



The National Anguilla Club

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# BULLETIN

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THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.

BULLETIN. VOLUME 12. ISSUE No 8.

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EDITORIAL

So, here we are again. Well, the season is now drawing towards its close. In the months to come we will be able to look back at our summer adventures; relive the capture of those big eels and cry about those we did not catch. For myself, the present season has lived up to all its expectations. I said that 1975 looked like being a great social year: I have not wanted for bank side company. My travels have taken me as far west as Cornwall, to Uncle Ernie in the north and as far east as Norfolk - yes, I've been fishing the Broads again! I have fished in the company of such people that the Club is famous for - a boozing, gluttonous mob that we are! And the eels? Well, I have certainly seen some good ones on the bank. My only regret is that I cannot claim the honours: but to have seen an 8lb+ eel lying on the bank makes up for all of my own personal failures. Not that I have had a terrible season. Numerically, I've done alright, having banked forty fish: all that's been lacking is the size.

The comics have been busy of late. Ivan Marks is, in my humble opinion, a very irresponsible person indeed. Anglers are solitary people. We are, in general, loners, unlike footballers and cricketers who could not conduct their pastime on their own. Because we are loners, we are divided: and divided we fall. Despite our numerical strength - some three million plus - we are as organised as fleas on a dog's back. Many people try to ignore the fact that we are bracketed with fox hunters etc by the anti cruel sports peoples: but mark my words, they are gunning for us. Already certain MP's have been lobbied by the anti-angling mob.

Divided we fall. The only way we can fight is by uniting under one single banner with the objective of preventing angling from getting the axe through misrepresentation to Parliament. And then along comes an irresponsible idiot like Ivan Marks, who sets himself up as a tin god trying to tell everyone that he is the greatest fisherman in the big wide world. The man is an hypocritical buffoon.

His ignorance his heightened by his advice to Tony Hollerbach: use 20's and you might get bites! Tell me, how do you attach a size 20 to a wire trace? Perhaps someone would care to tell him that not all fishermen are preoccupied with snotties (AT never print my letters).

I fear very much that Ivan Marks has done more to aid the cause of the anti angling cause than is realised: he has maintained division between the various interests. I only hope that he accepts Alan Otter's invitation to speak at the National Angling Conference, so that he can see what angling means to those of us who are not preoccupied with winning money. However, I suspect that there will be a "big match" in Ireland to preclude his attendance.

Finally, I apologise for the somewhat irregular appearance of the Bulletin these past few months, but then, I suppose you've all been out fishing, so have not really missed it. We're now back on an even keel, so keep the material flowing in.

DAVID SMITH.

TAGGING EELS

By Alan Hawkins.

Both Brian Crawford and myself have independently mentioned the idea of a tagging project run by the Anguilla Club. Leaving aside, for the moment, the knotty problem of how to tag an eel successfully, it seems worthwhile considering what such a project may hope to achieve. The potential benefits as they occur to me are as follows.

1. Number of Eels in a Water.

At the moment we have no reliable way of finding out how many eels inhabit the waters we fish. Members have suggested that the rate of catch data can be used to estimate the numbers, on the principle "the faster you catch 'em, the more there are". This is quite wrong, because rate of catch depends on many other factors besides the number of eels present. These factors include angling variables such as tackle, bait, time of day and the time of year. They also include features of the water such as the availability and type of food for the eels. Thus, it would be quite possible to get very different rates of catch from two waters containing identical numbers of eels if, in one water there was a great deal of suitable eel food, and in the other there was very little. We can only catch eels when they are feeding; in the first water, an abundance of food would lead to short feeding spells and a slow rate of catch. In the second water, the fish would spend a large proportion of their time looking for food: they would be much more likely to find and take a bait, and the rate of catch would be high.

Nevertheless, an idea of the number of eels present would be most helpful for many of us debating which water to fish during the coming season. Is a particular water fished out or not? A tagging project, if properly and enthusiastically carried out, could provide the answer by the tried and tested release and recapture method.

It works like this. Say, for example, you capture, tag and release ten eels. You then carry on fishing and, for the sake of argument, let us suppose by the end of the season you catch another 20 fish from the same water. In this 20, let us say, there are five of the tagged fish previously released. We can then calculate the total number of eels present by saying that tagged to non tagged fish occur in the water in the ratio of 5 to 20, or 1 to 4 (we recaptured 5 tagged fish in our total of 20). Since we released a total of ten tagged fish in all, it follows that the total population is 4 x 10, or 40 fish. More generally, the formula is:

$$\frac{\text{Total eels caught}}{\text{No. of tagged eels recaptured}} \times \text{Total tagged eels released.}$$

Clearly, this procedure provides only an estimate: it is subject to variability just like any other biological measurement. It also relies totally on one major assumption: that an eel previously captured and tagged is just as likely to be caught again as a fish not caught before. If eels learn by their mistakes - and they might, other fish do - then the method will tend to overestimate the number present. There is simply no evidence on this; it is something that will need investigating - ie. 2. below.

2. Do Eels learn by their mistakes?

The question whether eels learn to avoid anglers' baits having once been caught is a question worthy of attention in itself. Tagging could give us some information. If we regularly recaptured tagged eels, we could deduce that

eels are as stupid as some of us have suspected all along!

3. Do Eels survive capture?

The question of whether a deeply hooked eel can survive is a particularly hoary chestnut in the Anguilla Club. Dead eels are sometimes found around the edges of waters. Sometimes the presence of a trace hanging out of its mouth shows that the corpse was recently caught; in other cases it is not obvious whether the fish was an angling victim. Tagging would remove this uncertainty, and help us understand how well our fish survive capture.

Note, however, that this exercise is not compatible with the numbers project of item 1. In item 1, we need to tag a sample right at the start, and then refrain from tagging until a decent number have been caught (and returned again). Also, all tagged eels in the numbers exercise must be in good condition, ie. lip hooked fish handled with great care and released immediately after tagging.

The dismal inmates of a typical dustbin, left to swelter in the sun, would not do at all!

4. Do eels move far from where they are captured?

There are two aspects to this question, ie. movements within a water, and movements between waters. Both are of obvious interest and can only be answered by tagging and recapture methods.

5. Growth rates.

In principle a long term tagging project could give us a way of estimating growth rate without killing eels. In this case, the weight of small fish could be followed from year to year (as they were recaptured and released again) and the increases (or decreases!) in weight could be recorded. This would, however, be a lengthy and intensive process: one would need several seasons' intensive effort at a water to do this.

These, then, are five perfectly legitimate objectives for a tagging project. More could be enumerated, though they tend to become rather difficult and academic. Perhaps other members may have ideas which have not been discussed here.

It is clear, however, that a tagging project is not a thing to be undertaken lightly. The particular objectives need to be thought out very clearly in advance since, as we have seen above, it is not possible to run all projects at the same time. We would need members - preferably groups of members - to undertake given commitments to particular waters to guarantee enough effort to make the thing worthwhile. Finally, we simply do not know whether the eels once caught can be caught again. A lot of the things we would like to do depend on this; it would be sensible to run some pilot studies on this aspect before launching into more elaborate projects.

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First of all, I should like to convey my apologies to Alan for the delay in publication of the above. It was sent to me back in June but, alas, my annual "walkabout" infringed upon my Bulletin commitments.

Although some may say that it is a bit late in the season to publish Alan's comments, I personally feel that they come at an opportune time, since the points raised in Alan's concluding paragraph can now be answered, ie. we have had a pilot scheme.

During the recent season many people have in fact been tagging eels. Although not a "tagger" myself (the first qualification to participate in the scheme is to be able to catch eels!), I can confirm that eels that have been hooked will readily take another bait.

Now that the scheme has, in essence, got off the ground, the time has come to decide what we want the scheme to tell us. This is, of course, a subject for serious thought and discussion. To get maximum benefit, tagging operations should, in my opinion, form an integral part of the Club's session reporting scheme. Your thoughts and opinions should be made known to the Club's committee - once elected at the AGM - so that firm proposals can be presented at the Spring meeting.

THE CORNWALL TRIP '75 (or rub a dub-dub, three nuts in a tub)

By Kevin Richmond.

Way back at the beginning of the year, Dave (I read it in Angling Times) Smith and Bob ("my brain 'urts") Pountney arranged with myself, Kevin (Dinsdale), for a trip to Cornwall for a few days at the beginning of July. We intended to fish a water called Wheal Rashleigh - a virgin eel fishery.

Our adventures began on Friday 4th July. Bob drove down from Weston, while Dave came by the BR service, both arriving at my place in the early evening. After kipping at my place for the night, we left for ST Austell at 4.25am on the Saturday morning.

Just the scenery at St Austell made the trip worthwhile. Because of the China Clay industry, vast mounds of waste are piled hundreds of feet high. It is no exaggeration when I compare them with dormant volcanoes: dormant white volcanoes. Its like something out of a Dr Who adventure, and the appearance of little Green men would not have surprised us in any way; they would have looked quite normal in that strange setting! To make everything perfect, the weather was sunny and beautiful, with a blue sky and calm breeze.

We arrived bright and early and decided to do the "rounds" of the pools. Dave, who had fished in the area before, unlike Bob and myself, gave a conducted tour, after which we went for breakfast. Two waters really smelled of eels: Wheal Rashleigh, which Dave had suggested in the first place, and Electricity Pool, which Dave had fished before with Paul Wieczorek (an ex-member) but which was now a "members only" water belonging to Roche AC. Using Paul's name and the good name of the Anguilla Club, Dave phoned the Secretary of Roche AC and, as luck would have it, we were able to fish Electricity Pool.

Our first few sessions were at the Electricity Pool where, upon setting up our pogs, I had to catch the bait! The baitfish in the pool were small rudd and perch, although a certain Dave Smith pinched a vole from an adder which had just killed its dinner. We debated whether to use it for bait, but no-one would shove the baiting needle down its throat! In any case, it was full of lice and fleas.

Our baits were cast just over the ledge (Dave described this water in some detail in Bull. Vol. 10, No.1), a distance of a few yards where there was a depth of some 13ft - Dave, in fact, was literally fishing under his rod tip, not bothering to cast at all, simply putting the rod in the rests and opening the bale arm, allowing the bait to fall to the bottom of his 13ft swim!

Two eels were caught during the first night, 2:4 (Bob), measuring 33"x6", and 1:14 (Dave), measuring 30"x6". I blanked. Bob's was caught on a small rudd fished close to a weedbed, and Dave's took a small perch fished in the manner described above.

Early the following morning, that shining globe known as the sun crept over the horizon causing Bob's sunburn to hurt even more - he had been over exposing himself the previous day. This day progressed the same as the previous day: catching baits, gorging ourselves stupid and snoring away on our bedchairs.

One aspect of the Electricity Pool is that there is an electricity booster station right next to the pool (hence the name) and a hooter sounded when the telephone was unanswered. It sounded like a souped up sensor, and for a time I was of the opinion that they were trying to "hit" cows on cabbage heads from the neighbouring fields!

The second night saw the capture of one more eel, 1:11 ( $30\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ ), by Dave. It is typical! Here's a fellow who's had more blanks than Ernie Orme at Pickmere starting to hammer the eels. Bob and myself caught sweet nothing.

Then came the night of the tempest. Following our second night at Electricity pool, we decided to move on to Wheal Rashleigh. Gone was the sun and blue skies of the previous few days. Instead it was overcast and very humid. We expected it to rain at any minute. Our breakfast - which included trout caught by Bob - was interrupted by a short shower. This, we thought, was the start of the impending deluge, so we rushed to pack all our gear away in the car. It turned out to be no more than a shower and the humidity continued to rise and the atmosphere became even more oppressive.

We drove into St Austell to do our shopping and have a meal, but still it did not rain. We drove out to Wheal Rashleigh to have a good look round, expecting any minute, while we were by the water, to be caught in a downpour. But still it did not rain and the humidity increased.

Our attempts at catching baits from Wheal Rashleigh were rather futile. All we could manage were 7 or 8 inch rudd which were too big for our liking. With the time getting on for 6.30, we decided to drive back to the Electricity Pool and get some baits from there. This we successfully managed to do and arrived back at Wheal Rashleigh just after eight, giving us barely enough time to get set up before dark.

As we arrived at the waterside to choose our swims, the heavens opened with a deluge that would have kept Noah and his menagerie content. It was raining so hard that cats and dogs were bouncing all over the place! At the same time the wind started and the trees all around us were bent at right angles. Add to this the sight of those tongues of fire coming out of the heavens plus the crashing of the thunder right over our heads and you'll get the idea. It made the weather at Bala the previous year seem pleasant in comparison.

There was only one logical thing left to do, and we did it. One of the local ale houses had our custom until kick-out time. We had a very enjoyable time supping ale and trying to select the worst record on the Juke box - not that that was an easy task, since every record on the thing could have qualified. The highlight of the evening was when the lights went out, and the only source of light was the flashing of the lightning. Fortunately, the gloom was only temporary and the landlord soon has his generator rigged up to not only provide light for himself and his customers, but also give the necessary voltage to operate the beer pumps. To celebrate, we had another.

When we were kicked out at 11.30, the storm was still increasing in ferocity. We got soaked running to the car, a mere few yards away from the door. We drove to a free car park in town and spent the night curled up in the car. Anyway, who wants to fish on a night such as this, when there's the chance of a couple of thousand volts landing on one's nut?

The next morning, feeling cramped and hungry, the storm had gone away, leaving the atmosphere feeling fresh. Gone was the heaviness of the previous day. We went to a local restaurant and had breakfast and decided that, come what

may, we would fish Wheal Rashleigh that coming night. We all now regretted not having fished the previous night, although we were all agreed that we would not have liked to. Our regrets were soon alleviated by the "news" which said that Cornwall had been ravaged by the worst storm on record. Trees, pylons and houses had all been struck by lightning and large areas had been blacked out. Cowards though we were, perhaps we were not too stupid!

Armed with fresh baits, we went off to Wheal Rashleigh, selected our swims and set up our mobile homes once more. The day was again overcast and there were quite a few showers. After the second of these short, sharp showers, Bob came to the conclusion that his nylon parachute, which formed his pog, was not waterproof. In fact, it might just as well have not been there at all! As Dave, as is typical of him, had claimed not only the most comfortable but also the most spacious swim, he invited Bob to join him in his waterproof pog.

We were well set up with plenty of time to spare before dark. We had a large meal, followed by lashings of coffee and then returned to our respective pogs to cast out baits and await some action. What follows will go down in the history books under the title of the "Wheal Rashleigh Saga".

I was sitting in my pog gently snoozing away and watching the evening mist drift across the pool. Suddenly, there was one enormous moose-like bellow blasting across the lake: "MY BRAIN 'URTS!" It seemed as if the trees were shaken by this near gale-force gust of hot air. I stealthily crawled around the banks expecting to see God-knows what. The spectacle that affronted my eyes was unbelievable. Standing beside the Smith-Pountney pog was a caricature straight out of "Monty Python's Flying Circus", minus knotted handkerchief on his head.

With jaw thrust out, and arms held wide, Bob was "doing" his mating call. "Wuuuuuuuuuhhhh...!" At about 3,000 decibels, it made Dave Smith's blood curdling scream seem tame in comparison. Our poor resident duck swam away with terror in her eyes.

Darkness fell and there came comparative quiet until Dave (again) had an eel of 10oz. I followed up with a perch of 6"! At 23.20 Dave hit into something that seemed BIG. Upon striking, the rod was wrenched down and line taken from the clutch. After what seemed ages, the eel began to come in. The air was littered with a blue haze - typical of Dave! Eventually, over 3ft of writhing muscle was thrashing upon the surface, whereupon Bob got the landing net tangled up in the rods, making beaching the only possibility.

Once on the bank the eel looked four. Dave slipped it into his bin and celebrated by making us sausage sandwiches and a cup of tea. We were all keen to weigh the beast but thought it best to wait till morning.

I returned to my broolly, dealt with a few more perch, caught an eel of 9oz and fell asleep. At about 1am I was awoken by some strange words that I'd never heard before. My young and unsoiled cars are not used to being abused. I went round to investigate. Apparently, Dave had given in to temptation and had decided to weigh his eel. Well, it had been thoroughly exhausted when put into the bin - not a single writhing from it. Dave had opened the lid of his bin and found it to still be in a shattered state and did not move when prodded, so decided to weigh it. Alas, his cheap Japanese torch went out and, in the dark, the eel had come to life and escaped. Upon reaching my friends, I found Bob grabbing hold of the eel's head, and Dave standing on it (the eel, not Bob). We managed to get it back into the bin (after three attempts), sat down, had a little chuckle and put the kettle on. Exciting stuff this eel fishing!

The following morning, we were able to weigh the eel. We took it up to the car park so that, if the thing escaped again, it wouldn't get too far. She



weighed 3:9, the best Dave had had for some time.

The day was overcast and wet. Our kit was soaking wet by lunchtime and we were beginning to feel very uncomfortable. There was only one answer: go home. So we did.

Although short, the trip was good fun and as a social as well as eel fishing occasion, it was a roaring success. So taken with the place were we that we have vowed to return next year. Bob and Dave had another trip down there at August Bank Holiday. I was going to go aswell, but I ran out of pennies! No doubt, if their trip brought new adventures, one of them will tell us in a future issue.

### RIGHT OR WRONG?

By Tony Hollerbach.

New members to the Club may not know that the Secretary has a whole collection of back issues of the Bulletin which will be loaned for the cost of the postage. I have read through many back issues - fantastic stuff! My perpetual thoughts of eels were stimulated no end by the reading material within them and can heartily recommend them to everyone.

One thing really got me going! I refer to an article in Vol 5, No 4 (Sept '68) "The effects of rotenone". Apparently, this poison was applied to a 4 acre lake somewhere in England to kill the fish, which had become stunted. This was, in my opinion, a terrible, needless slaughter. Alright, the fish were stunted through overcrowding, but surely a form of electro-fishing could have been employed?

The effects of the poison on the fish and eels are described.

"Large eels died and appeared more vulnerable than smaller fellows. The small eels quite uncannily made their way to the bank with their heads out of the water swimming like snakes. In their thousands they threw themselves upon the bank and attempted to wriggle out of the water. Had it not been a dry period, I'm sure many of them would have made it. This was still going on some 12 hours later when the pit had suffered a terrible slaughter."

Can someone tell me why? Why could they have not waited for some rain, to enable a few poor eels to escape?

The comment below this piece goes on to say that the reason for such action was stunted fish and lack of fishery management, and: "There is only one way to treat such cases, and our correspondent's group has shown the courage, enlightenment and resolve to do it."

I cannot and will not agree with this barbarism. Couldn't pike have been introduced in sufficient quantities to reduce the fish stocks? I'm sure there are other ways to deal with problems such as this.

Perhaps a few words from one of our knowledgeable members would clear this point and give a reasoned argument in favour of such drastic action.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

By the courtesy of John Watson.

With Tony Hollerbach talking about articles in past Bulletins, this seems an opportune moment to slip in the following pieces which first appeared in Angling Times way back in 1972.

"Owning a fairly large quantity of land not suitable for growing purposes, I have been advised to use the land in order to breed and sell eels. I would be very grateful if anyone could send me details on the breeding and marketing of same. - R.Mattham, Battlesbridge, Essex."

"With reference to Mr Mattham's letter regarding the breeding and marketing of eels.

I suggest that you read 'Eels and how to breed them' by A.N.Guilla. The author advocates the criss-crossing of the land with water filled ditches, into which the initial stock is introduced. The land in between is then planted with lob-grass.

As everyone knows eels leave the water at night to feed, they will soon graze and grow fat and begin to multiply. The addition of pilchard oil to the ditches will stimulate spawning.

Once a large herd has been assembled it can easily be drawn to market with the help of a good Old English Eel dog. - J.E.Watson, Blackpool."

REPEAT SESSIONS

By Dave Holman.

A few years ago a major debate in the Club's ranks was the question of repeat visits to the same swims on our eel waters. Many were the arguments for and against, and some really first rate articles are in print to show the verbal battles that went on.

Without trying to stir up the ground again, I would like to ask Club members for their views on the marathon seiges that are part and parcel of our eel sessions these days. A Club trip is perhaps the best place to view this technique: where every item of tackle that has had the car's rear springs squeaking for dear life, is unloaded on the shore and set up like some travelling circus show!

The idea, as I see it, is that any eel that may be resident in the swim must feed at some time during the session and by sheer weight of rod-hours the fish will be caught, especially if the swim is a known "hot-spot".

The question is; does it work? Or is it that we are a lazy lot and don't like moving every night to a new location? I always try to fish different pitches every night, simply because I have found that the second and third nights usually produce far fewer fish than the first night, and, from what I have seen, other members results follow the same pattern.

So, have I got it wrong? Is all this moving from swim to swim really worth

it? I shall be extremely grateful if this very important topic (to my mind) were to be given an airing in the Bulletin.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am glad to see that Arthur Sutton is at last receiving the moral backing he most certainly deserves for his latest bite alarm system. I do not wish to blather on, but simply to state that in my opinion it is the "bite alarm of the future", and not only do I feel that it is progress in the right direction but is a first in its field. A proud achievement, not only for AJS himself, but for the Club as a whole.

Further to our own recent correspondence on the subject of whether metric figures should be without dots - ie using mm rather than cm and gm rather than Kgm - I now agree that the dots should be done away with to avoid confusion for analysis purposes. For the purposes of general information and discussion, stay with the more familiar units for the sake of failed mathematicians like myself!

Yours sincerely,  
Nigel Jeyes,  
9A, Southwolds,  
Ycovil.

Dear Editor,

Cor, it makes you wonder who your friends are! I mean, the Water Authorities profess to help the angler, though that is just one aspect of their work. But take the close season with which, I am sure, we have all come to loggerheads with. The close season is, in my opinion, a chain around our necks. There are, of course, those anglers who whole heartedly support the close season, but there are a large number of us who think it to be unnecessary. The reason for the close season, so we are told, is to allow the fish to breed without interference from us anglers, but there are, to my limited knowledge, only two or three fish that are obliging enough to breed during those three months of March-June. So, what is the real reason for the lay off? To rest the banks? A noble idea, but only of value to botanists. Yet the Water Authorities who have the power to dispense with the close season still persist in insisting that it stays. Look at the Anglian Water Authority. They will even go as far as to impose a close season where there has not been one.

Is there anyone else claiming to be our "pals"? The angling associations, the clubs which own, lease or share with others nearly all our waters, have the audacity to impose petty rules on their members. For instance, bans on types of fishing; bans on night fishing; bans on certain baits; bans from fishing waters reserved for matches. Need I go on? Most of these rules, seemingly, are aimed at the minority: a minority of which we, a specialist group, are hardest hit. What can we do? Well, I suppose membership, total membership, of the NASG is one answer. The NASG fight these petty bureaucrats on our behalf, and it is the Anguilla Club's policy to involve itself with the NASG. For that reason, I am willing to give the NASG my support by joining. However, I do have one reservation. I cannot see how I can give

the NASG my full support, since it will call for split loyalties. Being involved with a club such as ours demands total involvement.

I should love to have comments from all of you and I would especially like to hear what our policy makers on the committee have to say.

Yours,

Tony Hollerbach,  
Wymington,  
Northants.

Dear All,

Yes, it's me, your beloved Bomber!

Sitting at home tonight with my wife of nearly three weeks, I thought I must put pen to paper and say hello to all my old angling comrades and those who have just joined the Club.

1975 has been a hectic year for me as was 1974, for I have been courting over 300 miles to Newcastle on Tyne. Finally, though, she took the bait, was played landed and photographed. I decided, however, not to return her to fight another day!

So now, hopefully, I will be able to get down to some serious fishing. Janice, my good lady's name - who some of you know accompanied me to Westfield Lakes and Barton Broad on the '74 Whit trip - has come to the conclusion that to fight man's urges (I mean the fishing ones, Ernie!) is useless and now offers me encouragement.

Anyway, with this and that, I still managed to catch some eels of 0:15, 2:2 2:7, 2:7, 2:8, 2:10, 3:0 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 3:2.

Unfortunately, the summer trip to Bala did not live up to expectations, for me and Dick, anyway; but none the less, was still not to be missed with John Watson trying to brolly train his dog providing the light entertainment. Sally, his dog, seemed to derive great pleasure from wrecking a well built "pog". The storm was quite an eye opener as well, unless, like Sally and me, you were cowering under a bed chair!

Anyway, recently in the Bulletins, I have noticed several articles on groundbaiting for eels. One criticism I have of the tin with holes containing mashed up fish is by doing this, are we not making the tin more attractive than the bait? I suppose an argument against this is that the eel intercepts the bait before it reaches the can. However, isn't there the danger that by doing this we mask the smell of the bait? - any comments? Or, in the case of using the same species of fish for both groundbait and hook bait, is it possible that the mashed up fish could emanate such a strong smell so as to make it once again more attractive? Would it be better to stuff groundbait down the fishes throat - if using fish - so it slowly filtered out thus increasing the chances of our bait being the eels ultimate objective as opposed to the can.

I hope everyone is OK, and I look forward to seeing you all at the forthcoming meeting.

Best wishes,

John Holliman,  
1c Mount Road,  
Wimbledon,

London S.W.19

SMITH SLEPT ON

By A.(JS).Nonimous.

Through the thunder and the rain  
And though the night has gone  
We chanted, shouted, all in vain  
Still Dave Smith slept on.

Through the night the cels came fast  
But noonday sun now shone,  
And today is halfway past  
Still Dave Smith slept on.

Nothing wakes him - but last year  
A nude maiden, tanned and wan  
By his brolley did appear  
Suddenly, Smith's leapt on!

(With sincere oppologies to a good fishing companion.)

WHOLE OR SECTION?

By Tony Hollerbach.

We, all of us I'm sure, predominantly use deadbaits during our eel fishing season. But should we use whole baits, or only sections? An incident this season has got me thinking.

Having received an open invitation from Brian Crawford at the SGM to fish Bra lake, I arrived one Saturday, unannounced, at his house. I travelled with Brian to the water to find Dave Smith who had caught two eels the previous night to 3:11 and Arthur Sutton. I chose a swim - the one Dave and Arthur had fished the previous night - we caught some baits (small perch) and tackled up. I fished two small perch of about 3" long threaded straight on to the reel line rather than on a trace with a size 4 hook. I fished two rods with 12lb line on one and 18lb line on the other.

Not having had a twitch, I wandered away at about midnight to find a toilet. The call of nature answered, I returned to my rods to find my buzzing going full blast, but no line moving. According to Brian, it had been like that for about five minutes. Anyway, there was no joy at all with that one, but about an hour later I had another run. It stopped. I asked Brian:

"How far do they run?"

"Hit it as soon as it moves," came his reply.

It moved. I struck. Nothing. Not a damn thing - thanks, Mr. Chairman!

Then came a nocturnal visit from Dave Smith, on the prowl for some tea. His excuse was that he had forgotten to take his cup back to his pog after his previous cuppa, and thought it was a pity for it to have remained empty for so long. So I was persuaded to part with yet another cuppa!

On finishing our tea, Dave took his cup and disappeared in the general direction of Arthur's broolly - after a refill, no doubt! - and I lay down and shortly fell asleep.

At 03.55 I was awoken by my buzzer. A run! A real goody was this one. It stopped. One minute, then it was away again. I let it have a yard, then bang! I hit it and connected with a good one. Reeling it in, the line went slack. I thought I had lost it, but in the nick of time I realised that the eel was running at me, and by that I mean running straight towards the submerged car that lay in 6-10 feet of water at my feet. Reeling in the slack, I caught up with the eel and steered it clear of the car. A friend of Brian's was then on hand to net it for me.

It turned the scales at  $4:5\frac{1}{2}$ , measuring  $38\frac{1}{2}$  x  $7\frac{1}{2}$ .

The eel had gorged the bait right down, and there was no chance of removing it. It was placed in a bin with some water. There was no blood, and it was breathing alright. But, some two hours later it showed signs of illness and died shortly afterwards. You may laugh, but I was upset something rotten that a beautiful eel should have died because of my incompetence and stupidity. Stupidity in using barbed hooks; stupidity in using gorge baits, or allowing the eel to gorge the bait. Would a section have been as good? Perhaps a tail or head would have allowed me to lip hook that eel and return it alive?

It's a topic that I think ought to be fully discussed in the pages of the Bulletin. If I can't find a way of catching eels on dead bait without their having to die, I think I shall return to using worm baits. Please let us find a humane way of catching eels.

On a lighter note, there is something to look forward to. I have just been reading a recently published book "Life in the Oceans" by Joseph Lucas and Pam Critch, published by Thames and Hudson of London in their World of Science series.

"Sea monsters and sea serpents do exist," it says. "A giant eel would fit the description of a number of sea serpents, and here it is of particular interest that, very occasionally, relatively giant eel larvae have been caught for which no adult form is yet known."

Who knows, pals, a 30lb plus eel is on the cards, maybe....?!

### THE RETENTION OF EELS

By David Smith.

Tony Hollerbach was genuinely very upset about the death of his eel. The following morning saw me in no fit state to face the world. I was feeling tired and irritable having had an uneventful night but little sleep to make up for it. Tony makes a good cup of tea, but by gum it gives you the trots! However, it did register that Tony was upset and my only regret was that I could not have been more sympathetic to his cause.

Now that he has committed his thoughts to paper, and I have had time to reflect on the events of the past season, I feel that the time has come to give a few answers to the question raised by Tony and also raised by Alan in his article on tagging- i.e. can an eel survive capture on a gorge bait. In short, the answer is "yes, providing....."

Most, if not all of us, retain the eels captured for some length of time. The length of time the eel is retained after capture depends on many variables, but basically they fall into two categories: the time in the session the eel is caught in conjunction with the duration of the session and one's general disposition at the end of the session. In other words, an eel caught at dusk will be retained longer than one caught at dawn; and if, as many of our members do, you have a few hours sleep at the end of your session before weighing and measuring your eels they will be retained longer than those caught by the lively fellow who is full of beans in the small hours and weighs and measures his captives as soon as possible.

So, an eel can be a captive for anything up to, and in some cases over, 15 hours.

How then do we look after our prisoners. The Geneva convention is a recent innovation but, as yet, does not extend to include eels. There is legislation to protect birds and mammals, but eels fall into neither category. As with lesser creatures such as butterflies, whose wings can be pulled off with impunity, few people care much about the well being of the poor eel. In the Middle Ages, prisoners for which there was no chance of receiving ransom were simply thrown into a dank dungeon with little consideration to their health and left to their own devices: if they died, tough. That gents, is how we treat our anguilliform captives.

Our dungeons fall into two groups: sacks and bins. The sack is the specimen hunters friend. It's convenient for retaining carp, barbel and even pike. But, it is only efficient if it is of a loose weave construction so that water can freely circulate providing the fish with a constant supply of life giving oxygen. The same is true of eels. They need their oxygen the same as any other fish. Never-the-less, I have seen members using sacks that carp fishermen would never dream of using. Furthermore, I've seen these sacks bone dry and their contents a dehydrated stick.

Bins, in my opinion are better, though still quite lethal. As said above, the eel needs oxygen. It has an advantage over most of its fellow fishes in that it can, if needs be, use atmospheric air....provided its gills can be kept moist, and the atmosphere humid. Place an eel in a bin with some water and it will use up the oxygen in the water and then drown - die of asphyxiation. That, Tony, is the probable reason for the demise of your eel. If, on the other hand, the eel is popped into a wet bin with a lid that fits firmly, it should survive the hours of darkness: but, once the sun comes up and the air in the bin starts to warm up, the eel stands a good chance of pegging out, either through overheating or dehydration. The early bird not only catches the worm, but also releases his eels.

It is not as gloomy as it would appear from what I have said so far. This past season, I kept in custody an eel in excess of three pounds for nearly twenty four hours. It was returned to the water after that period and showed no obvious ill effects. On another occasion, I retained three eels - 2:12, 3:13 and 3:15 - right through the afternoon heat, with temperatures soaring into the nineties. All three were returned alive to the water, showing none of the effects typical of an eel that's been kept under those conditions. How did I do it? Quite easily, thankyou, in a ten foot keep net.

When we were down in Cornwall, Kevin Richmond asked me why I used a bin rather than a keepnet. Convenience is the only answer. My convenience, not the eel's. So, let's throw that one out to the general public. Do you use a keepnet? If not, why not? It forms a much more humane prison and I have not had any mortalities with eels so kept. My use of it over the past season was by way of experimentation after Kevin suggested it. I'm now convinced. Furthermore, as deeply hooked as some of my fish were, they swam away quite happily and I'm sure that many of the fatalities blamed on deep hooks are a result of retention.

You may disagree with me, but going on my own experiences, I am now convinced that most of the fatalities we have are a direct result of mal treatment whilst the eels are in our custody rather than the traditional view that the deaths are as a result of deep hooking.

In support of my opinions, I should like to cite the following to occurrences.

Dave Marlborough, a former Anguilla Club member, deeply hooked a small eel. He took it home with him and kept it in an aquarium, where it lived quite happily and appeared to suffer no ill effects from the hook within its stomach.

Secondly, an event that happened earlier this season was something of an eye opener. Arthur Sutton and I spent a night at a gravel pit. The only run of the night came to AJS. This he duly hit, but after a brief moment's contact with the fish the line went slack and Arthur reeled in his line with no trace. Close inspection of his link swivel revealed that it was not clipped up, so that the trace had been able to slip off.

The following weekend we returned to the same water in the company of Tony Hollerbach. This time I was the one to have the run. In came an eel of 1:11 boasting two traces from its mouth, mine plus another that was later identified by Arthur as belonging to him. This eel, then, had spent a whole week with a hook firmly imbedded in its belly and a wire trace hanging out of its mouth. That I caught it proves that that particular eel was still capable of feeding and that the presence of a hook hadn't caused any ill effects. Furthermore, it indicates that capture does not prevent an eel from making the same mistake twice and helps to confirm the theory that eels are stupid.

That eel was weighed and measured almost immediately after capture - it was caught in the hours of daylight and returned alive. I have little doubt that it is still alive (unless its made the same mistake thrice and has been eaten) and next season, I think there is a fair chance of catching it with a magnet! Who knows, groundbaiting with size 12 hooks soaked in pilchard oil and using a horseshoe magnet as hook bait could revolutionise angling!

So, from now on I intend using a keepnet for my eels, reserving the bin for baits and my car-cover.

### THE TRUE STORY OF QUASIMODO - A genuine "monster" eel

By Henry Hansen.

\*NB This article has a "Double X" rating and should not be read by minors. Also, it is not recommended for weak willed persons, persons of a nervous disposition, hysterical types or Ernie Orme and Arthur Sutton! The author disclaims all liability for mishaps resulting from the reading of this text, but can recommend a good psychiatrist should anybody start suffering from nightmares. It is advised that the following be read in the smallest room in the house!

It should first be stated that this text would not have been written had it not been for Graham Booth's article on the Clun trip to Pickmere. It was with some disdain that I read of the "thing" that Graham caught, as this brought back memories of a similar horrendus event for myself. For a couple



of years now, people have been trying to get me to fully describe what happened. But, always in my mind was the question: "Is the Club big enough to take it?" Now that you have been primed by Graham's "fish", I think that the time has come.

In August 1972, John Szwechlowicz (an ex-member) and myself decided to fish Cartwright's pit, near Louth in Lincolnshire. The weather was quite good and consequently the majority of the swims were already taken. John squeezed himself into the main part of the pit - a three acre clay pit - whereas I decided to fish the relatively unfished back section of the lake. This is very irregular in shape and has several very small islands. It was from one of these that I decided to fish that particular night. The chosen island afforded a good number of choice swims and I placed my rods strategically around it. The adjacent water is the deepest part of the pit, so it was only necessary to lob the baits a short distance.

The night itself was totally uneventful with not even an abortive run between us. Shortly after dawn, John came over to the island. I was just reeling in my baits. When I came to the last rod, which I had placed adjacent to a very small patch of woods, there was some resistance. I wound down on this and pulled hard. There was a slight responsive tug and then, up it popped: Quasimodo! Even as I was reeling it in (for it put up no struggle whatsoever) the local village church bell was chiming away like mad. It seemed to be one hell of a coincidence! Both John and I were completely lost for words and simply gazed at it for some time.

I will try to describe Quasimodo as best I can. Firstly, it was 29 ins. in length and weighed 11lb. It had accepted a 5" silver bream on a 1/0 hook and 12lb line. It was creamy white in colour and had a decidedly wrinkled skin. The upper part of its body, nearly the entire length, was covered in small patches of hair. It had two large gristley lumps midway along its spine, and its head seemed abnormally large for an eel of such a weight. The eyes were a dull red colour. It was also noticeable that it had extreme difficulty in manoeuvring properly - not surprising really when you consider its rather odd shape! To top it all off, it died about ten minutes after capture. I say "capture", although I am of the opinion that it was literally on its last legs and virtually gave itself up. Presumably it got the new style bodywork from someone's boot or bankstick and was thus relegated to the role of a cripple or "super-scavenger".

Hence, I feel sure that it virtually crawled up to the bait and slowly consumed it. Quasimodo had probably evolved its own style of eating in that it captured/found its meals and ate them on the spot. This would explain my not getting any indication of a bite and also how it developed the very large head. Incidentally, we took a colour photograph of it, but it mysteriously never turned out!

I would like to say that I have not elaborated on any of the facts, I have simply stated them and allow you to make up your own minds. I will be forever thankful that I took the fish in daylight and not in darkness. Could you imagine the effect of landing such a beast in the dark? Probably nightmares for life! Also I should point out that John Szwechlowicz retired from fishing shortly after this event and left the club the year after!

I can only finish by saying that in Quasimodo I caught a truly monstrous eel!