and had done all our baiting-up and were sat back waiting in anticipation of a good evenings carping, when I noticed something moving in the margins in front of my swim. On closer inspection we discovered that the "disturbance" was from two very good Eels. These Eels were almost entwined together, writhing about between two clumps of marginal rushes, some 4 feet apart, we thought at the time that they were "cleaning themselves off" and left it at that.... but what were those Eels actually doing? Once again I haven't a clue, may be they **were** cleaning off?... but why so close together ?... and why in broad day light ? I just don't know.

About a year later, Tony and I were walking around one of our local carp waters when we saw what we presumed was an Eel of about 4lb. This too was acting very strange, and it was also writhing about in the weed with both its head and tail right out of the water at the same time. Once again, this was put down to "cleaning off"....but was it actually doing that?...and yet again, I haven't the foggiest idea what it was doing or why it was doing it ?

Eel "encounter" number four, and I think the most fascinating, can only be described as "periscoping". This observation occurred on the Sankey Canal, which is a disused stretch of canal at Newton-le-Willows, which is in between Wigan and Warrington, but is actually in Merseyside. Once again I was fishing for carp at the time with an angling friend of mine, when we both noticed something unusual about 30 feet to our left. My angling mate Steve turned to me and said, "Did I see what I thought I saw?" "Yes, that was an Eel" I replied. This Eel was between 3lb and 4lb, with its head and approximately 10 inches to a foot of its body sticking out of the water with its head held at right angles to its body (rather like an inverted "L"). This Eel had lifted itself out of the water, which was some 5 feet deep and was actually looking around, (well it seemed like it was looking around anyway) before slipping back down beneath the water.....why?.... if any one can shine some light on this, or any of the other subjects then please, please **please**, do so!...as before, I haven't the slightest idea what it was doing or why it was doing it?

My final encounter I shall relate to you could be rather controversial, it concerns an Eel that I actually saw feeding, (and so far, this is the only Eel I have seen doing so for certain). It happened one day this May (1999) whilst walking my two Jack Russell Terriers along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, which runs at the back of where I live. It was about 5pm, the weather was warm and the sky was clear. We had just reached a small turning basin when I saw a disturbance in the proximity of a small branch, which was floating in the water. This branch was some 3 feet in length and was crescent shaped, in the heart of this "crescent" was a shoal of small roach about 2-3 inches long (from mid-May to about late September, the L & L is literally full of fry of this size). At first the disturbance was put down to one of the numerous perch or to a lesser extent, (because there are relatively few Pike residing in this stretch of the L & L) even a jack-pike that congregate near such shoals. As I got closer the disturbance occurred once more, but this time I could see that the perpetrator was not a perch or small pike but an Eel of approximately 4lb. What happened next is where the controversy may occur.

This Eel had curved itself in to an opposing crescent shape, so the shoal was virtually "surrounded". And as the fry scattered in all directions some obviously headed towards the open mouth of this Eel, if this had happened just the one time, I could have put it down to a "one off" occurrence, or just a coincidence, call it what you want?.... but as soon as the shoal had reformed it happened again about two minutes later, in exactly the same way. (At the time, I mentioned this observation to our I.T Officer Ken "The Bushman" Ward, and I asked him if he thought I should mention this to the membership, and ask if anyone had seen anything like this before. His reply was that I would probably be asking the wrong people. As most Eel anglers are at the waterside during the hours of darkness, so would not be able to observe such events, but just in case anyone has seen this behaviour please let us know.)



Now I'm in no way saying that this is how all Eels, in all waters feed, I'm just saying that surely there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to how and when an Eel will make a meal of some unwary fish.

Now I do not profess to being an expert on Eel biology....once again, for want of a better term, or Eel fishing for that matter, (as you may have realised from all the..."I haven't a clue" and "I don't know") ...but to me, evolution has produced one of the greatest predators in *Anguilla anguilla*,... The European Freshwater Eel.

WILLEN LAKE / G.U. CANAL FISH IN. (23-25/7/99)

By
Chris Siddall.

As this was the first fish-in I had organised, I was rather disappointed at the low amount of interest shown in respect of enquiries for details, hopefully things will improve next year.

On the Friday I had intended to get to the lake to meet people, especially the new faces who were expected. However due to work pressure this was not possible & it was about 5.30 by the time I stopped by straight from work to see if anyone had arrived.

The only person at the lake was new member Paul Smith who I introduced myself to & it turned out that Anthony Jolley plus brother Jimmy & Phil Lukins had also arrived & gone to fish the canal.

I left Paul tackling up & went home to get organised before returning about 8.00. On arrival Nick Rose had arrived with son Andrew & friend Jason Tyndall, also there was another new face on a fish-in John Davis from Derby. The final 2 members on the day were Damian Wood & Mark Smethurst.

Andrew & Jason decided to set up on the lake along with Paul whilst the rest of us decided to spend the first night on the canal either in small groups or, like myself, on their own. The weather that night was perfect for eel fishing, so there could be no excuse from this point of view.

The next morning we all began to meet up at the lake to discuss the events of the night before. No eels had been caught (not a major surprise as it took me 14 years to catch my first one), but there had been some action. Nick caught a 10lb + carp & several bream etc. were taken as is usual when using worm. The biggest surprise was when John Davis was visited by a bailiff at 1.30 in the morning!

Anthony then carried out the draw for swims on the second Elvington fish in before he, along with Jimmy & Phil, left to head back north (where it's grim). Work pressure meant that John & Paul also had to leave.

The rest of us set up bivi's ready to spend the Saturday night on the lake. The day past without event apart from my son Robert turning up looking like he was off to a night club smelling like a brothel with no tackle (if anyone can explain teenagers to me I'd love to hear it).

As night-time arrived the weather was still & warm and once the baits were cast in we all settled down with a few cans for a good social get together. Over the far side of the lake is a small concert venue, the mini bowl, from where we were entertained into the small hours with some good live music. The chat & the beer flowed & it wasn't far off dawn before we all staggered to our respective bivi's for some much needed kip.

Unfortunately the only fish caught were a few small perch but I'm sure everyone there had a real good time.

I hope next year there will be more members attending, as even though we didn't catch any eels we all had a bloody good weekend.

EELS, THE ULTIMATE OPPORTUNISTS.

By
Shaun Pope.

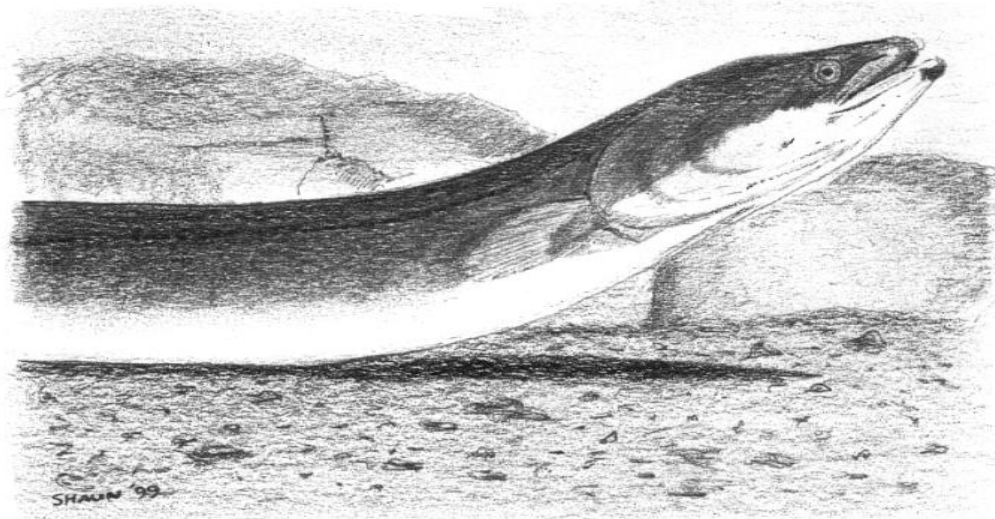
In a large number of British stillwaters the eel is the only truly native, truly wild fish. Without the aid of artificial stocking and introduction, eels have managed to colonise the bulk of British waters. This due to their ability to travel overland, live in a wide variety of habitats, tolerate low oxygen and relatively high pollution levels and their willingness to eat practically anything edible. In short eels, where British freshwater fish are concerned, are the ultimate opportunists.

As NAC members, I am sure that we are all aware of the existence of "broad headed eels" and "narrow headed eels", the fish eaters and the invertebrate eaters respectively (although within these categories an increasing amount seem to be caught on boilies each year). In fact so different can their appearance be, they were once classed as separate species: the narrow heads being classed as Anquilla anguilla and the broad heads being classed as Anquilla latirostris, the Grig, Glut or Fromouthed eel. The widely held belief is that, the broad heads develop in an environment which dictates that they feed on fish, whilst the narrow heads (or Knibblers as Dave Holman called them) develop in waters which provide an abundance of smaller morsels. John Sidley concluded that the ratio of these different forms was generally 95% to 5% one type to the other in stillwaters, and in rivers more like 50:50.

Many of these facts and findings, although widely accepted, are very little understood or reasoned. In this article I shall attempt to suggest some reasons (using biological fact and theory) for the unusual but adaptive ways of our mutual friend the European eel. I apologise in advance should I seem to state the obvious, but hopefully it will make some interesting reading.

Recent work carried out researching eel head shape has all but proved that broad and narrowed headed eels are not separate groups, but are the two extreme ends of a continuous variation between head shape. Additionally, findings from the same research suggested that the vast majority of eels fall into an intermediate position, somewhere between the two extremes, rather than one of the two. This could be compared to foot size in British adult males, (male humans that is) some will have particularly small or large feet, but the majority would be found to occupy a range of sizes between these extremes. Similarly other fish species express variations in head size and shape. Pike show variation in form, which include large heads, smaller heads, flatter heads and the rarer but very distinctive "parrot-bill" or "pug-nosed pike. It is doubtful that these variations are single generation adaptations to catching prey in their particular environment. All right, it could be a fact that over many generations, head shape could become a distinct advantage. For example a pike with a large head would have a great advantage if living in a lake full of bream. These pike could thrive and reproduce more efficiently, thus however this would only occur after many generations and a very long period of time.

It is extremely doubtful that this would occur in eel populations for the simple reason that they are catadromous, that is to say that when they do breed, they only ever do it in the Sargasso Sea (I said I'd state the obvious). The nature of this breeding is said to be an orgy of sperm and egg shedding within a massive vortex of water – haphazard and random to say the least. With this in mind, it can be seen that due to the nature and location of an eel's breeding, regardless of where they live and what they eat, eels are in effect taken "back to square one" in each generation. Due to this evolution to suit their freshwater habitat can never occur over several generations, as it can in other species, which stay in one water where they will breed, their offspring will breed and so on.



Regarding fish eating and worm eating eels, there is, without a shadow of a doubt a preference for mature eels to eat one or the other. Indeed, statistics shown in a scientific article showed a distinct preference for eels in Lough Key and the River Erne to have eaten invertebrates almost exclusively, whilst eels in Dubh Lochan had consumed only aquatic insect larvae, perch and newts. Meanwhile, eels from the River Cam and Shepreth Brook were found to have eaten mussels, snails, fly larvae, crustaceans, several fish species, worms and even in one case a vole! – In short, they had eaten anything in front of them.

It seems that eels are willing and able to feed on whatever is small enough and easy enough to find and catch within their particular water. With this in mind it could be said that eels will get used to eating any particular set of prey species which are abundant enough to find and small enough to swallow. The presentation of unusual food in front of them e.g. a dead roach as bait where eels feed more usually on leeches and snails could result in suspicion and possibly refusal. Perhaps the smells of a different lake or river could evoke this suspicion. Bearing in mind the eel's catholic tastes, this seems hard to swallow (sorry), however as we all know there are waters where the resident eels seem to ignore either worms or deadbaits.

Eels are likely to eat small fish simply because they can fit them into their mouths, therefore eels with broad mouths will be able to eat deeper-bodied small fish more easily than eels with narrow heads. This would be particularly useful if they lived in a typical British match type fishery (such as a Midlands canal) where competition from roach, perch, gudgeon, bream etc., would make less invertebrate food available to eels. Therefore any eel capable of eating small to medium sized coarse fish would have a distinct advantage over an invertebrate eater in this type of fishery. Equally, it could work that eels in a water containing small pike or even zander are more likely to carve out an existence feeding on prey other than small fish.

In support of this (though I am sure there are numerous exceptions) two of the top ten eels listed in John Sidley's book were taken from waters very local to me. These being one of 9lb 02oz from Chasewater, on boilie and one of 8lb 10oz taken from Calf Heath Reservoir on lobworm (which I had the misfortune to see at a later date, having been removed and stuffed, although rumour is it that it died immediately following capture). Anyway both of these eels were taken from waters containing pike and neither were caught on deadbaits. Similarly, having checked my own records and spoken to others who have caught eels locally, I have found without exception, that any of the lakes, reservoirs and meres local to me that produce eels to worms only (or even boilie in one case), tend to contain pike or (in one case) zander. I am not trying to introduce a hard and fast rule here, but trying to make general sense in an extremely grey area. Additionally, my favourite stretch of canal for eeling, the Shropshire Union in South Staffordshire, contains (as far as I know) few, if any pike or zander. It is interesting to note that of a great deal of eels I have caught from this venue, all have fallen to deadbaits. The only exceptions to this are bootlaces, which take maggots and worm.

It seems logical to say that any eel entering a stillwater will feed on whatever it can find and catch most easily. The abundance of prey species will depend upon its natural occurrence and population size, as well as the predation it endures from other species.

An eel with a narrow head entering a lake full of stunted crucian carp, which feed on the natural invertebrate populations, may not be able to find sufficient invertebrate food. Also, due to its head shape, it may experience difficulty in finding fish small enough to eat. This eel would face a very real threat of

starvation and would need to move to another water in order to find a suitable habitat. On the other hand, a broader headed eel migrating into a lake full of crucian carp would possibly find rich pickings and remain in this particular water. Additionally, a broad headed eel in this environment would need to forage for food less in order to find sufficient calories, because a fish or two would provide as much energy as countless worms, leeches and insect larvae. Bearing this in mind, it could be suggested that an eel entering freshwater will migrate again and again between waterways until it finds a habitat which provides sufficient, easy to catch and consume, food, and this may be determined by the shape of the eel's head.

It is likely that eels with narrow heads will eat fish and broad heads will eat worms, however, eels with narrow heads will have difficulty eating fish above a certain size, while broad heads will recognise a larger meal as more energy and will not waste as much time and energy hunting leeches when roach could be hunted more profitably. Eels of intermediate form will be similarly likely to eat whatever they can fit in their mouths or gain most energy from, and again it seems likely that this will determine their chosen habitat.

As for the 95% to 5% ratio of one head shape to the other stated by John Sidley, I feel that this division is perfectly believable because natural food availability is likely to favour either one side of the head shape spectrum or the other. The other 5% could be composed of eels, which are yet to move on, or simply a small number, which manage to carve out an existence on limited food availability.

Eel migration may occur more frequently than we suspect, with groups of eels moving between waters, via drainage ditches, overflow drains, draw-off outlets, connecting streams and draw off gulleys.

A fish that takes this one step further, is the walking catfish – by this I don't mean the 100lb'er which mysteriously walks from continental Europe to a stillwater in South East England. I mean the one that lives in the tropics and "walks" using it's pectoral fins to drag itself overland to colonise new waters when it senses adverse conditions in it's current home. Similarly, crocodiles do this in Africa, moving on during rainy nights, when lack of food or overcrowding affects their current habitat. I remember reading about a girl being killed by one a few years ago, after going swimming in a "crocodile free" lake following a period of rain. (It makes dealing with cold weather and rats a pleasure when night fishing, doesn't it?)

Anyway, it seems possible that eels will migrate again and again if conditions become unsuitable for reasons such as angling pressure, pollution, drainage, lack of food and even the introduction of competitive species (e.g. carp). Additionally John Sidley mentions in his book that he witnessed a large number of eels leaving a lake via an overflow pipe. They ranged between 1lb and 4lbs. I think these simultaneous migrations, likewise, will occur more frequently than we suspect. Chemical stimuli could be the reason for this mass exodus. I know that minnows secrete distress chemicals into the water when attacked by predators, which passes on a message to other minnows, that they should take evasive action. It is a possibility that eels sensing adverse conditions will secrete stress chemicals, which will pass on the message to other eels, possibly triggering a mass migration. This also could account for the occurrence of large numbers of eels in any particular water being of similar size and head shape.

John Sidley's finding of a 50:50 spread of eels by head shape found in rivers is no easier to try to explain. One suggestion is that eels in rivers are still at a very early stage of their migration, i.e. only one step away from the estuary. In view of this, these eels have not had a chance to occupy a favoured waterway; therefore eels in rivers are less likely to be separated out according to head shape. Another suggestion is that eels are using rivers and streams like a network of roads, which connect stillwaters throughout the country. If this were the case, eels of all shapes and sizes would occupy rivers at any one time. Hence a seemingly 50:50 distribution of broad and narrow headed eels.

One difference not yet addressed, is that of their tooth size. Dave Holman has suggested that fish-eating eels develop larger teeth than their counterparts. Tooth formation could feasibly occur as a response to diet. I read of a cichlid fish in Africa, which feeds, on snails in the wild. In order to crush their shells it develops hard pads in its mouth. Research has shown that captive cichlids fed on unshelled prey do not develop these crushing pads. Alternatively, tooth size in eels could merely be determined by their DNA (as I personally believe governs their head shape) and is a pre-set factor in their design, long before they reach British Rivers.

In this article I have tried to emphasise that the eel's DNA gives the species a broad spectrum of shapes and forms. Thus enabling them to feed on a wide variety of prey and enabling them to colonise a wide variety of waterways, despite the fact that eels do not stay in a water for generation after generation, as occurs in other species.

So there we are, just some suggestions put forward in order to try and help us understand the movements of our favourite species. I stress that these ideas are only suggestions, I am not claiming to have sussed out the behaviour of eels and I would welcome challenges to these ideas. Indeed, a variety of theories and findings from others would put forward more ideas and possibly give an improved understanding of the European Eel.

Brian and Jill Crawford.

If any members are thinking of having a holiday in the Brittany area of France then they could do no worse than look to stay with Brian and Jill in their 200 year old Breton farmhouse. They can accommodate camping, self-catering and half or full board. Prices vary from seasonal period to period and are available on request from either Brian or Jill at KERSULAN, 56310 Bieuzy Les Eaux, France. Telephone 0033297277895.

(Another thought would be to contact Kevin Stephenson as he and his family stayed with Brian and Jill this summer.)

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE.

By
Kevin Huish.

It is now approaching 12.50am and I have just returned home after dealing with an emergency callout. The deadline for the magazine is fast approaching and my Chairman's piece is needed.

The Social Meeting was a great success, my thanks to Tony and the rest of the committee on a job well done. The guest speakers were first class; it is hard to believe that they were speaking for the first time. Some of the information certainly brought fresh ideas on how to tackle your favourite waters for the coming season. I am looking forward to renewing my fishing with more enthusiasm after eels. One of the rigs shown will certainly help to tackle a snaggy water in South Wales that I intend to fish next year.

Now on something that should be true of every member; supporting the Magazine & Newsletters. The magazine is the lifeblood of the club and is one of the main reasons that most of us have joined the club to receive information and read and learn about this mysterious creature, *Anguilla anguilla*, The European Eel. Please make the effort during the New Year to spare some time and write something for the magazine. It could be you're last session, or your success or failure in your pursuit of the eel. Do not worry if you have not caught a big fish or if you think that the rest of the members will laugh at your efforts. We all thought the same when the first maiden article flowed from the pen or should that read the keyboards; technology has advanced so much these days.

The club's Internet page is really coming on well, Ken Ward is the person who is looking after the web page. Please feel free to contact him if you require information about using the web and how to find our web-site. It is very easy to use, I learnt it in about three phone calls to Ken, although I must admit I am no expert and still find that I need to contact Ken occasionally just to point me on the right track.

Over the last few years I have struggled to find time to fish on a regular basis. Commitments will crop up from time to time and it is just a matter of getting your priorities right. There is more to life than just fishing and occasionally you have to step back a little and consider the next move. However, this season I fully intend to fish a lot more often and hopefully I'll catch a few fish which will give me the opportunity to keep the Records Officer and the magazine producers busy with some articles, news of my catches etc. I hope you have the chance to read my news.

Finally, as I am writing this the heavens have just opened again and it raining quite heavily. The River Wye is now 10 ft up and rising. With a bit of luck the eels will travel back down the river and out to sea back to their spawning grounds and help to ensure the survival of the species. On a recent session on the River Wye, a local fisherman, named Les, introduced himself and explained that he fished for eels and other fish for a living. I listened for a short while and then quietly pointed out that they were also my favourite species and I told him that I was concerned that the numbers were getting less and less and that if this trend continued that he would soon be out of business. His reply was that there were plenty of eels and that I should relax and just enjoy the fishing. The conversation ended there so I can not enlighten you further.

Still, it is time for me to say farewell till next time. Have a truly wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. May all your Eels be big ones.

Tight lines.....'Taff'.

For any Members who are on the Internet, the new N.A.C web site address is

www.anguilla.org.uk

So, if you have access to the "Net", log-on, and visit one of the best sites available courtesy of Mr Ken "IT" Ward.

PHOTO GALLERY.



Keith Bradbury's 7lb – 15ozs eel.



Barry McConnell and his 7lb – 04ozs beast.



Malcolm Laws 6lb – 04oz Elvington Eel.



Damian Wood and his 6lb – 01oz fish

PHOTO GALLERY.



Martin J Dorman's 4lb – 12ozs
Elvington eel.



Anthony "BT" Jolley and his 3lb – 05
eel from the 1st Elvington Fish-in.



Steve Pitts with his eel of 4lb – 11ozs



Steve Dances Richardson's 4lb – 09ozs

'ARCHIVE ARTICLES' INTRODUCTION.

(In memory of the late Nigel Jeyes.)

The National Anguilla Club has a trophy that is awarded for meritorious endeavour. It is named '**The Nigel Jeyes Trophy**'. It is a prestigious trophy and the committee of the club now selects the winners. (For a long time it was voted on at the presentation meeting by the members present but it seemed it was always being won by a committee member. This was due to the fact that those present were focused on how much work the individual had done over the past year or because of the profile that person emanated at the meeting. Quite often there would be a member who had done something excellent within the club that the majority of the membership were not aware of. So nowadays it is chosen by the committee and every member is eligible for selection.)

Nigel Jeyes was a member of the NAC in 1977 but he was involved in an automobile accident whilst on his way to an eeling session at Cheddar Reservoir in the autumn of that year. Unfortunately, as a result of this accident, Nigel died, aged 23.

However, just before this tragic accident, Nigel had written an article for Coarse Fisherman Magazine. This was published, with his mothers express wish that it be included, in September of that year.

Arthur J. Sutton kindly donated a Rose-Bowl trophy to the NAC in Nigel's honour and this has since become a highlight in the clubs presentations.

Stuart, Jimmy and myself thought it would be a good idea to have something written by Nigel in the club's Bulletin, as we are unaware if anything has been put into print from Nigel in the past. If not, then we have made amends and Nigel Jeyes memory is now cemented into the clubs history records for all time.

It may not seem like a long time ago since Nigel wrote this piece on eel fishing but please be aware that at that time there wasn't much in print on how to go about successful eel fishing. When you consider that this was written only 8 years after Mr. Peter Stone wrote his chapter on eel fishing, you will see that some considerable ground had been made up in that short time.

To end this introduction to Nigel's article, it seems only right to say that Ken Ward and Jimmy Jolley were selected as joint winner's for the 1998/99 season.

THE ESSENTIALS OF EELING.

By
Nigel Jeyes.

When I started eel-fishing it was very much a hit and miss affair. There was very little information available, especially relating to the catching of larger fish, and so I spent many hours 'Bootlace Bashing' on the local rivers, using worm-baits on size 8 hooks. A pound fish was, in those days, considered an achievement: and perhaps not suprisingly as the weirpools seem to hold tremendous and inexhaustible stocks of mini-eels, all of which could easily cope with such small food. Novice eel fishermen are now fortunate and can by-pass much of this rudimentary learning. I wholeheartedly suggest that the beginner seeking the larger specimens obtain a copy of Brian Crawford's excellent informative booklet on eels in the Catchmore series. Before getting fully underway I should state that this article is aimed at the beginner, to provide him (or her) with a platform from which to start in this branch of angling – the chance to learn from my mistakes! It is, I must stress, purely an outline of this 'art', to get him off the ground. It does appear to me that more anglers are beginning to appreciate the fighting qualities of the eel and, if not fishing regularly for them during the season, are spending a few sessions each year eeling.

WATERS. Almost every water in the kingdom holds a stock of eels – great or small. In my opinion however, the best waters to concentrate on are those which are enclosed, i.e. Lakes, ponds, reservoirs and not the rivers. I divide such waters into two categories (i) 'Bootlace Waters' – those that produce far more eels below 2lb than over and (ii) '2+ Waters' – where the average weight is high, preferably 2lb and over. It is the later which I search for and concentrate on – my own favourite at the present time having an average of 1lb 15oz. However, I should state that this does not discount the fact that there are big eels in rivers and canals – there undoubtedly are – but concentrating on enclosed waters is, at the present time, my policy based on personal experience and results. Kevin Richmond, a fellow National Anguilla Club member, did in fact have some excellent results last year from tidal rivers.

BAITS. Even in waters where eels tend to run small there are usually some larger specimens but the use of worm-baits tends to ensure that almost all the eels caught are small. It is seldom that one is successful in wading through the great numbers of small fish to get to those few large fish, and this, the 'Bootlace Water' is where deadbaits are a far better proposition than worm-baits. You may still get the odd twitches with small eels 'worrying' the bait but it is usually the larger specimens which take it.

However, on the 2lb+ Waters, I prefer worming. Worms are more convenient, more easily collected and stored. The eels in this type of water do not need to be selectively fished for. Also, using worm-baits, you can strike earlier and almost guarantee lip-hooking your quarry. Deadbaits may be as successful but you have to judge the run, hit it at just the right moment to ensure that the eel is hooked and not too deeply.

Anyway, the chances of the eel aborting the deadbait are higher – generally worms being taken with greater confidence.

Size of bait has a considerable bearing on successful hooking of the fish. By deadbait I refer to bait-fish (Dace, Roach, Rudd, Trout, Gudgeon etc.) of between 4 and 7 inches. Minnow and small gudgeon deadbaits are just as likely to catch small eels as are worms on 'Bootlace Waters'.

You don't have to think solely in terms of whole deadbaits or worms. Eels are notorious for taking a wide variety of baits. I have heard of good eels taken on rabbit guts, cooked chicken, large slugs, section fish-baits (including sections of their own kind) cat food (tinned variety), maggots, cheese – even bread. As a general rule anything meaty has a good chance of success. Livebaiting, which is a relatively new topic on the eel scene, is being tried with some favourable results but needs much more work and experimentation is needed in this field before it can truly be regarded as a standard eeling method – especially in relation to rigs to ensure lip-hooking and not gorging, and the timing of the strike.

Furthermore, eels are particularly adept at 'Homing in' by scent and one can effectively groundbait in one form or another using meaty attractants such as tinned cat and dog food, offal, finely chopped fish, blood etc. and the appeal of deadbaits can be improved, on occasion, by the injection of pilchard oil, emulsified or not.

TACKLE. Legering is the standard method used when eeling. Obviously whenever possible it pays to freeline a bait and in the case of the aerodynamic deadbait this is quite simple. To add weight to a deadbait simply slip a barrel-lead on the trace, slid it down to the hook and when you're baiting needling the bait on to the trace this weight will be pulled inside the deadbait, adding weight, concealed and leaving the remainder of the tackle unencumbered. It should not be necessary to use a 'bomb' on this rig.

Worming however, often requires the use of lead for that extra distance. I prefer to use a pear-lead attached to the line by a link swivel. This is very free running, like the arlesey, but can also be changed or removed quickly without tackling down.

In each case my trace or leader is between 18 inches and 2.5 feet long. I also prefer the use of a swivel in the rig when worming, as well as deadbaiting, to attach it to the main line. I may use the plastic leger-stop if I am using the main line from rod to hook – never a split-shot as this can damage the line. In any case, you will have to innovate your terminal rigs as differing circumstances demand it.

WIRE VERSUS MONOFIL. I always use fine plastic coated braided wire (which I dye green nowadays) when deadbaiting and monofil when worming. I expect that an eel hooked on a deadbait will be sizeable. Judging the time to strike may be tricky and if I mis-judge it, the deadbait may be wholly taken. With a 'toothy' eel the wire should save the day. On some waters however, eels can be very wary of wire but on others they will even take worm-baits on un-dyed wire in clear, shallow water during daylight. When worming though, there is no necessity for wire, as previously mentioned, you can strike early with far greater chance of lop-hooking your quarry and wire is therefore unnecessary.

As to the primary tackle, I use line s of 10-15lb BS, depending on the water I am fishing and the size of the bait I am using. I don't feel happy under 10lb – and of course its very important to feel confident in your tackle – but eeling associates are talking (and maybe even fishing) down to 6lb. In a snag free water you can afford the luxury of playing an eel (contrary to some things I've read about hauling it in quickly, whatever water your fishing) and so can use light lines but in many waters it is purely a matter of battling it in quickly and I admit, you need heavier lines. I try to compromise between obtaining maximum sport out of any eel I hook and the chance of landing a 'lunker'. There is nothing like fighting an eel at long range on light/medium balanced tackle in a snag free water – unfortunately, they seem to prefer the snags.

Rods should, as a general rule, be of 10ft plus and of the carp/pike type. There are so many makes and 'actions' available today that I'm not even going to try discussing them – suffice to say that I prefer the 'fast taper' type, 11ft plus.

Reels – very much your choice. Of those that I have used I prefer the Mitchell 330 and ABU 5001C Multiplier. The Mitchell has a lockable finger-dab bale arm, which I like for casting and because the bale arm can be locked when a good fish is on and there is no chance of it accidentally opening. The ABU Multiplier gives a really pleasing direct contact with a hooked fish and the 'drag' mechanism is more conveniently adjusted but the retrieve is relatively slow and I find it difficult to cast accurately in the dark. A few comments on 'playing' an eel will not be amiss here. Unless absolutely necessary I never give an inch of line during the scrap in a snaggy water. You can do what you like in open water though. Always keep in contact with the fish and try to keep it off the bottom – that's where the snags (if any) will be, eels also swim just as well backwards as they do forwards, and usually try to stay deep and get their tail into a snag. If they succeed, sometimes you get them out but mainly you don't. As a matter of interest, I once hooked a 3lb eel in a fairly shallow lake which, when I struck, shot straight out of the water. Eels are full of surprises.

BITE INDICATION. Although eeling is essentially a nocturnal pursuit, it is, I think whenever possible, best to remain awake throughout the session watching the 'bobbins'. Electric bite-alarms are a great invention if you don't wholly rely on them as a system of indication – they can be moody and

unreliable, and if not adjusted correctly to the present conditions, bites may not register at all. As a 'bobbin' indicator I do not like the washing-up bottle top type – both myself and friends have had them twist on the line, causing them to jam in the rod rings and the line to snap on the strike. Any tubular indicator, i.e. section of plastic piping, sliver paper etc. is far superior. Everybody seems to be designing indicators at the moment and you will find your own preference in time.

STRIKING. Striking varies from water to water (as does the rest of eeling). Generally I strike immediately any firm bite is registered with worm-baits. Striking on deadbaits is more complex – some say strike on the second run, others on the first. You'll have to learn for yourself what is best for your particular water. In any event strike before it gets into a snag.

SEASON AND TIMES. The real time to seek your quarry is by night – from one hour before dusk until a couple of hours after dawn – during the warmer months. Fishing by day can also be rewarding. Incidentally, large worm-baits are most successful during daylight, especially in deep waters and at long range. Eels can be very contrary creatures and are very variable between waters and can be very specific in feeding times. Keith Leeves, a fellow eel enthusiast, fishes one water where the bigger eels (4lb so far) feed at around 1am, never before midnight and finish long before dawn. Some of the more hardy members of the National Anguilla Club are beginning to get decent fish in winter. What more can I say?

NETTING AND UNHOOKING. A large landing net is, in most circumstances essential - **minimum** 32 inches (and that really is minimum) with a deep bag of fine mesh. The triangular framed nets seem to me to be ideal. Method: Sink the net. Bring the eel in, drawing it well over so that as you raise the draw-string, the eels tail is clear of the frame and over the net bag. As eels tend to swim backwards in such situations, it should go nicely back into the folds as you raise the net. Then lift it out quick and don't put it down until well you're clear of the waters margin, because if the line does snap the eel will move quickly back to the water – and freedom.

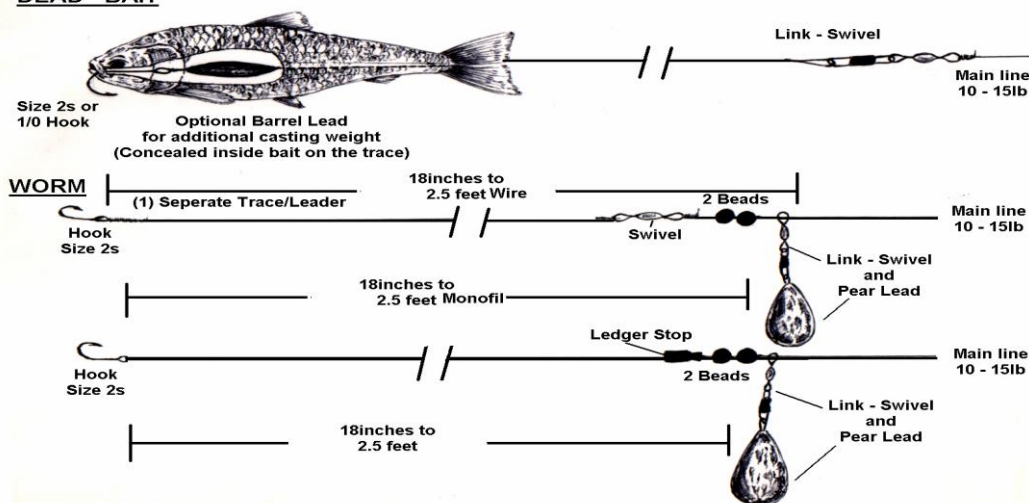
Have a good supply of absorbent clothes (old towels are ideal) to hand. Anglers have all sorts of ways of dealing with eels – mainly little short of barbaric. Mine is to wrap the whole fish in a damp clothe, keeping only the head clear for hook extraction to take place. The eel generally remains quite quiet and I don't get slime over everything.

Unhooking a lip-hooked eel is a simple operation – often made easier if you have a pair of pliers or artery forceps to grasp the hook shank to get a stronger purchase to lever it free. If it is deep hooked however, cut as much of the line and hook out as you can without damaging the eel. Sometimes it is possible to cut the hook shank itself and it may be possible to remove the bend and barb. In any event, don't take it out on the eel if unhooking is difficult, just remove all of the line, wire and hook that you reasonably can. Even with a bit of 'iron' in it, the eel may well survive, as it has been proved in the laboratory that, providing no vital organs are damaged, an eel may digest the hook in time.

The best method of retaining eels is in a fine messed keepnet. When it's light you can weigh, measure and photograph your catch – and then, of course, like any real angler, return it alive and undamaged.

It should be noted, in favour of eel conservation, that a 2lb eel may be 20 years old – and for a creature of the wild, that is pretty good going. Tight lines!

DEAD - BAIT



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER.

By
Chris Siddall.

I'd just arrived home on Sunday afternoon having spent the weekend at Emberton on a N.A.C. fish in organised by 'The Hedgehog', where we had managed one eel of about 2lb between us, when the phone rang.

The call went something like this.

"271976".

"Hi Chris, it's Ian Peacock". (MKAC assistant head bailiff).

"Hello how are you doing?"

"Not bad, I've got some news you might be interested in".

"Yeah what's that?"

"I was called out today to weigh an eel on the canal".

"How big?"

"Nine - three".

"What!"

"It was amazing, 47" long, 10 1/2" girth, it's easily the new MK record, I thought as a predator man you'd be interested".

"You're not kidding, where was it from?"

"I promised the guy I wouldn't tell anyone exactly where it was caught but what I can tell you is ~#*~#*~# " .

"Thanks Ian, I'm sure the lads in the club will be interested in this, thanks again for the info, I'll keep in touch".

Based on this info. The following week was spent scouring maps to find a good-looking spot. After several let downs I visited an area which from first sighting was perfect, all that was needed was to flatten down some of the profuse undergrowth.

The following Friday saw me in position & as darkness fell & the boat traffic ceased 4 baits were cast into position, 3 deads & 1 worm. The baits were placed as shown in the diagram. (**Fig. 1**)

The night started off with the weather quite good but before long the sky cleared & the temperature fell dramatically.

Maybe as a result of this the session was a complete blank, the only action being a half hearted run on worm on rod 3 & as daylight broke another angler set up to my right forcing me to bring bait 4 towards me which was taken within minutes of moving. Unfortunately the second run never came so it was off home to get some kip.

The day that followed was perfect for the time of year, hot sunshine & about 1 hour before dark I was back in the same swim. The only change was to fish worm on all 4 rods.

As night-time fell the sky clouded over leaving the night dark & warm. I didn't have to wait long for the action to start, but unfortunately not with eels. I caught 2 perch about 1 1/2lb. followed by 3 common carp between 6lb & 14 1/2lb plus a bream & a tench both about 3lb each.

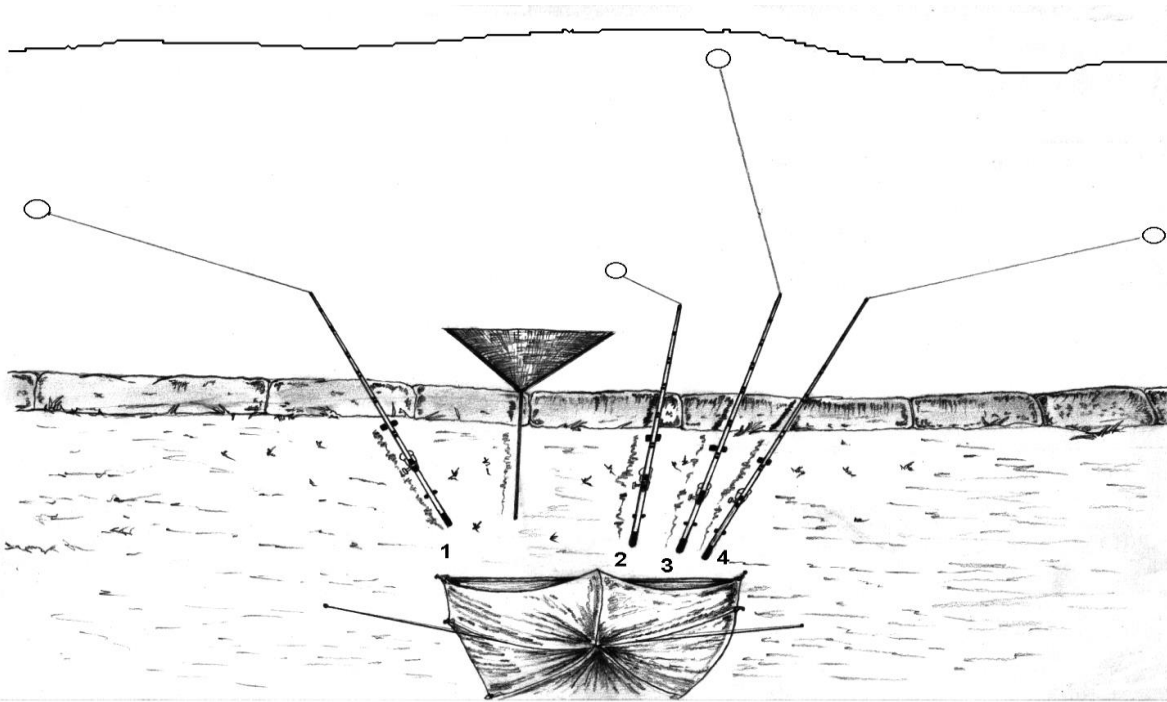
The time was now around midnight & it started to drizzle quite heavily, but not a breath of wind. After about 1 hour without any action I started to nod off & it was almost 2am when the alarm on rod 1 sounded as a short but positive run commenced. I scrambled from the bedchair into the now quite heavy rain & on reaching the rod the line could be seen twitching as a fish seemed to be mouthing the bait. I lifted the rod, engaged the bail arm & bent into a good fish. Half expecting it to be another carp, as it broke surface, I was delighted to see against the pale night light, I had hooked my first canal eel.

The fish was quickly netted & the net propped up against a hawthorn bush whilst I collected the petzel lamp to view my prize. When I netted the eel it didn't seem that big, 3 or maybe 4 pounds. On parting the folds of the net the first thing I saw was a section of the eel about in the middle & I'll never forget that moment. It was as thick as my arm!

I quickly zeroed the already wet weigh net on the Avon's & lifted the eel slowly taking all the weight. The needle sailed past the 5 lb mark & hovered around the 6 lb line before finally settling at 6lb 01oz.

I'd done it, the fish of a lifetime. The 14lb 8oz carp was quickly ejected from the sack & the eel safely housed. Having sorted everything out & recast the rod I settled in the bivi rather wet, very happy & wide awake.

I was on such a high there was no chance of sleep so I just lay there listening to the rain & whistling to myself "happy days are here again-----etc., etc."



Apart from the now heavy rain nothing further happened until about 5am & as it was the end of September it was still quite dark when a steady run developed on rod 4. I was quickly at the pod & striking into a solid fish. Once I had connected with the culprit I held everything solid against the anti-reverse with one hand whilst I manoeuvred the landing net over the pod. By the time I had done this I became aware that the rod wasn't bent to the right as you would expect but the fish was well to my left & the 2 3/4lb T.C. rod was in a horseshoe shape. I quickly released the anti-reverse & once I had recovered from the bruised knuckles it was clear I was attached to an unstoppable object. The fish wasn't tearing off fast nor could I feel any kicking just sheer power.

When the fish had reached about 50 yards away it eventually stopped against the tremendous pressure I was applying & I thought I was at last in control. No! The fish (probably unaware that it was hooked) set off & once again there was nothing I could do. Hanging on & back winding as necessary I told myself to just stay calm when all of a sudden everything went slack. I wound in about 100 yards of line to find the knot joining the 35lb line to the swivel holding the trace had come untied.

Now let me tell you I've caught pike over 30 lb & catfish over 20 lb but this beast was in a different class. My guess at the time was that it was a huge catfish & the subsequent capture of several small ones from the same swim seem to back up my suspicions.



So there I was soaking wet, a 6 lb+ eel in the sack & gutted at just loosing a fish which would have made a mockery of the MK catfish record of about 16 lb. The eel was later measured at 41" Long x 9.5" Girth.

THE DAY (OR THE NIGHT) OF THE SQUID.

By

Arthur J. Sutton.

This piece is, to the best of my knowledge, factually correct. The incident caused much merriment at the time, and I feel it will bring a smile to one or two of your faces.

I go back over thirty years. The Anguilla Club was progressing nicely even though we only had around twenty members. I was, at the time, fishing for eels regularly with members David Smith and David Walker. David Smith was a diminutive member of our team who had some big ideas (and some very small ones). He is perhaps best remembered as the member who went to extreme lengths to secure minute particles to his hook. He had the idea that the larger eels would only feed on very small items of food. The theory was good — the resulting captures nil. Poor Dave, he took some stick from other members including myself, but he never wavered regarding his theory and resolutely stuck to his guns.

Although mostly there, he did occasionally go right round the bend and would come up with yet another theory. David was a most likeable chap, one whom you would not wish to put down. And so it was that the three of us, at one of our non-fishing meetings, got involved with THE SQUID. These meetings between the three of us were held so that we could compound ideas or theories and form a resolute plan which we would all keep to until, at a meeting, we decided to abandon it. Dave's theory, on this occasion, was this. Eels must be presented with a bait comprised of an item which they could recognise. Such an item was, in this instance, SQUID. Eels readily took lugworm and ragworm, cockles and mussels, so why not SQUID? David Walker said that he could get huge amounts of squid and we resolved to put large amounts of the squid into the large water we were fishing at the time Kingsmead. Now Kingsmead was a huge water with relatively few eels, so we concluded that apart from a huge initial baiting up, we would feed squid into our chosen area each time we went. It was decided that Dave Walker would get the squid and boil them up as best he could, and in such quantity as would allow us to get a goodly amount of squid into our area.

On the Thursday evening I telephoned Dave Walker to see if all was well. His Mother answered the phone to say that Dave was too busy to answer. He was, apparently, boiling something up in the rear garden. She said that she could get little sense out of Dave other than that everything was set for the Friday evening. He had, she said, an evil look in his eyes.

So it was that, right on time, Dave arrived at my house in Hoddesdon with his fathers large estate car complete with all his tackle and a large black plastic refuse bin with lid firmly on. We waited for Dave Smith to arrive, which he finally did although he was late, having been held up on the London Underground. He insisted in seeing the squid before we moved off and eagerly removed the lid from the bin. Oh, what an evil pong!, I have never smelt anything like it in my life - not even when they left some dead bream under my rear seat. Dave stuck his head inside the bin for some time, then emerged saying "oh boy, that should get them going" Silently, I could imagine all the eels going - right back to the Sargasso Sea. Ugh, that smell. Three years later when they sold that car, the new owner was rocked back on his heels. They got away with it by saying that the car must have run over a dead cat or something.

We finally got going and arrived at Kingsmead a little late. Then we realised that we would have to find another spot to park which was nearer the water as we now had a full black bin to carry. I said that David Smith should carry the bin on his own as a sort of penalty, but we agreed that we would have to manage it between us. We arrived at the water as dusk was falling and made haste to get our tackle ready. Tackle ready, bivvy erected and kettle on the go, it was dark by the time Dave suggested throwing out all the groundbait. It took us half an hour to throw all that mess out. I remarked on the messy nature of the squid and David replied that it was caused by all the chicken livers and rabbits entrails he had added during the boiling process. It was awkward, trying to keep upwind of the bin, hold ones nose and throw the mess out, but we managed somehow.

We settled down to wait with a great mug of hot Bovril and a Burger, and I don't know if we expected action or not. The night seemed short and we were soon into the early hours of the morning when I had a twitchy run. I soon retrieved a rather insignificant little eel. The only significant thing about it was that it had been taken on a piece of squid — a fact that David Smith never let me forget. First light came, and at Kingmead that's a sign that the action is over until the next night. So we settled down to a good breakfast. The eels could fast if they wished, but we weren't going to. David Smith went to the waters edge for some water to wash the plates with, and let out a yell "Good grief, the bloody squid are all floating" And so they were, every one of them. The on shore breeze had carried them all to the edge of the lake and there they were, all bobbing about with their tentacles waving in a most life like fashion. It was an awful sight and was not helped by the fact that we realised that none of our squid groundbait had reached the bottom. Of course if we had minced them up it would have been a different story.

As we stood there, reflecting on what might have been, a very tall upright gentleman in plus fours and having a military bearing approached from behind. A very polite "good morning" was exchanged and we were asked if we were having any sport. "No" replied Dave "you see the blessed squid keep eating the bait". The gentleman looked bemused until he spotted the squid. "What the hell are they?" he asked. "Oh, they are the squid, and the lake is full of them" Muttering Good God he made off in great haste never looking back. Apparently the gentleman was something to do with the newspaper Slough Observer which, one week later carried a piece about a certain lake being infested with alien creatures. Poor old Dave Smith, he never lived it down. He left the Club without ever again trying squid and is said to have turned to drugs. Who could blame him. Dave Walker and I went on to try squid on other waters, and I can tell you that eels certainly do like squid although it seems to attract the small eels.

"PRESSURISING" EELS.

By
Damian Wood.

In fishing, most radical ideas (Radical may be too strong a word, more like a "Happy Accident") have happened purely by chance and how many times have we over-looked these accidents just because there is a fish in the net at the end of the day? And **not** asked the reasons why? Everyone of us must have done this at some time or another, no matter how long we've have been fishing, but we still fall into the same old traps.

I'm no expert on eels, just an inquisitive angler! (I must get out more often!) Even when I have caught I'm still asking the questions why? What was I doing right this year that was different from the previous four seasons fishing the same stretches of water, with the same baits, for the same eel population? Was it the baits? New rigs? Finding the correct areas? Or the hundreds of rod hours that were spent? So many variables, without taking into consideration, weather conditions, moon phases and high and low pressure, and so on.

You hear the typical answers in numerous aspect of specialist fishing “Fish are stupid, we give them to much credit!” and “they have small brains”. So why is there such a thing as a “hard water”? What makes a certain water difficult? There could be many reasons for this, for example, you could have a water of seventy acres with three pegs holding thirty specimen fish, that may not have seen an anglers bait before. Not all species show themselves by crashing out the water like carp!. So if you have this large expanse of water in front of you and one side is tree lined, or is a “notorious” safe area from angling pressure, you know that the bigger fish may be there, then it becomes a sit and wait game until the fish come to you. The more hours your baits are in the water the higher the chances of success. You could have a three-acre water with thirty pegs and seventy specimen fish that have seen everything, done it and bought the T-shirt. Could all these waters be classified as “ Hard waters”, with both containing fish that “elude” capture for years, or never get caught at all, but all are not un-catchable. The above scenario means we could have “easy” fish in a hard water, or “hard” fish in an easy water but both are difficult in their own way.

They haven't moved anywhere! You'll be surprised how many times they can pass over your bait, pick it up and drop it again without making a single “bleep” or hooking themselves, even with the latest “**Super rig**”. They can even ignore a certain area for a period of time that has been receiving a lot of angling pressure, like the margins for example, moving further out into the lake until you are chucking a hundred yards to put a bait amongst the fish. Is this down to the incompetence of the angler? Or inferior baits and rigs? Or do fish “ Associate” baits, presentation or areas with danger? Does this make them problem solving, or have a long-term memory? (Or is it more likely it becomes second nature, or even “**instinct**”, to take that particular bait with caution instead of calling it a “memory”). These are the types of ideas that wake me up in the middle of the night sweating (No that's another reason!). Or are we just complicating matters? Reading too much into things that are not there?

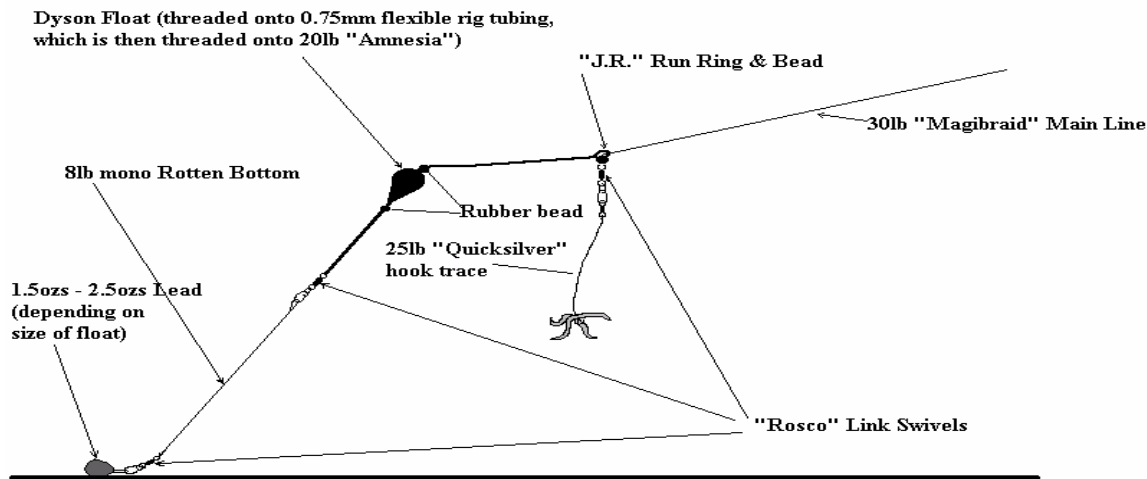
Are eels any different? They probably feel “angling pressure“ more than any other fish. (Their lives could depends on it, because not every angler who catches an eel returns it alive!) Could this be a reason that sometimes you get deep hooked eels? Have these eels taken the bait with confidence because it's never been caught before? While at the other end of the scale, have the eels that were hooked square in the lip, taking the bait with caution, purely because they **have** been hooked once or twice before? Have they hooked themselves in the process? Bolting away from the area, trying to get rid of the hook, or because it feels something isn't right? Does this make them wary of that particular presentation, or bait?

Even missing a run on the strike, pulling the bait from its mouth can change its approach to a bait, even though it's first initial instinct is to take the food item because **it is** food? In a situation like this, could slight modifications in presentation or a change of bait, create a new lease of life? Normally when the runs have died off, or get aborted and “ twitchy”, we've usually moved on to pastures new, or even giving the water a resting period before returning, to do the same things all over again, as we did before.

Wondering why we're not getting as many positive takes as we did when we first put a bait in the water, instead of trying something different, but are we giving eels to much credit? Not all eel anglers have the luxury of having vast amounts of waters at their disposal. Or the transport to get too them, having to make the best of what they have available.

Could the reason that we get aborted and “twitchy” takes be due to the resistance from our terminal presentation, or the initial pulling of the line from our clips? Or is it down to the change in resistance that follows after it has taken the line out of the clip when everything goes slack? But “Eels don't like any kind of resistance.” Or do they? Does it depend on how much resistance? What kind of resistance? Does increasing, or reducing the resistance on our set-ups cause problems, or solves certain predicaments that arise later in the season? Mainly concerning eels that have already been hooked before and feed cautiously? Does it have to be a constant resistance, or not? Certain events happened to Jimmy and I during this season, purely by accident that changed the way we looked at eel behaviour towards presentation, bait and resistance (which I will explain in more detail later).

Fig 1.



Fishing the canal, the problems we have are, where it is clear one day could have a Christmas tree in it the next and semi-floating bread-feed bags. The most confident way I knew to present a bait, so it wasn't stuck in a bag all night, was to use the "Dyson rig". Also the only way I could fish worms without being pestered by nuisance fish (20lb carp). The second equation was changing my mainline from "Fire-line" to "Magi-braid", and for Jimmy to change from 15lb "Big Game mono. Unbeknown to us, until mid-season, that this would change our ideas concerning resistance fishing for eels.

When the braid arrived I took one look at it and thought "that's thin!" (Being a flat braid it has a diameter of 0:20mm with eight pound mono being 0:25mm baring in mind the braid is 30lb B.S.). So I had to adjust my drop-arm clip tight enough to hold it in, which I didn't think anything of at the time. The rig also went under transformation to compensate the multitude of situations that may arise without changing the "rig".

Both Jimmy and I decided to **fix** our "Dyson floats" (**see fig 1**) on a length of rig tubing with 20lb "Amnesia" through the middle, between two locking beads. The reason for doing this was, if we were fishing a water with a heavy growth of weed a normal sliding float could be restricted by strands of weed on the line. The weed would prevent the float sliding to the stop-knot on a conventional Dyson rig.

When it is fixed at the right depth, it's already in the correct position to start with, eliminating this problem in conjunction with an inter-changeable lead-link. The lead is a 2½-oz dumpy lead, which **critically balances** the large sunken "FOX" float.

If you tighten down too much, only two things can happen. The first being that the drop-off arm won't hold the line in the clip and the second is that the whole rig moves to realign it's self again. The advantage of the braid is that you can feel the float before it goes tight (even at distances of 60 yards plus).

With it having only 3% stretch and being water repellent, this makes it totally buoyant and a perfect choice to fish "off bottom" rigs, reducing line-snagging to a minimal. This creates an 'almost' true line from the rod-tip to the rig, line-sagging is a common problem you tend to get with mono-lines used in conjunction with buoyant rigs. Once the rig is cast out, all you have to do is, tighten down until you feel the float, then feed back about four inches of line, clip the drop-off indicator on and tighten everything back up until you feel the float. Your rod-tip actually bends round to the rig, with your bait being suspended at the correct depth and angle **every** time.

We had created a resistance rig and didn't realise it at the time, or how much resistance, until we came across a big problem.

With the braid being of such a low diameter, flat and extremely supple, it didn't register any runs, just the first "bleep" then nothing! The way modern alarms are designed to work under constant tension, on "bait-runners" for carp. With an open bail-arm, the line hasn't weight to move the smooth wheel and instead glides over it. To remedy this problem we tried fishing with the clutch slackened right off, which these eels didn't like, but it solved the alarm problem. So back to square one, eels don't like "resistance".

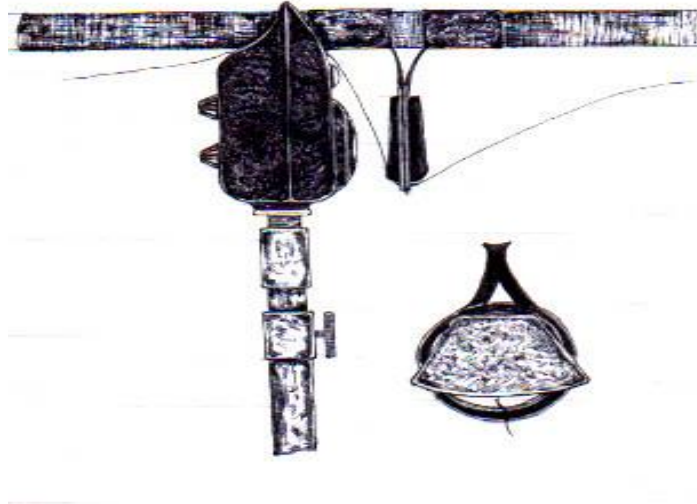


Fig 2. Indicator and Butt Foam.

Back to sleep for Jimmy, and a night of hair pulling for me! Dawn broke and the answer came in a flash! When Jimmy emerged from his stupor he was greeted with the words “I’ve cracked it!” and in unison, “foam in the butt ring” (see fig 2) and the end of the problem (Jimmy later informed me that he thought about it the previous night but couldn’t be a***d telling me! He could have saved me a sleepless night but that’s not how Jimmy’s mind works). After experimenting with the foam insert, it was discovered that the problem wasn’t the tension, but the angle that the line was travelling over the wheel. During these trails we had to set our rods up on the bank as if in a fishing situation, but facing along the bank. The foam was inserted and the line clip attached in the normal way, Jimmy would stand 30 yards away with the line in his hand, pulling madly, but getting nowhere. The rod tip was bouncing and the rear bank stick rocking but the clip stayed put, indicating just how much “resistance” our clips had on a taking eel. We later found that this would have little or no affect on our results.

We all know just how different eel takes can be from one another, from the preverbal “screamer” to the “twitchy” type of eel take. Using the exact same baits, rigs and presentation in all cases, except for the time of year when food supply exceeds demand (Summer).

On one occasion this was brought to our attention in a most unpredictable way. In May this year (99) I was fishing with Jimmy on our local stretch of the L & L canal, when Jimmy’s far margin rod started to act very strangely. Jimmy noticed that the line where it entered the water was making a figure-of-eight movement, slackening and tightening and occasionally bouncing the rod tip but with no indication on his line clip or alarm. However, it was still daylight (9:15 p.m.) so we presumed it was a small perch trying to make off with his “Platt Bridge Octopus” (worms). This went on for approximately 2 minutes, “*Are you going to hit that perch or what?*” I asked him “*Alright*” he replied “*or at least check my worms before it goes dark*”. On lifting his rod and unclipping his indicator. The 3lb test curve rod assumed its formidable “Klingon battle arc” (I really most stop watching Star Trek) any way back to the tale. After a healthy scrap, the net slid under a nice 4lb 06ozs fighting fit eel. (See fig 3) Now, how many times does this happen when we can’t see what the line is doing? We just don’t know!



Jimmy's PB eel of 4lb – 06ozs.

Something very similar happened to myself later on in the season, fishing a totally different area, but again on the far margin, the bait again was worms, but this time it was dark! (11:45pm.). I got a single bleep on the worm-rod, on closer inspection I noticed that the rod tip was bouncing like mad. So I unclipped the braided line, which started whizzing through my fingers, then came to an abrupt stop. On winding down and making connection, the eel leapt from the water in my own margins, (which was an enormous shock at the time) unfortunately it came adrift, spitting the hook in the net cord. Jimmy said to me in mid-fight that it looked as if it was hooked in the underside of it's lower jaw and was probably the reason it came adrift so easily. At 00:45 a.m. I had another take on the same rod, same spot and the same bait. The eel did exactly the same thing as the first eel, except this time she graced the net at 4lb-05oz, hooked in the tip of the lower lip (**See fig 4**). On closer inspection (in the light of day) a small incision was duly noted in the region of the under side of the lower jaw. Could this have been the same fish? If these "*takes*" went unnoticed would they have developed into positive runs?

So in conclusion: Why are not all "*eel takes*" the same? Even when you are using the same set-ups and baits? Is it because eels "associate" with presentation and baits as danger. Why did those two eels take the bait with so much caution? Does this mean they have been caught before, or hooked and lost? The previous eels didn't mind the resistance from the clips, it's what happens afterwards they didn't like, the sudden change in resistance, was this creating more positive runs because of the sudden change in resistance? Was it spooking them?

After what we have experienced this season, every time the line falls out the clip and nothing happens, or the rod tip bangs round once then stops, as if something was tugging at the bait. In conclusion the first reason I'm going to put it down to **are** eels, instead of saying "*it's a liner, or a perch pulling the worms*" because it could be an eel, you never can tell for sure. How many times could this happen at night with out us knowing because we can't see our lines or rod-tip banging away? Could "*association*" be more apparent than we **want** to believe? If so, could slight modifications in presentation, or bait, when these situations do arise (Given the time of year, or the amount of angling "pressure" it has been receiving) give a new lease of life? Or is it purely a "confidence thing" for our own benefit?



The "Burglar's" 4lb – 05oz canal eel.

THE UPPER TAMAR FISH-IN (20-22/7/99)

By
Nick Rose.

We arrived at about 5pm and, as we unloaded the gear, I realised that I had not put either of the bedchairs in the van, thus explaining why I was thinking "Why have we got so much room in the van on this trip" as I sped along the M5. Considering that I had just recovered from an operation, the thought of sleeping on the ground all weekend didn't fill me with glee, but as they say, "we're made of hard stuff us Midlander's."

Anyway, you have to cross the dam to get to the area that we were going to fish (I had rung Steve Dawe and Chris Hodgson about the best areas to fish and Chris had said "try the first bay on the far side of the dam".) As usual, Andrew and Jason made off into the sunset as far as they could walk so I dropped my gear in the bay and walked up to see Steve Dawe, who was about 150 yards up the bank. After chatting for 10 minutes I made my first mistake and moved out of the bay and set up near Steve.

The action was almost instant and I was getting pulls on livebaits, resulting in many missed runs but I did catch a couple of small eels, and so did Steve. The next morning we went round to see the lad's and found Jason happy with a lone eel of 2lb 14oz. (This equalled his PB that he caught at the Lynch Hill fish-in last year) Andrew had caught 3 eels up to 2lb. It was good to know that we had all caught on the first night.

I followed Steve and Chris's advice to the letter in the morning and cast out a big deadbait and low and behold at 10.45am I had a screaming run. I struck into a big fish and after 5 seconds it made its escape with half of my 5-inch roach. At this point I decided to move (again advice from Steve and Chris)

I walked past the bay and up to the dam, (mistake number 2) Steve followed me around and was left with the bay swim. We both cast out at mid-day and at 12.20pm Steve had a run which produced an eel of 4lb 12oz. 37½ inches long 9½-inch girth. A short, fat eel but a joy to see.

Runs were coming regularly during the next 20 hours, resulting in eels all around 2lb in weight. It was great fun and I was trying all manner of livebait rigs to try and cut down on the missed runs and learnt a lot. On prolific waters you can afford to experiment but if I was fishing a one run a session water I would not have experimented so much.

The next morning Steve and I walked round to the lad's, who, on our advice, had moved swims (further away from us) and were greeted with Jason 'cock a hoop' because he had caught yet another PB. This time the eel went 3lb 12oz. (He really is on a roll and there is Elvington to come.)

All the photos were done and we, Steve and I, set off back to the cars. I said goodbye to Steve and he left but I had time to order a full breakfast, wait for it for 25 minutes, eat it and drink two pots of tea whilst watching the two lad's trekking back along the bank with all their gear. There are advantages to being old

and not being able to walk that far.

As a fish-in, this was the best venue for a long time. It combined loads of swims to choose from, lot's of action, the odd big eel, cheap fishing permits and on site there were loo's, shower's, a restaurant and, for those who wanted it, a gift shop stuffed full of pressies.

The only drawback I can think of is it is pretty far for the regular fish-in lad's, but not for some of the others.

As for me, I did it all right. I asked Steve and Chris about the baits, the methods, the rig's and having taken all the information on board, put them all into action. But oh how I wished I had dropped into that bay, like Chris had told me!!

EEL FISHING CIRCA 1969. **(A chapter from Peter Stone's 1969 book entitled 'Coarse Fishing'.**

By
Peter Stone.

Description and location.

The eel does not require much description. Its shape is that of a snake and it has a fairly small mouth and small red eyes. The colouring of an eel appears to depend upon the water in which it lives. Those on gravel have yellowish undersides, and I have caught them silver in colour. Very few waters do **not** hold eels, yet few anglers fish for them. A pity, for they are a fine sporting fish.

I like eel fishing, especially at night, and one can afford to relax at this game, as there is little need for concentration. To hook a big eel is a wonderful experience, and I spend many a summer's day or night fishing for them.

Eels are found anywhere in rivers and lakes, but certain swims are better than others. In rivers, I like the deep holes, especially in the weir-pools, and in lakes I go for the deepest water I can find. Failing these swims, wherever a lot of rubbish has accumulated is good, as are "onions" and "cabbages".

Night fishing if allowed is best, when eels move more freely. A nice mild night is the time to be out, or if in the daytime choose a close, humid day. Eels do **not** bite better in thunderstorms, despite claims to the contrary, but I have taken good bags immediately following one. They are primarily a summer fish, and will feed in the hottest of weather, but night fishing is the most productive.

Tackle.

The rod: For eels you **must** have a fairly powerful rod. A fibreglass one, 10 feet in length is about right.

The reel: Fixed-spool

The line: 10lb. b.s.

Terminal tackle: A barleycorn lead, hook. A baiting needle.

Ledgering.

Eels take most baits offered to them, but for big ones a dead fish cannot be bettered, bleak and gudgeon being the best. Lobs are all right, but tend to attract small eels (boot-laces), which should be avoided.

Get your dead-bait, insert the baiting needle into its mouth, bringing it out again at the fork of its tail. There should be an inch of needle protruding from either end of the bait. Now get the "barley-corn lead", thread the gimp hook through it and allow the lead to drop down to the hook shank. Push the loop of the gimp through the eye of the needle, and pull the needle right through the bait until the lead rests against the bait's mouth. Remove the needle from the gimp, and with the eye of the needle ram the lead down the bait's throat, out of sight. Pull the loop of the gimp until the hook is inside the bait's mouth, with the bend of it outside the mouth. The hook, plus bait is now attached to the line in the normal manner and is ready for casting. A small point worth remembering here is to prick the bait all over with the baiting needle. This allows the flavours of the bait to "scent" the water. The eel picks up the scent, eventually finding the bait.

That is how I thread my baits, but if you do not like gimp (and many don't) you can attach the bait in the following manner: push the needle in at the tail and out at the mouth. Thread the line through the eye of the needle, pull through, and remove the needle. The end of the line is now protruding from the mouth of the bait. Thread the lead on the line, attach an eyed hook, and pull back as above. A split shot is now pinched on the line against the tail of the bait. This prevents the eel spitting the bait up the line when hooked, and biting off the hook. The bait, being fixed in this manner, also forces the mouth of the eel open, partially choking it. These are two methods of attaching the bait; use whichever you prefer.

Long casting is often necessary, especially in weir-pools and lakes, and a bait with lead inside it greatly improves casting range.

Bite-indicators.

I generally use an electric bite alarm when eel fishing. Bite alarms first came into prominence when night carp fishing became popular. Many anglers make their own and because of this there are many "variations on an original theme". For the electrically minded, the building of an alarm is quite simple, but for those, like me, who are not that way inclined, one must be bought.

For years I have used the "Heron" indicator. As can be seen from the picture it has a separate waterproof box, which houses the battery. The plug on the end of the flex plugs into a hole in the bottom of the indicator. To set the alarm a brass rod or stick is stuck into another hole in the indicator and then pushed into the ground at the water's edge. A rod rest is then positioned about 2 feet behind it. The rod handle is placed on the rod rest, the bite indicator supporting the rod near the butt ferrule.

On top of the indicator is an antenna, which, by means of two screws in the side can be set to very fine limits. Take the line between the butt ring and ferrule and pass this over the antenna leaving it so that it is resting against it. When a fish takes the bait, the line rubbing against the antenna sets the buzzer off, thus denoting a bite. The indicator must be set very finely by means of the screws, so that a bite is registered as soon as the line moves. The pick—up" of the reel must be left open so that line can be taken without any resistance by a fish running off with the bait.

Care must be taken that the rod does not touch the antenna in any way, and the indicator and rod rest must be positioned so that the rod is pointing at the water.

Bites follow the same pattern. The line will run out for several yards, then stop, and for a minute or two knocks are felt on the line. This is followed by another fast run. Allow the eel to run several yards, close the pick-up, take up any slack line and strike. Having hooked your eel, you "pump" him in, which is done in the following manner.

Pull the rod right back into the vertical position, then quickly point the rod at the fish, at the same time winding in, thus keeping the line tight. Then, holding the line tight, pull the rod back until vertical, and repeat. Continue pumping until the eel is at the bank, and then net it, or, if the bank is level with the water, slide it out.

Fishing weirs.

When fishing weirs, and if much water is coming through, false bites, caused by floating debris, often occur. Under such conditions, in daylight I dispense with the indicator, and hold the rod upright, with as much line out of the water as possible. Constant flicking of the line will be necessary in order to avoid and free rubbish, and when this happens eel fishing is not so relaxing as it can be.

You may also be fishing with your bait very close to a snag or snags. The eel will pick up the bait, run a few feet, become tangled and feeling resistance, drop it. If this occurs, a miniature snap tackle similar to the one described for mounting herring (in the pike chapter) using No.10 trebles, can be used, A single hook going in at the bait's mouth, with a treble halfway down its flank. The bait, of course, is not threaded. When the eel commences to run, strike, and although it is not certain that the fish will be hooked, at least you have a chance, and this is the only way to make the best of a poor job.

If you can't afford an indicator, use a piece of silver paper, as I described in the tench chapter.

Fishing at night.

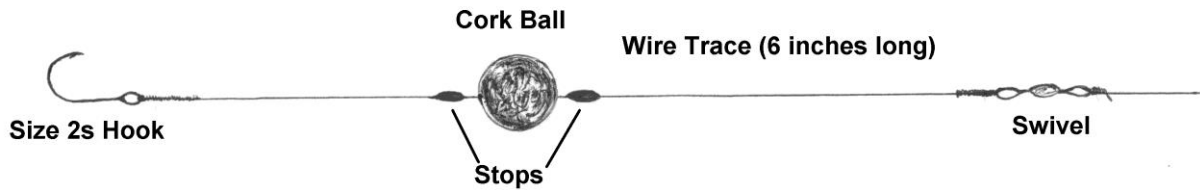
Eel fishing is a most exciting sport, especially at night, and it is a relaxing kind of fishing. A two-pounder put up a most dogged resistance when hooked, and you often get a fight that lives long in the memory.

When fishing at night it is advisable to cut the line just above the eel, and drop it into a sack, tying it up until daylight. In any case the eel must be killed before you unhook it. This, if done correctly is easy. Get a sham, pointed knife and stick it into the top of the eel's head, immediately between the eyes. This kills it instantly, and cleanly. Don't take any notice of the oft-repeated advice such as to hit it on the tail, etc., because it does not work. The only effective method, apart from the one mentioned, is to cut off its head. This, however, makes the skinning of the eel difficult, besides being messy.

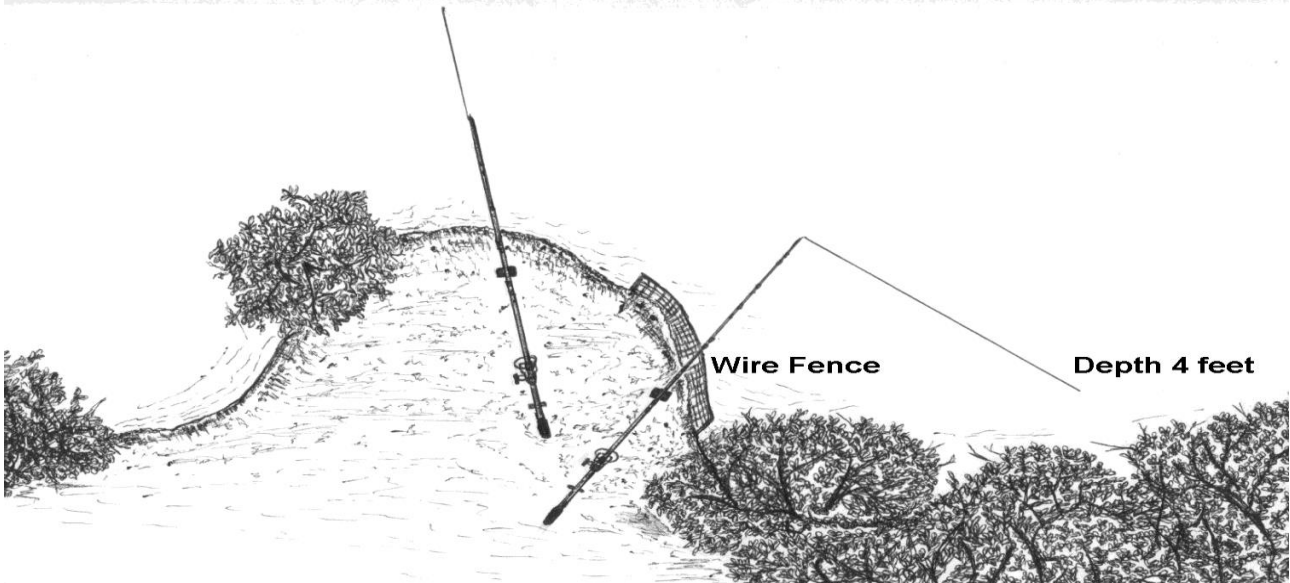
LUCKY LAW'S SIX FOUR.

By
Malcolm Law.

I arrived at Elvington with Jimmy Jolley at about 4:30, after another excursion around Yorkshire and picking up two fellow lost souls on the road (Nick and Golden B*****s Rose). After a quick reccy around the lake, I decided to fish my allocated swim. I'd made the decision to try livebaiting, properly, for the first time and was armed with three rigs to try out (as it happened I only used one). Two were off Keith Bradbury and the other was Damian Wood's lasso rig.



After setting up, I acquired a live roach from Phil Lukins and flicked it out to my right, in between two trees. My other rod, with worms on, was cast straight out.



After casting out my worm rod, I realised that it was snagged up and on walking backwards to try and free it, I drew level with my livebait rod. It gave out a bleep, with which I thought I had bumped into it. The next thing a screaming run developed, which I hit straight away. The rod bent double and carried on some. I let out a few choice words. On hearing this, Phil Lukins asked if I'd "got one?". More choice words like "get your **** over here and give us a hand" came out. Meanwhile, I was hanging on and not gaining any line, but after about a minute, I started to gain the upper hand. She started to come towards me but the fight was unbelievable. I couldn't give an inch due to the snags on my right.

On getting her to the surface, the fun of trying to land her started, Phil and Jimmy came strolling into my peg. "A bit of urgency wouldn't go amiss, boys," I said. Phil grabbed the net but couldn't net her, due to a submerged fence by my feet, which she was now wrapped around. After getting her to the side, I now had to try and force her out again! After three or four attempts to "knock her off" or out, she finally moved and in an instant Phil had netted her.

On seeing her size Jimmy said, "it's a six, that is". I thought about 5lb 08oz but she turned out to be 6lb 04oz, 41 inches long with a girth of 9.75 inches. The fish, and fight of a lifetime.

Thanks to Phil, for landing the beast, Jimmy for the picture, Ken for the video, Nick for more photos and everyone who seemed genuinely pleased for me.



6lb - 04ozs, from Elvington Lake, Yorkshire.

***** Anthony 'B.T.' Jolley wanted it known that in all the time he has been social organiser he had one dream and that was for someone to catch a 4lb plus eel on one of his official organised club fish-in trips. This dream was realised by the capture of the fish on both Elvington trips. The 2nd trip was the icing on the cake with Malcolm taking the biggest eel on a fish-in in the club's history. The 2nd Elvington trip produced a few more eels, these were as follows.... Andrew Rose 2.13, Jason Tyndall 4.00 (A new PB), Damian Wood 2.08 and 3.11, Phil Lukins 3.12, Jason Morgan 2.04, Shaun Pope 3.07, Chris Siddall 3.13 and a boot, Mark Smethurst 3.08, Lucky Law finished up with his fabulous 6.04 and 2.14. B.T., Cousin It, Jimmy no name and Dances all BLANKED.

LOOKING BACK AT MY SEASON
(As I wait for the new one!!)

By
Jason "Eric" Morgan.

Having made a promise to myself to fish more sessions than I did last year, I'm more than happy to have accomplished my desired objective. By the end of September I had recorded a total of twelve sessions, opening my account in June, with an accidental 2lb'er. I went on to take a further four eels in July (2lb 13oz, 3lb 04oz, 2lb 13oz and 3lb 06oz). These four eels were taken from my local canal and were all caught on ledgered roach or gudgeon section. I rounded my season off nicely with my first eel on a fish-in at Emberton. An eel of 2lb 06oz.

However, as I cannot get onto the canal until June 16th, in my part of the country, this years Anguilla hunting, started with a blank on Town River, in the swim that had given me last years surprise 2lb'er, whilst chubbing with meat. A session in early April on Gailey Lower Reservoir also failed to produce a fish of any species, no matter what I threw at them.

May arrived and for the first time I could get onto my new syndicate water. I was buzzing for days prior to that first trip, the venue is said to have produced two daylight 3's, as well as a smaller fish and to my knowledge had never been eel fished. I managed three sessions on consecutive weeks with the following results: -

20th May. Blanked and very nearly froze to death, very, very cold night. A few liners to keep me awake but other than that zilch.

27th May. Got caught in a heavy thunder and lightning storm, very nearly electrocuted this time and recorded another blank.

1st June. Settled weather at last. Roach tail cast into the middle of the lake gave a few bleeps at 3:15am. On inspection the wire had tangled on the cast, possibly causing the run to stop.

At last June 16th was here and I had booked a week off work with the sole intention of eel fishing and very little else. To accompany me was a friend on leave from the RAF, his interest in eels fuelled by slipping the net under my 3lb 04oz, the previous season. Mike was almost buzzing as much as myself.

Before setting off for the first trip of our week long session, I gave the "Hedgehog" a call. I like to have a chat about eeling with another member before I go. This is probably a bad idea, as by the time I make it to the canal I am so psyched up I can't cast straight (well that's my excuse). During the call I mentioned to the "Hedgehog" that I was going to try and get Mike his first eel, to which Nick replied "Never mind your mate, catch 'em yourself". How I wished I had listened to him. Here is a diary of the week's events.

18th June.

We picked a nice looking swim just upstream of a boat club, right next to a bridge. Being a generous fellow I gave Mike first choice of swims (mistake No 1). Not surprising he chose the bridge swim leaving me with the open water. Still, it wasn't a bad looking swim, so out went the baits. Not much happened until around 2:25am (apart from Mike falling off his chair twice and nearly setting fire to my broolly. Oh yes, not to mention half blinding me with the biggest starlight type thing I've ever seen. Army issue, I believe). Then Mike had a 3lb 08oz on ledgered gudgeon head from right in the middle of the bridge opening. OK, so he had beaten my PB at his first attempt, but I did feel well and truly made up for him. Then he nailed another eel of around 1lb, this time using what I have learned as the stealth method (he forgot to switch on his alarm). This eel was munching big time, as well as Mikes bait in it's mouth, it had the previous two baits Mike had had snatched and we removed what was left of a 4 inch long gudgeon from it's jaws. Once again I blanked, but did manage a 2lb 08oz perch at first light on an off bottom roach section.

20th June.

Well rested and eager to go, we were off once again. Shaun Pope was to join us for this outing, so a larger communal swim was chosen. A large overflow, that from the presence of bait fish topping on our arrival was sure to home to some members of the Anguilla tribe. Bait bashing was no problem, and very soon six baits were out. Shaun, at the start of the swim, plumbed for two freelined baits, one marginal and one just off the track. Mike, in the middle, went for two Sidley rigs with gudgeon sections on both. One was in the track and the other along the far shelf. This left me with the end peg. Oops, sorry. That's a matchmans term, I should have said swim. So as the sun set I placed my off bottom roach livey, just off the track and a J.S. roach head along the far bank, further down stream. Shaun had a couple of screaming runs, before the sunset, resulting in perch of around the pound mark. Then all was quiet. Very quiet indeed, until at last around 1:30am, off went my livey rod. Casually walking up to the rods I could see the line spilling off the reel. My first take on a livebait and I was nervous as hell. Firstly having thus far failed to get a run on live bait, I had no idea when to strike. Secondly, I did not what to botch it up in front of Mike and Shaun, This being our only chance so far. I should not have worried, for as I began to wind down it became painfully clear that there was no eel attached, nor a sunk float, run ring, ledger or trace. The eel had obviously swum over a sharp edge of a can or something similar. Many swear words later, I re-rigged,

but not an off bottom rig. At that time of night and feeling more than a little er.....miffed, I could not have even attempted to set up an off bottom rig without more swear words and a further rise in blood pressure. So I lobbed out a freelined mini skimmer and went to sleep. When I awoke, Shaun was packed up and ready to go. We said our goodbyes and I apologised for the lack of action. At around 5:00am the skimmer rod burst into life. I let the second run start before picking up the rod and winding down..... Aaarrggghhh, B*****s. Yet another chance gone!! Shortly after, when I had finished swearing and settled down with a nice cup of coffee, Mike announced that he was going to put his bait back in the track, to see if he could nab a perch or two. 6:30am, bright sunlightbeeeeeeeep. Hmmm, me thinks, as the water is turned to mud and bubbles, perch don't do that. Once again I am ghillie, as Mike brings a 2lb 11oz to the net. This was now getting embarrassing!

22nd June.

Session No 3. Once again a swim near a bridge was chosen, but this time it had the added advantage of extensive marginal weed. I am not sure if I offered Mike the bridge swim or whether I just didn't get my gear down fast enough to reserve it. Anyway, I wasn't really bothered as I was sure the marginal reeds would produce an eel, or hopefully two. With baits in the bucket and camp assembled it was time to get down to the "serious" task of eel fishing. Was that really my alarm? Nope it was Mike's again! At around 11:30pm Mike's ledgered gudgeon head was taken and the result was a fine eel of around 3lb (I will explain later). Shortly after Mike's fourth eel of the week was confined to the quarters of the keep net (with soft sacking at the bottom, quite cosy really), my bedchair collapsed, TWICE. This along with a couple of missed runs was the final straw! I completely lost it!! Or to quote Mike's own words "Threw my teddy out of the pram". Nothing was going right for me, so I took my bedchair off the sloping bank behind the towpath, and threw it onto the towpath, in the hope that the level ground would support the legs. I chucked a plastic sheet over me and went to sleep.

At this point I feel I should point out that I love eel fishing, regardless of the blanks, but as I have limited fishing time, I get a little frustrated that on a high percentage of my sessions something inevitably goes wrong. This may be that I am still relatively new to the whole night fishing scene and just down to inexperience, but at this point I felt someone was really taking the ****.

I was just entering dreamland at around 1:30am when I had a slow confident take on an off bottom gudgeon head. I picked up the rod and wound down and BANG! the rod tip slammed over. This fish did not stay in one spot, instead it used the width of the canal, making a beeline for the reeds and then ripping of for the far bank snags. She really did not want to meet me. When eventually she was netted, I did not grasp how big she was until Mike shone the torch. Safe in the confines of my net lay, one pristine conditioned 4lb eel, lip hooked, which is always nice. Shortly after Mike nailed a nice two plus and bumped two more, but I was still in a daze. First fish of the year and a new PB. Sweet!!

Earlier I mentioned that we never got the weight of Mike's 3lb'er. That is because whilst weighing and photographing my 4lb'er, she did a "Houdini". As Mike was taking pictures, the net with the other two eels was on the unhooking mat below me. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that one of the eels was making a wriggle for it. Apprehended and confined to the net once more, I released my eel while Mike went to get his 3lb'er ready. "It's not here," said a rather upset Mike. He was right, I must have recaptured the smaller eel, but the 3lb'er was long gone! Mike decided not to weigh the smaller eel or have any photos (I think he was a bit grumpy), so back she went and we headed for home.

24th June.

The final session of the week. After a good afternoons sleep and some proper food, we were back for one last go. Having had the four I was not bothered if I caught or not. I just wanted to have a laugh and enjoy Mike's company before he disappeared for another couple of months. We chose a swim with a nice big reed bed in front of us, but not a bridge in sight. Would Mike be able to cope? It was a frustrating night, that saw us miss run after run, lives, deads, sections, everything was being hit, but we could not connect. We tried all sorts' of timing on the strike but nothing was hooked until yours truly whipped out a 2lb 12oz on an off bottom gudgeon tail at 3:00am. Shock! Horror! Stop press!! Mike blanked, so he is human after all !! After the eel was photographed and released, two zombified anglers piled their gear into a taxi one last time, and headed home to reflect on an interesting week, with no lack of action. On every session we had banked an eel.

The things I learnt from my experiences in the above week are....

1. My best friend is a pyromaniac. He needs to burn things, whether it is brollys, eyebrows or whatever.
2. Mike must never be offered first choice of swim.
3. Forgetting to turn your alarm on is not a mistake. It's called the stealth method
4. Small eels will eat until food is falling out of their mouths..... And continue eating.
5. Eel fishing IS fun, when done with a friend. As long as they don't wipe the floor with you and tell your fiancée, then they both hurl abuse at you in your own home, in which you are letting one of them stay.

With that week ended, I said farewell to Mike and returned to work, with only one or two sessions a week. But alas the blanks mounted up. I seemed to be getting chances on every session, yet I could not turn them into eels on the bank. One short session from 8pm to 1am saw me miss four good takes to ledgered gudgeon sections. The baits were crushed right up to where the hook was (head sections lip hooked on a size 4). The eels were having it big time, but none wanted to visit my landing net. A few more blanks followed until I decided to try something different.

During a conversation with the "Hedgehog" he suggested I try a different timing on the strike, as the eels seemed to be belting off with bait at high speed, but not eating it straight away. The next session and a screaming run to ledgered roach head, roared off a little after 12am. With the optonic wailing and line disappearing down the canal, it was difficult to resist the urge to strike. Resist I did, until the run stopped and as soon as the second run started the strike was made. It resulted in my third eel of the season, weighing in at a healthy 2lb 07oz, with the hook eye only just beyond the lips.

Perch have been a problem all season, zipping off with baits at high speed and inevitably gutting them, and for my next couple of sessions, kamikaze stripeys is all I could tempt. If anyone has any ideas about how to avoid deep hooking perch that seem to have a death wish, any advice would be welcome. I don't like having good perch die but they seem to give the same runs as the eels in the canal I am fishing. Very confusing.

The rest of my season continued along the same path, with good chances missed and the occasional eel. In the last couple of months of the season I added a 3lb 07oz from my only run of that session. This happened after moving an off bottom roach head from in the track, to the margins of a bridge opening. The take came twenty minutes after repositioning the bait. I ended my season with a 2lb 04oz eel from Elvington Lake on a club fish-in. This eel took off bottom worms. I also lost a heavy fish (species unknown) that decided on a midday snack of lamprey section.

So now I come to the closing lines of my little effort. With my eel season now over, I look ahead to six months of passing the time with other species. Be it chubbing, perchling or jack bashing (I can't seem to catch proper pike). I will close with this one sentence.

I'd rather be eel fishing.

THE HILLS HAVE EYES : (Part 2)

By
Anthony Jolley.

At 7:30 we arrived on a hot sticky evening in July, I called at Phil's house to pick him up and made our way to an unfamiliar stretch of canal, one that we think may produce a very big eel one day. We looked at some likely areas, as we had a lot of time on our hands before the light faded.

We eventually chose a spot where the canal had turned a deep orange, due to deposits of "iron ore" from some old mines close by. The canal was originally dug out to transport coal in the mid 1700's from the coal seams.

We returned to the car, unloaded the gear and made our way back to the canal, where the tunnels can be seen disappearing into the hillside, like eye sockets in a skull. There are actually locks underground, with miles of dark canal within these tunnels. As we walked along the canal bank, we noticed some peculiar signs, which became more apparent as we carried on walking, until they were on every signpost available.

They had a picture of a man and woman with two children in tow, all holding hands! And at the bottom were the words "Is your conduct suitable" with the police patrolling the area. Somewhat puzzled by the signs, we eventually set about trying "swishing" for some bait, before setting-up, but we couldn't get a single fish, not even fry! So we decided to move to a different stretch of canal we'd seen earlier.

On our way back I spotted a slim long-haired, scantily clad woman (As you do) on the other tow-path, as we approached her, she seemed to try and avoid our stares, I said to Phil "It seems a bit strange that she'd be out, on a canal in the middle of nowhere" then it became obvious, this 'she' was a "he"! and "she" wasn't alone, there were a few "young men" hanging around, looking very shifty. Then it suddenly dawned on me what the signs were all about, we started to quicken our pace and made it back to the car, where I told Phil "If he wasn't quick enough he could ask the "she-male" for a lift home"

We departed rapidly and made our way on to the motorway, where the Skoda promptly broke down, the coil-lead had come off, then we were on our way again, although the car felt strange and 'plucky', so we decided to try our luck on a 'familiar' stretch of canal, nearer to home, just in case we had anymore car trouble.

We arrived at 10:15 p.m. nearly three hours later, everything went okay with us setting-up and fishing, luckily just before dark. Phil had been suffering all week with an ear infection and when one of his optonics decided to pack in, I lent him the use of mine (Which were Phil's really, but I've been using them for the past two seasons!).

I put the rod out and said to Phil that I would listen out for the clutch. At 2am I was awoken to a slight 'thud', I looked over to the rod and the drop-arm was off, on the alarm less rod!, on closer inspection line was whispering off the reel (I'd not left the bale-arm on). I struck with a horrible feeling of line going through some under-water snag greeting me, strangely the eel came in okay and netted at a fraction under 3lbs. It's a good job I'm a light sleeper, or it could have been disastrous (A lesson learnt)

Everything went quiet again until 4:30 a.m. when I was awoke to the sound of 'stones' being trampled under foot. I looked around quickly, but couldn't see anyone! but the sounds continued. I looked behind me at the old farmhouse to observe two young men 'Mooching' about, obviously up to no good! As we watched them brake into a secure container, oblivious to our presence. They were easily startled, as we shouted " Oh! What you up to! which made them run like greyhounds across the fields

Thinking that we had scared them off, we continued to fish-on, until 'yes! you've guessed it' they came back. So this time we just let them get on with it, until they were ready to leave, as we had already closed and secured the gate that covered the only entrance in and out to the farm!

Phil shouted again but instead of running to the 'ready loaded car' of 'knock-off' gear they scarppered off over the fields again. We had left it for about five minuets to see if they came back, while we contacted the police from the nearest phone box, but they never returned. As the police arrived like the 'Sweeney' with their lights going and dust everywhere, my alarm burst in to action and at 6:30 a.m. I had another eel of 2lb 7oz on a live-bait, we gave a statement while unhooking the eel. We had learnt a few lessons on this trip.

- 1: If you come to a good looking area, fish it and don't try to find any more till your next session: 'The grass is always greener' so they say
- 2: If you see strange signs, **look** for strange people!
- 3: You never know when you'll catch an eel, as we have usually gone home by that time. The strange thing is, that Damian 'The Burglar' Wood's eel of 6lb 1oz came out at the end of a session on their way home!
- 4: If you are listening for the clutch, make sure the bail-arms on!

RECORDS OFFICERS REPORT PART 3. (JUNE- OCTOBER)

By
Jimmy Jolley.

First of all, I would like to thank **all** the committee for giving me the opportunity to take some "small" active part in the running of the National Anguilla Club (seeing that I have only been a full member since the last AGM in March), and in particular Stuart 'Spac-e-man' Dean for his invaluable help in "braking me in" to my new roll within the N.A.C, (Thanks Mate, good luck in the future, and keep up the great job that 'Dances' and yourself are doing with the magazine.)

I would just like to add some late additions to Stuart's last Record Officer's Report, which was produced in the summer issue of '**Anguilla**'. On the 27th/28th May an eel of **3lb-09ozs** to yours truly, and another of **4lb-09ozs**, which at the time was a new P.B for **Damian 'The Burglar' Wood** from the L & L Canal caught on worm and roach head respectively.

My first job as Records Officer was to follow up an E-mail from Stuart regarding a report of a large eel, caught by **Keith Bradbury**. This was confirmed by Keith and weighed **7lb-15ozs** (this eel is at equal 4th in the N.A.C top 50 list) and came from a Mid-Lancs Pit, to a live bait at 00-50a.m. on the 14th June (length 49",girth 10¼"), but I'm jumping the gun a bit here.

Before my chat with Keith, I received **Nick Rose's** monthly catch report (I think the idea of monthly reports like the E.S.G. has should be adopted by the N.A.C, as it makes the Record Officer's Report much easier because it can be done month by month, instead of doing it all at one go in October and the membership can get some idea of what's being caught and by whom) anyway, back to Nick's June report. On the 10th/11th on the Grand Union (fishing with 'Dances') Nick had an eel of **2lb-14ozs** on worm. The 13th/14th found Nick back on the Grand Union, this time an eel of **2lb-12ozs** was the prize taken on worm once again. 15th/16th at Windsor Lake (with Jason Morgan) no eels were banked but Nick caught "a good 12lb'er first cast. (But we don't count Canada geese - Nick didn't say what bait this goose took, I'll try and find out for those members who fancy goose for Christmas dinner). On the 19th/20th at Lynch Hill, Nick had an eel of **1lb-08ozs** on worm and lost another in the weeds. 29th/30th at Eric's Pool an eel of **1lb-08ozs** to live bait, two **1lb-08ozs** and an **8ozs** eel to worm and a **1lb-08ozs** on dead bait. All of these eels were "caught in day light, maybe because of the full moon?" Now onto July. Once again, Nick Rose's monthly

catch report dropped through my letterbox. On the 9th /10th, fishing the Trent & Mersey Canal, Nick banked eels of **1lb** and **2lb** approximately 13th/14th from Pugwash Pool, eels of **2lb-14ozs**, **2lb-12ozs**, **2lb-02ozs** and a wee one of **12ozs** caught on worms and live baits. The 20th/21st at 'Black as your Hat' Mere (I love the names that Nick comes up with for some of the venues he fishes) two eels were caught of **8 ozs** and **1lb-08 ozs** both to worm baits. 'The Eeling Hedgehog's' August report is as follows... 11th/12th 'Cosmic Day' on the Exeter Canal, eels of **1lb-01oz** (worm), **2lb-01oz** live bait and **2lb-03ozs** (also live bait), "It was the day of the Eclipse and I didn't get a run at 11-10a.m." On the Upper Tamar Fish-in on the 20th /21st Nick had eels of **1lb-04ozs** and **8ozs**, both to live baits. And on the 21st/22nd he caught eels of **1lb-12ozs**, **1lb-00oz** and **1lb-01oz** and once again the winning bait was "livies". The 26th/27th found Nick on the Trent & Mersey, and his reward was an eel of **2lb-01oz**, live bait produced the goods, presented on the 'The Nick Rose Waggle (not Waddle) Over' Rig. (See Nick for more details). And finally Nick's September report reads as follows. An eel of **2lb - 01ozs** caught on a livebait fished on the 'N.R.W.O.R'.

Andrew Rose has caught lots of eels under 2lb's but has also had some very nice fish indeed. On the 2nd Elvington Fish-In Andrew had eels of **3lb-12ozs** and **2lb-13ozs**. And an eel of **2lb-05ozs** from Lynch Hill.

Andrew's fishing buddy, **Jason Tyndall** has also banked numerous eels under 2lb's, and he too has had some good ones. Again at Elvington, Jason had an eel of **4lb-00ozs** (best eel caught by a junior), and at Upper Tamar the prize was an eel of **3lb-12ozs** and also an eel of **2lb-14ozs**.

Steve Pitts has continued his season in great style, in June he had eels of **3lb-14ozs** on the 11th from "Snake Pit", a **2lb-10ozs**, **2lb-00ozs** and a **1lb-09ozs** on the 12th from EMP Lake. Steve's August catch return arrives and as Steve says himself "not a lot to show for a lot of effort" (14 sessions) but on the 6th Steve had eels of **3lb-14 ozs** and **3lb-13 ozs** (very nice double!) caught on Rudd head and Rudd tail respectively. These eels were caught from a North Wales water. And on the 28th Steve caught an eel of **3lb- 02 ozs** from a Northants lake. Now on to Steve's September report. On the 15th eels of **2lb- 0ozs** and **3lb-02ozs**. 17th **1lb- 5ozs** and **2lb-11ozs** all four fish came from "Brick Pit" and were caught on fish sections. 25th Steve had his final eel of the season, a fish of **3lb-13ozs**.

Barry McConnell has continued his successful season with an eel of **5lb-02ozs** from "A new Mere" on the 21st June, caught on brandlings. Then between the 30th and the 4th of July, whilst Zander fishing on the Fens, Barry had **13** eels of various sizes. On the 9th from the new mere, fishing brandlings once again, he caught an eel weighing **5lb-03ozs**. From "Yet Another Mere" Barry had 2 "boots" and finally the Fens produced **4** eels to **2lb-06ozs** again while fishing for Zander. (****I think if I want to increase my eel captures next year I should take up Zander fishing.)

Another member who has had a very good season is **John Davis** starting with eels of **2lb-14ozs** and **2lb-00ozs** from a "Midlands Lake" on worm on the 15th - 17th of May. Between the 6th / 7th of June he caught eels of **1lb-14ozs**, **1lb- 09ozs** and **4lb-08ozs** on worm and Roach head baits. On the 22nd John had a fish of **2lb-02ozs** caught on a Bleak head. Again from the "Midlands Lake" on the 30th, eels of **1lb-04ozs** and **2lb-03ozs** were landed, baits were Squid and Bleak head respectively. On to July, 13th an eel of **3lb - 09ozs**, (and how's this for a session) on the 14th eels of **1lb - 08ozs**, **2lb - 08ozs**, **2lb - 12ozs**, **3lb - 13ozs** and **3lb - 02ozs**. And then from the 18th - 20th, John caught fish of **2lb - 11ozs**, **1lb - 05ozs** and **1lb - 09ozs** (all the above eels were taken on fish sections). And on the 25th he had an eel of **1lb - 02ozs** on worm. August 2nd a **1lb - 06ozs** eel, the bait, Roach head. On the 8th, a **1lb - 10ozs**, the 11th a **2lb - 3ozs**, on the 17th an eel of **3lb - 05ozs**, 24th, **4lb - 07ozs**, and then on the 25th a fish of **2lb - 07ozs**. On September 11th John took an eel of **1lb - 09ozs**, 13th a **2lb - 14oz**, on the 14th a **1lb - 08oz**, 20th he had a **1lb - 03oz**, and John ended his season, as he started it with an eel of **2lb - 14ozs**. (All the above eels came from the "Midlands Lake").

My fishing buddy, **Damian "The Burglar" Wood** has also continued has he started with a fish of **2lb - 00oz** from Larsford Lake on the 19th June. Then on the 28th he caught a personal best eel of **6lb - 01oz** from the L & L Canal taken on "Platt Bridge Octopus" (worms), (this fish is currently equal 23rd in the N.A.C top 50 list). On the 6th July he had an eel of **3lb - 04ozs**, and on the 27th August a fish of **4lb - 05ozs** both eels were taken on worm, and also came from the L & L Canal. At the 2nd Elvington Fish-In, in September "the Burglar" had eels of **2lb - 08ozs** and **3lb - 11ozs** taken on Roach tail and live Gudgeon respectively. And finally, on the 24th at the Trentham Gardens Northern Fish-In he had an eel of **3lb - 08ozs** caught on worm (well done mate).

Jason Morgan hasn't had that good a season as he himself admits, but he did have a couple of nice fish. On the 22nd of June, he took an eel of **4lb -00oz** and on the 24th, a fish of **2lb - 12ozs**. Late July and Jason caught an eel of **2lb - 07ozs**. August 10th Jason had a fish of **3lb - 07ozs** and as with the above eels, the successful bait was fish section. Finally at the 2nd Elvington Fish-In he caught an eel of **2lb - 04ozs** on Lobworms fished off bottom on a margin fished Dyson rig.

Erica 'The Snake-Queen' Richardson hasn't fished much this year due to work and ill health but she did attend the Elvington fish-in and the junior fish-in at Lynch Hill, unfortunately she blanked on both occasions.

Amanda Richardson fished the junior fish-in at Lynch Hill and also recorded a blank season.

Steve "Dances-with-Eels" Richardson hasn't been able to do as much fishing as he would have liked due to serious car problems, work commitments and also (along with **Stuart "Spac-e-man" Dean**) has had the job of putting all the issues of the N.A.C magazine, "**ANGUILLA**" together and then getting them printed (and if anyone thinks that this job isn't that hard, then they should just try it sometime). However, Steve still managed to "bank" a few more nice eels during the season. On June 3rd he took two eels on the 'Russia' stretch of the T and M canal, **2.02** and **3.01**, both eels took Rudd head sections. On the 25th June he had a **2lb – 06ozs** eel caught on off bottom worms from the "Russia" spot on the canal. The 9th July and Steve caught a fish of **1lb – 04ozs** from the "Two Bridges" spot on Rudd tail section. August 27th and an eel of **2lb – 04ozs** was landed, the bait was Roach head fished hard on the bottom. And lastly a **2lb – 10ozs** eel on the 18th September from "Dances Lane", again on the canal. The winning bait this time was Rudd head section again fished hard on the bottom.

As I've mentioned above **Stuart "Spac-e-man" Dean** as also been putting a great deal of time and effort into the production of the club magazine, he has also had a change of jobs, so Stuart's fishing has suffered badly (losing more than 50% of his annual eeling sessions) as a result. However, Stuart did manage to bank an eel of **2lb – 15ozs** on his final session of the season (which was the 21st /22nd of August), this eel took 4 Lobworms fished on a running off bottom paternoster. (**** I hope that Steve & Stuart have the best season of their lives next year, because if anyone deserves one, they do!!!)

Another member who doesn't have a long season is **Martin J. Dorman** because of work commitments (being a Merchant Seaman) his season ended on the 29th of May but still caught eels of **3lb – 00ozs** (18th May), **1lb – 10ozs** and **1lb – 03ozs** (on the 27th May). All of Martin's fish came from Norfolk stillwaters and were taken on 3 Lobworms, fished on ledgered paternoster.

Jim Angeletta on the Rufford Canal has caught eels of **12ozs** (27th March), **1lb – 06ozs** and a small eel to float fished worm (3rd April), **1lb – 12ozs** and **2lb – 02ozs** and another small eel, all taking fish baits (17th May). And from the L & L canal on the 29th May banked eels of **1lb – 13ozs**, **12ozs**, **2lb – 03ozs** and **2lb – 08ozs**, all took worms fished on a Semi-fixed bolt Rig and he also missed 5 other runs. On the 22nd June, Jim had a new P.B of **3lb – 08ozs** from Hampstead Heath, London on float fished worm. July 25th on the canal he had eels of **1lb – 04ozs**, **2lb – 03ozs** and another smaller fish, again on worm with a Semi-fixed bolt rig again as the winning method. And finally an eel of **2lb – 04ozs** from a local stillwater on 30th August caught on bolt rigged worm.

Malcolm Law has had a memorable season, not through catching lots of eels, but for taking a personal best eel of **6lb – 04ozs** on the last Elvington trip (length 41", and a girth of 9¾") caught on a live bait and is the largest eel taken on a club Fish-In. Malcolm also took a **2lb – 14ozs** again on a "livey".

Another member who hasn't got a lot of eel fishing done this season through work and a lot of travelling (a fishing trip to Canada, and one to the Brazilian Amazon) is **Pete Gregory**, but having said that, Pete still had some very nice eels. On 27th May at a Devon syndicate water he took eels of **2lb – 00ozs**, **3lb – 03ozs** and a **4lb – 03ozs**, all caught on Roach live bait. July 16th Pete had a **3lb – 04ozs** eel, and on the 2nd August an eel of **3lb – 12ozs** and on the 17th a **3lb – 01ozs** fish.

Steven Dawe has continued his remarkable season, on the 11th of June Steve had eels of **1lb – 07ozs**, **1lb – 04 ozs** and **2lb – 02ozs**, and on the 12th he landed eels of **1lb – 10ozs**, **1lb – 02ozs**, **2lb – 06ozs**, **2lb – 08ozs**, **2lb – 12ozs** and **1lb – 02ozs**. On the 18th Steve had an hectic **50 minutes** taking eels of **1lb – 01ozs**, **1lb – 04ozs**, **1lb – 04ozs**, **1lb – 07ozs**, **1lb – 02ozs** and **2lb – 03ozs**. The 19th Steve took an eel of **2lb – 08ozs**, and finally on the 24th eels of **12ozs**, **1lb – 02ozs**, **1lb – 04ozs**, **1lb – 14ozs**, **3lb – 02ozs** and lastly **2lb – 08ozs**. All of Steve's catches came from the Upper Tamar, and all but two eels were caught on ledgered live Roach, skimmer dead baits accounted for the other two.

On to **Steve "Snigger" Ormrod**, on 16th/17th/18th of June, Steve caught eels of **2lb – 08ozs**, **2lb – 02ozs**, **1lb – 14ozs**, **1lb – 08ozs** and a boot of **8ozs** all to live baits on a CD rig and a **2lb – 04ozs** on a float ledgered dead bait. July 6th/7th/8th, again fishing the Cheshire water, Steve had eels of **4lb – 02ozs**, **2lb – 14ozs**, **2lb – 06ozs** and **1lb – 12ozs** all to live baits on a CD rig. 15th/16th/17th Steve had a total of 22 runs with produced eels of **3lb 04ozs**, **2lb – 08ozs** and **1lb – 08ozs** again to live's on a CD rig, and an eel of **3lb – 00ozs** to a Roach head. 28th/29th, Steve took a **2lb – 00ozs** eel. August 5th/6th/7th Steve had 25 runs, and took eels of **4lb – 10ozs**, **3lb – 02ozs**, **3lb – 04ozs** and **3lb – 00ozs**. 26th/27th/28th saw eels of **3lb – 04ozs** and **2lb – 14ozs**. All of "Snigger's" eels came from a private Cheshire estate lake

While **Eric Brown**, (fishing with "The Snigger") took eels of **2lb – 06** and **1lb – 12ozs** to live baits on the 17th/18th of June. And on the 28th/29th July, Eric (again fishing with Steve) took eels of **3lb – 11ozs** and **2lb – 08ozs** using live's.

And yet another member not having a lot of time to go eel fishing because of work is **Chris Siddall**, but at the 1st Elvington Fish-In he did manage to take an eel of **2lb – 04ozs** and at the 2nd trip, took eels of **3lb – 13ozs** and a boot of **8ozs**. And at the Midlands Fish-In at Emberton in September Chris had an eel of **12ozs**.

Mark “The Whisperer” Handley – Wood has also had a poor season through work commitments but has still managed to get out occasionally and bagged eels of 1lb – 08ozs, 1lb – 1ozs and 8 eels of 1lb – 15ozs. All taken from a North-East coastal water on worms and dead baits fished on a CD rig.

Anthony “BT” Jolley hasn’t had a bad season considering he’s been doing a lot of D.I.Y work on his home over this season. However, Tony has had a good few eels this season. October 10th (98) he had an eel of **3lb 03ozs** from the L&L Canal, taken on CD rigged live Gudgeon. Then on the 2nd of April on a Cornish stillwater Tony took 5 eels up to **1lb – 12ozs**, on the 30th on the L&L Tony had an eels of **1lb – 08ozs** and **2lb – 11ozs** on a live Gudgeon. On to May, and on the 7th a fish of **1lb – 13ozs**. June saw Tony take fish of **2lb – 00ozs**, **1lb – 15ozs** and another of **2lb – 00ozs** on the same night. On July 14th, again on the L&L “BT” caught eels of **2lb – 15ozs** and **2lb – 07ozs** on ledgered Roach and CD rig live Roach respectively, on the 19th from the L&L he had a **2lb – 00ozs** eel using live Roach on a CD rig. And on the 25th from the Shropshire Union, Tony fished ledgered worm and took an eel of **2lb – 14ozs**. In mid August he took a seasons best eel of **3lb – 08ozs** again from the L&L Canal on a ledgered full Gudgeon, and finally on the 22nd September on the L&L Tony landed his last eel of the season, a fish of **1lb – 08ozs** taken on CD rigged worms.

“BT’s” fishing partner Phil “**Flukin’s**” **Lukins** has had a few good fish also this season including an eel of **4lb – 04ozs** on the 30th of April from the L&L Canal. And at the 2nd Elvington trip Phil had a fish of **3lb – 11ozs**

And finally, after almost three blank months it was my turn to bank a much welcome eel of **2lb - 03ozs** on the 6th of August, caught on "P.B.O." (Worms), and once again it invariably came from my local stretch of the L & L Canal.

Numbers and Weights of Eels caught.

- Under 1lb = 15.
- Over 1lb = 121.
- Over 2lb = 106.
- Over 3lb = 49.
- Over 4lb = 21.
- Over 5lb = 6.
- Over 6lb = 2.
- Over 7lb = 2.
- Total = 322.

On closing this, my first Record Officer’s Report I must apologise for any omissions, as these are the only catches that have been reported to Stuart and myself through the season. I also hope that next season you all have a great deal of **big** eels to report, so good luck for the forthcoming season and “Tight Lines” to you all.

CATCH REPORTS.

Jimmy mentioned at the last committee meeting (7/11/99) that he had only received just under 25% of the members catch returns this year. This, to be blunt, is pathetic. Why on earth do you all go fishing and **not** record your sessions, never mind your catches. I find it amazing that most people who fish don’t write down the events and conditions whilst they fish a session. A blank session is never lacking in information. We can all learn from re-reading our comments from previous fishing trips. Consider this whilst you are sitting around at Christmas. What was the date that you caught your last eel?, what were the weather conditions?, what was the bait/, where was the bait placed?, did you have any other enquiries to the other rods?. Try doing that again, but use June as the subject month. I bet you can’t remember how many sessions you had in June, never mind if you caught or not. 75% of you cannot want to learn and progress in your eeling. Its my opinion (Dances’) that your missing something from the jig-saw of successful eel fishing.

Please use the booklets that Chris Hodgson made for you and send them to Jimmy next October, so that he can fulfil his important role in the club’s structure.

Be smart, don’t be ignorant of your past eeling exploits and give the club some much needed information.

JUNIOR TOP 25 EEL LIST.

Compiled by Jimmy Jolley.

- | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | 5lb 01oz | Andrew Rose | Midlands Lake | Worms | 1992 |
| 2. | 4lb 04oz | Andrew Rose | Midlands Lake | Worms | Aug-97 |

3.	4lb 00oz	Andrew Rose			
-	4lb 00oz	Jason Tyndall	Elvington Lake		Sep-99
5.	3lb 12oz	Karl Richardson	Emberton	Bleak Tail	Jun-95
-	3lb 12oz	Jason Tyndall	Upper Tamar		Aug-99
7.	3lb 02oz	Andrew Rose	Daiseyfield	Roach Head	Aug-97
8.	2lb 15oz	Jared Huish	Barry Res		
9.	2lb 14.5oz	Andrew Rose	Pine Lodges	Worms	Jul-96
10.	2lb 14oz	Jason Tyndall	Lynch Hill	Worms	May-98
-	2lb 14oz	Jason Tyndall	Upper Tamar		Aug-99
12.	2lb 13oz	Andrew Rose	Midlands Canal	Worms	Jun-97
13.	2lb 05oz	Andrew Rose	Midlands Canal	Maggots	Jun-97
14.	2lb 03oz	Jared Huish	Barry Res		
15.	2lb 00oz	Karl Richardson	Erewash Canal	Deadbait	1996
16.	1lb 15oz	Jared Huish	Barry Res		



**Jason Tyndall's 4lb – 00oz Elvington (Junior Trophy winning) eel.
NAC PRODUCTS LIST.**

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SIZES ARE..... MED LRG X.LRG XX.LRG
 CHEST SIZE..... 44 47 50 52

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THE GUNGE PAGE.

(Supplied by 'Lucky law' and 'The Eeling Hedgehog'...written by 'Dances'.)

With 'The Baitswisher' out of action for most of the season with a prolonged illness, Steve 'Ooh-Ah' Gardner boycotting all social events for the 98/99 season and 'Dances' only managing to get to 1½ fish-ins this season the Gunge was nearly shelved for this issue but, thank God, not everyone listened to the 'The Eelsnapper' and some information did arrive in time for this issue. The truth is always shadowed by perspective and so it is my job to make sure that 'What happened is told'.

'The Eeling Hedgehog' made the 2nd Elvington trip and spent **all** of his waking hours compiling Gunge on whomever he came into contact with. (Bar 'Dances'.) Now anyone who knows 'The Hedgehog' will agree that he is always helpful but sometimes those around him take things too far. 'The Hedgehog's' swim became known as 'Ye olde Corner Shoppe' on the Elvington fish-in. Here is the list of requests from him over the weekend.

1. Andrew, Jason and Chris Siddall... for Bog Paper.

2. Andrew, Jason and Mark Smethurst... for Worms.
3. Ken Ward... for Storm Caps.
4. 'B.T.'... for a Landing Net.
5. Ken Ward... for a Cork Screw.
6. Andrew and Jason... for Ketchup.
7. Mark Smethurst... for endless cups of Coffee.
8. 'Dances'... for a Taxi.
9. Mark Smethurst... for a Vacant Swim.
10. 'Dances'... for a Breakfast.
11. 'Dances'... for the perfect small Perch Livebait in his bucket.
12. Malcolm Law... for Off-Licensing Hours and use of Pub Amenities.
13. Malcolm Law... for Verbal Abuse.

'Lucky Law decided to a-light in 'The Hedgehog's' swim, after walking around the lake, the surrounding fields and the nearby village, in a state of 'High' that only comes with either a girl getting undressed in a tent in front of 'The Burglar' or by the use of banned substances, after he had sacked up his new PB eel. 'Lucky informed him that he had just caught a 6.04 and the reply from 'The Hedgehog' was "B*****S". 'Lucky' continued to relay the good news regardless and when he had convinced 'The Hedgehog' that he had indeed just taken a 6.04, 'The Hedgehog' retorted with "You B*****d, you have just knocked me off the Top 50 list".
There's nothing like sharing good news with a mate, is there?

Eventually, 'The Hedgehog' did the decent thing and congratulated 'Lucky on his fish of a lifetime. He then offered him a bottle of cider. At this point 'B.T.' came around to see what all the noise was and, upon seeing the two of them drinking, (and conveniently forgetting the 1st Elvington fish-in scenario of 'Lucky' and himself), said, "This is an alcohol free fish-in you know". To which 'The Hedgehog' quickly replied "It's not alcohol, it's apple juice". (Strange that. Two alcohol free fish-ins and, both times the rule is violated, 'Lucky' is in there somewhere.)

Mind you, 'The Hedgehog' isn't entirely without blame. Later on, Ken, 'I've a new haircut', Ward strolled into the swim and asked if 'The Hedgehog' had got a corkscrew. (Ken had known that Nick would be sophisticated enough to have one.) A good question from another alcohol free member but a bad mistake asking 'The Hedgehog' when he's fishing a very quiet swim. Ken got to drink a small cup full of his wine and the rest of the bottle went the way of many in the past. Straight down 'The Hedgehog's' throat, Linda Lovelace style. (One swallow)

Afterwards, Ken made his way back to his swim and decided that he was too dog-tired to fish two rods on the first night, so he just placed one rod out and promptly went to sleep on his bedchair. Sometime during the night he had a run and, in a half awake stupor, he landed a personal best Carp. However, when he was asked if he wanted to weigh and photo it, he said, "No, he was too tired" and threw it back (literally) before retiring to the bedchair again.

In the morning, every man gathered around Malcolm's swim for the photos...this was less than three feet from 'Sleeping Ken'. (Who was into his 14th hour of beauty sleep) Obviously with such a super eel to photo and the gathering of NAC members the noise level got quite high. Ken slept through the whole lot and only awoke at the end of the photo shoot to complain about the noise. (It's a good job that 'The Hedgehog' confiscated the rest of the man's wine the night before, otherwise he wouldn't have risen until Sunday morning.

Talking of 'risen'..... Damian 'The Burglar' Wood had a young couple pitch their tent in the field behind his swim. (The lad was pleasure fishing over the weekend. Take that anyway you want!!!!) Anyway the young couple stayed up on the Friday night hoping to see a big eel landed. When Chris Siddall obliged with his 3.13, the lad said that it was ugly. The young lady however, said it wasn't and that it looked cute. In true 'Hedgehog' style (Humorous) Nick said "Does that mean I have a chance tonight then"?..... There were smiles all round bar one person, that being the lad. Rumour has it that he never let the young lady out of his arms reach for the whole weekend. (The lad, not 'The Hedgehog'.)

'The Burglar' then suggested that everyone retire to their own swims to settle down to some serious eeling...had it not been so dark, they would all have seen the little smile on his lips as they all decided that it was a good idea.

'The Burglar' spent most of the next hour looking back towards the tent than at his rods and was successful in his deviant manner to get a small glimpse of the young lady as she got undressed for the night. He then spent the rest of the weekend walking about with a rod rest in his trousers and drooling from the corner of his mouth. (I did say mouth!!!)

Chris Siddall was completely shattered on the Sunday morning because he was fishing next to 'The Burglar' and hadn't got any sleep either night due to the fact that he was worried about Deviant Wood trying to get in his bivvy.

Is there something we don't know about here, Chris. ???????

Talking of Chris...When he had hooked the 3.13 his son, young Robert, took hold of the landing net and attempted to do the honours for his Dad. Robert spent 10 minutes trying to net the eel whilst it was floundering in the margins and all this time the conversation was getting nastier between the Siddall clan. In the end 'The Hedgehog' took the net off Robert and netted it first time. (Probably because it was tired out, waiting for Robert) Nick then spent every occasion he bumped into either of them over the weekend apologising, incase he had upset them. (Not a normal 'Hedgehog' mannerism at all. I have heard, on the grapevine, that he was apologising because he intended to drop 'Dances' from his session shareing sorties and pair up with Chris, in the hope of being taken to some of Chris's secret Lincolnshire drain venues this coming winter!!!! Surely he wouldn't do that, would he. ?)

Every time someone visited 'Ye Olde Corner Shoppe', they mentioned to Nick that his swim was the only swim **not** to have produced an eel on the whole lake. Now this was starting to get right up his nose but happily an old chap walked up to Nick's swim and started a conversation, which took Nick's mind off the fact that he was in a crap swim. Eventually, the old chap asked him if he had caught anything yet. Nick replied that he hadn't.

"Oh, that's not suprising because in all the years I have been coming here, it has been the crappiest swim on the lake." (The old man was never seen alive again. He was probably fed to the 300 budgies, Parrots and Canary's that were housed in the aviary next to 'The Hedgehog's' swim. There was no dawn chorus though, because they sang well before that time of the morning, dawn being 06.30am and they started at 04.00am and kept on all day until darkness. Thus rendering the nerves of 'The Hedgehog' well 'on edge'.)

During the Friday night, 'The Hedgehog' thought he heard something shuffling in the bushes and so he switched on his head torch and illuminated Mark Smethurst having a much needed wee. Fortunately, or unfortunately, whichever way you want to look at it, Nick's quick flash made Mark aware that he had just filled his rodholdall pocket up with urine. 'The Hedgehog' asked if it was some strange kind of ant repellent but Mark just emptied it out and asked Nick to put the kettle back on.

'B.T.' took Mark Smethurst all around the lake, looking for a swim for him, when he arrived and eventually he asked 'The Hedgehog' if Mark could double up with him due to lack of room. Nick agreed to allow this, due to the reasons given and wound in the other five rods he had out, to accommodate Mark and his gear. However, he was somewhat surprised in the morning when he saw 'B.T.' fishing from two swims. **Two rods in one and one rod in the other. 'Dances' informed him that this was probably a perk of being the Social Officer in charge. (Nick's excuse for blanking was a tight swim and limited casting space. The main thing is, he **always** has an excuse.)

On the Saturday morning, Deviant Wood 'limped' round to 'The Hedgehog's' swim and somehow the conversation got around to an ex-girlfriend of 'The Burglar's'. (Probably something to do with night before) Apparently, this ex had a false eye made of glass and she used to have a party trick at the nightclub, where she would take it out (Her eye) (The false one, I think) and wash it in 'The Burglar's' pint of beer. (No wonder he is a 'tea totalling deviant' nowadays.)

Andrew approached his Dad and asked if he had any loo roll handy (No pun intended) the reply came back in the negative. Five minutes later he was back and asked 'The Hedgehog' if he had anything at all he could use because he was desperato. Again the reply was negative other than the advice to find some 'dock leaves' or some other kind of wide leafed plant. Another five minutes passed and Andrew returned looking very tense and uncomfortable. "Pass me the scissors please Dad". He then proceeded to cut a square out of the leg of his trackie bottoms and disappeared into the undergrowth. After a lot of micky taking by 'The Hedgehog' Andrew decided to educate his Dad regarding certain things that **go** on fish-in's but **don't** come back. He said, "Do you know why Jason doesn't wear any socks on the way home from fish-ins"? To which Nick said "No."

"Well its because of !!**!!!**!! and he has also used his woolly hat on one occasion as well".

'The Hedgehog' told me, after relaying this conversation to me....."God help any under privileged person who discovers a new pair of socks and a woolly hat whilst walking in the woods at Upper Tamar, Emberton, Lynch Hill or Willen Lake".

Birdwatchers (Not deviants) will be pleased to know that Jason went home **with** his hat and his socks at the Elvington Fish-in because he managed to obtain loo roll from 'Ye Olde Corner Shoppe' on both days. (Good stocking policy, G-G-G-G-Granville)

Possibly the most Gungey Gunge ever given to 'Dances' by anyone is the following... but to make it even better, 'The Hedgehog' had already relayed the Gunge to 'Dances' earlier in the day. The person who told both of them, thought he was telling some Gunge about someone else, but we think the Gunge is more about him than his target. Jason 'Eric' Morgan rushed over to 'Dances' and said he had some Mega, Mega, Mega Gunge for him. He said..."You know how the chap who owns the lake doesn't like any noise on the lake, well when Shaun Pope and I came in the metal gate, Shaun kicked it buy accident and it banged loudly."

'Dances' asked what else happened and was told "Nothing, that's it...it's good isn't it". 'Dances' asked "What time in the early hours of the morning was this Jason".?

Jason replied "About five o'clock in the afternoon".

Sad or what????????????

The Mega Gunge being that Shaun kicked a gate by accident in the afternoon, when all 300 budgies, parrots and canary's were singing their heads off, Carp angler's alarms were sounding out, other members were arriving and chatting about the action to come and Ken's, Jimmy's, Nick's and Chris's mobile phones were ringing every two minutes. (I'll get 'Eric' to write the next issues Gunge pages after that)

'The Hedgehog' phoned 'Dances' up and told him about 'Lucky's' fish and asked him when he was coming over. 'Dances' replied that he couldn't get because his car had taken sick. Nick said he would come over and pick him up (just to stop 'Dances' crying) and arrived at Long Eaton 2 hours later. All the gear was stowed in the van and off they sped back up the M1. 'Dances' commented on how good 'The Hedgehogs' memory was in being able to find the lake again with no directions, to which the reply came "Intelligent people don't need maps, one visit is enough". They then proceeded to get lost three times before they got to the lake.

As they arrived at the lake, Nick said to 'Dances' "Just watch, I'll bet Mark has caught from **my** swim whilst I have fetched you". As they got out of the car, Mark came to the fence and told Nick that he had caught a 3.08 about 10 minutes ago. 'The Hedgehogs' comment cannot be printed here except to say that 'B.T.' was blamed for making Nick share swims.

'Dances' went to set up in his swim and found himself surrounded by seven other anglers, all of them making sure that the margins ('Dances' favourite area to fish) was not the place to present a bait that night. It must be noted here, that after 'Dances' had dropped his flask and broken it, 'Flukins' went and made him a cup of coffee. Cheers Phil.

Whilst every man and his dog mingled in 'Dances' swim, 'The Hedgehog' took advantage and got some kip. It was a good sleep because he was in 'No Eel Bay'.

'Dances' swim was in the corner of the lake and the far margin had been left undisturbed by the lad's. Just after dark, when Steve had placed two of his baits up that quiet part of the lake, Jimmy 'No Nick-Name' came ambling along swishing every swim down to 'Dances' swim, including the ones with his baits in.

Chris Siddall asked 'The Hedgehog' if he wanted to have a session on the Grand Union canal the following weekend. He said that they would either blank or catch a biggie, but that there would be no 'boots' caught.

During the session Nick had a run on worms and struck into it and promptly landed a size 8 Doc Martin boot. Typical eh!!!!!! (Photo'ed as well)

As the session was coming to an end, Chris told 'The Hedgehog' that unlike the last time they fished together, this wasn't a guinea pig scenario but that Chris had wanted Nick to come along because he had never fished this bridge before. When asked why that was, Chris replied "Because of the two pubs on the bridge. One is a Gay Bar and the other has the worst reputation in Milton Keynes for trouble". It came as no surprise to 'The Hedgehog' that he was fishing the nearest to the bridge. (I want to know which pub was the nearest to Nick?)

'Passport Pete' has made his way into the Gunge again. Apparently, whilst on one of his globe trotting trips to Lake Nassar, in Egypt, after Nile Perch. (Oops...Erica's turn whilst it is in my head. Erica reckoned that it was a long way to go to catch some perch, not realising that Nile Perch are something completely and utterly different in size and attitude.) Anyway, before he comes home, 'Passport' sees a small scorpion and decides to take it home to show the wife and kids. This he duly does but eventually, after lots of time playing with the little beastie, he decides he has had enough of it and takes it to the local pet shop. The trouble is 'Passport Pete' fibbed a little bit about how he had gotten the thing in the first place. He said that he found it in the bottom of his tackle bag as he unpacked. The pet shop said they would take it and try to find a home for it. After some coverage in the local paper, the Express and Echo, a BBC wildlife presenter from the Really Wild Show took it home and tried to identify it. He rang a mate at the Natural History Museum and they discussed the beastie's features and identified it as '**The Israeli Gold**'... the **world's most venomous scorpion**. Quote of the scandal was this..."even though it's just two inches long the sting can kill a child or even an adult with health problems". 'Passport' has been to the Amazon since this news broke, "Is that a snake in your pocket Pete or are you just very happy to see us"? Pete's wife dares not ask for a different sort of Christmas present this year, they only have a small back garden.!!!

After an operation on his piles, 'The Hedgehog' decided to still go to the Upper Tara fish-in. All the way down the M5 he was wondering why there was so much room in the van considering that he, Jason and Andrew were all inside and had plenty of room between them. At the venue the answer became obvious, two bedchairs were still back in Birmingham. Nick opted for nice soft grassy swims rather than horny eely ones.

This issue of **ANGUILLA** may reach you **after** Christmas. I would like to mention the reasons that it wasn't just **before** Christmas if I may. Over the last 48 hours, after I have done two days work and cancelled yet another session on the river because I still have too much to do to the Bulletin before sending it to Jimmy, I received phone calls from... Nick Rose regarding have I done the Bulletin yet?. Kevin 'Taff' Huish regarding all the Christmas shopping he has got to do and if the Bulletin is ready yet?. Steve Pitts just talking about eeling in general and when I said I was Gunging him for the length of the call which is stopping me finishing off the Bulletin he replied.."If I am in the Bulletin I won't have to do an article then shall I". Stuart Dean regarding "How's the Bulletin going",?. That he is on holiday today and is pike fishing, and has just caught a 15lb+, 16lb+ and a PB 19lb+...and then talks me through a real run and weighs the fish at 9lb 8oz. (Congratulations Mate) Stuart then say's in true Andy Lister style "I'm not really a pike angler but..."

If this does reach you before Christmas, then you all owe **Jimmy** a drink because he will have worked his butt off to get this printed and sent out given that today is 11/12/99.

THANK YOU BOX

Each issue of the Bulletin is growing and this issue is an improvement on the ones before it for several reasons.

1. It has acquired a new format. This is down to Jimmy Jolley joining the 'Production team' and having access to an A3 printer. This issue is an experiment but we hope it is one that everyone likes, one that

the club can afford and is a step upwards. Hopefully, it will also contain colour photos. (I am writing this ending whilst the Bulletin is in disc format so I don't know what the thing your reading looks like yet)

2. This issue has even more articles in it and has been labelled 'A bumper issue'. It was certainly a lot of hard work that's for sure. There are 15 different members who have contributed to this issue, we thank you all for your support.
3. It has a middle page photo gallery. We chose the photos because it is a new addition, hopefully it will remain with us and in future issues you will send us your photos so that we can include different members in each edition. Size is not important (unless it is a perch livebait for me... 2" is perfect) what is important is you sending us some photos. We don't want just the same few anglers being presented to the rest of you every time, so 'send us a photo today and we will display it.

Damian Wood has kindly done the line drawings for those of you who went to the same art school as myself. Cheers Damian, we appreciate it big style.

Chris Siddall sent us the 'Archive Article' from his collection of Coarse Fisherman to which we are very grateful. Thanks Chris.

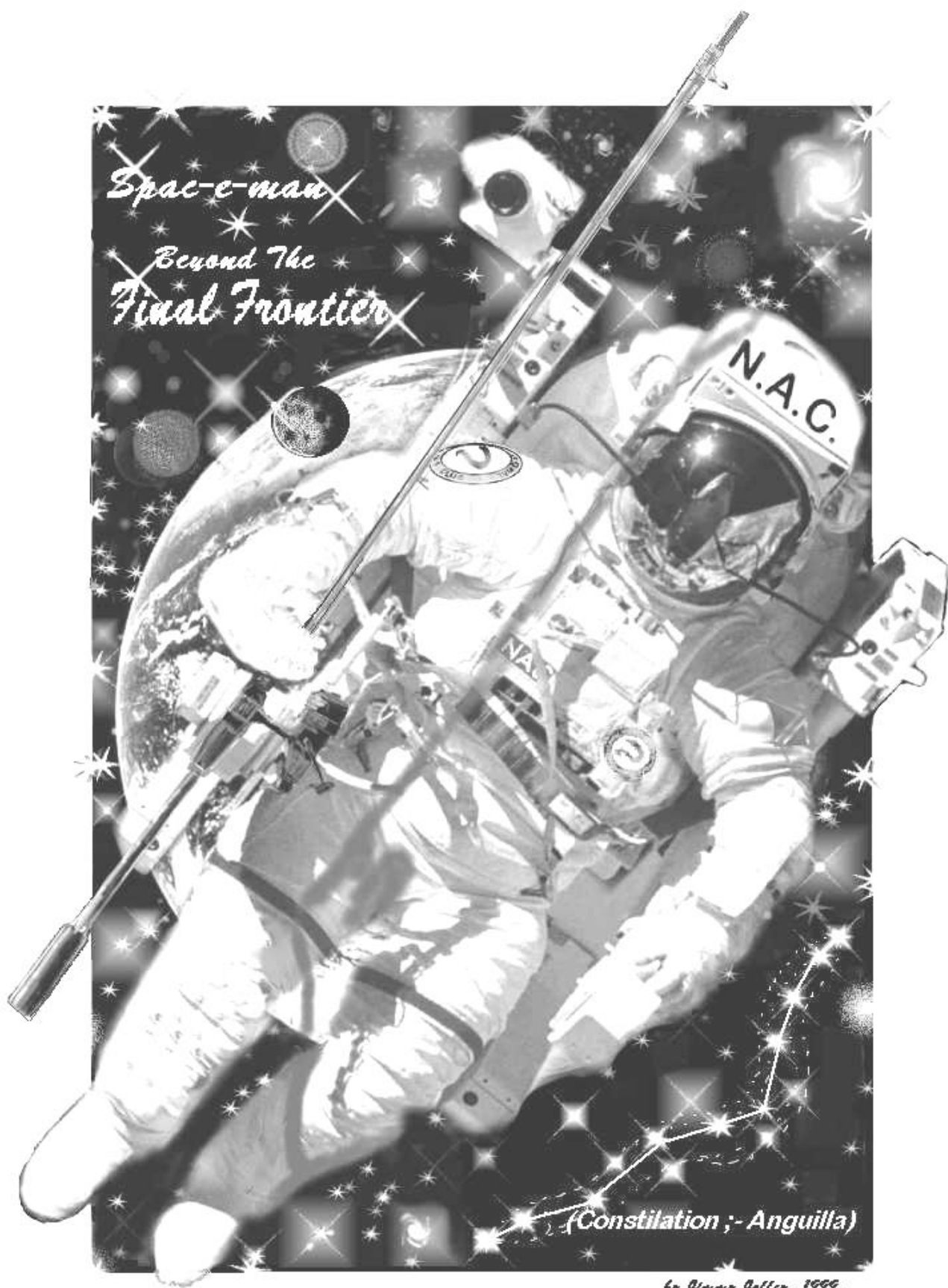
My personal thanks go to '**The Hedgehog**' for supplying the Gunge, fishing with me, sharing a slideshow and for the taxi.

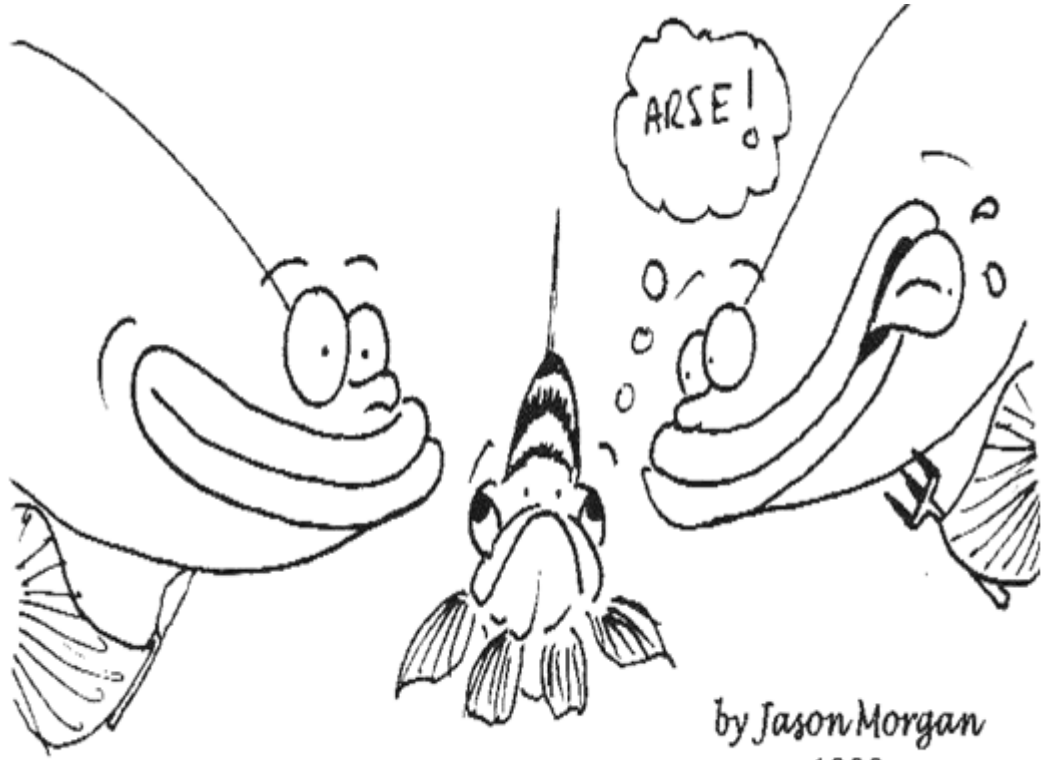
To **Stuart** and **Jimmy** for being a 'team' and for all the hard work they have put in, in order for you to receive this production.

Lastly, our thanks to **Jean, Pauline** and **Erica**. We disappear for hours at a time, still expect our dinner to be cooked and go fishing as well.

"The Eeling Hedgehog"







by Jason Morgan
1999