



NATIONAL
ANGUILLA
CLUB
BULLETIN

1.
NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BULLETIN

VOLUME 22

NUMBER 7

(Copyright NAC 1985 ©)

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1985

CONTENTS

PAGE

CONTENTS PAGE

1

EDITORIAL

2

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

3 - 4

I'M AN EEL ANGLER - FULL STOP by John Sidley

5

REACTION! by D.P.Walker

6 - 9

I FISHED THE RIGHT WATER? by John Sidley

10-11

A SEASONS PLAN by D.P.Walker

12

LONG RANGE WORMING RIG-1985 by D.P.Walker

13-14

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR by John Sidley

15

NOTABLE EELS - 1985 by Brian Crawford

16

VIEW FROM THE BIV' by 'Stormies'

17-18

GERRY ROGERS - THE SILENT ONE by John Sidley

18-19

A LOST CHAIRMAN'S PAGE by Mark Davles

20-21

FIRST SESSION 1985 by Mark Davles

21-22

Brian Crawford
Editor

EDITORIAL

2.

Well members, I guess this will be my last Editorial and the last Bulletin that I compile. Pressure of schoolwork plus family demands are too great for me to continue. I have tried to do the best I can in the time available and I thank those members who have supported me and the Club by supplying material.

I hope the standard of presentation has been acceptable. Ten years ago when I had more free time I could have done a much better job.

However, I have managed to give you reasonably regular Bulletins and Newsletters.

The Summer trip to Baston Lake was as expected poorly supported. On the Friday night there was just myself (and wife), Dave Walker, Dave Taylor and Pete Stickland. About 4 eels were caught in the 2 - 3lb range. The weather was typical, gale force winds and non-stop pouring rain. The only consolation was the excellent food and beer at the local pub. Dave Walker got on very well with these locals, playing darts all afternoon. Saturday evening saw us joined for one session by Kevin Stephenson and a friend of Dave Taylor and Pete. About 7 eels were caught in the range 2 - 3½ lb. Sunday night there was just Dave Walker, my wife and me. No eels were caught. Actually, I blanked all three sessions, but that's the way it goes - at least I was there. I'm sure you all had lots of wonderful excuses why you could not attend. It is a pity that one of the conditions of membership was compulsory attendance at at least one of the Club trips. If that was so, half our present members would not qualify.

Despite my particular poor year, there has been some very excellent catches of big eels reported. I hope to list those I have information on in this edition. It is significant that most of the big eels were reported from August and September. At the time of compiling this Editorial, the local water temperatures are in the range 58 - 62°F. (September 23rd). The nights are not too cold, just wet and windy. I still hope to get in a few more night sessions and then switch to daytime sessions for eels. My main problem is that I have not yet found a water in this area with really good potential for big eels. I either get no runs at all in a 12 hour session with up to 4 rods or I can only land eels about 1:0. Still, it is early days yet. There is always next season and I am negotiating to fish certain private waters with very good potential.

I must apologise once more for the poor reproductive quality of the last Bulletin and in advance if this one turns out the same. I still have to blame the duplicator which although electric, has to be used by hand only and the feed is very poor. Hopefully, whoever replaces me will have the new duplicator which Arthur has. He has also managed to acquire for us lots of other stationary items to see us through a few years. I must also add that Arthur, according our Chairman, is now under great financial strain and is unable to run his car or go fishing and may not be able to attend the AGM as a result. I'm sure we have some members out there (somewhere) who can step in with some support for him after all the support he has given to the Club and to other members when they had similar problems. That's what the Club is all about isn't it????

This is Brian Crawford signing off.

Best wishes and tight lines in all your eel sessions.

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

I'll be completely frank with you. At the present time (and this piece is being written on the 5th, September) I haven't got the slightest inclination to out fishing for eels. In truth I can't explain why. Perhaps it's the awful cold wet weather. Perhaps I'm getting old. I really don't know. I had decided some time ago that my attitude towards fishing in general and for eels in particular would change this year. I felt that in previous years I'd simply been going through the motions. If I didn't feel like going I wasn't going to force myself! You may say that a person with this attitude has no right to be a member of the National Anguilla Club let's alone its Chairman. If so let's hear from you. As you all should by now know I lead a fairly active life and only have 24 hours in each day to fit in all my interests and also do some work. I await hearing from you.

I have been disappointed in recent times to hear of the resignations of provisional members Matt Johnson and John Sidley. I still don't understand why they felt it necessary to leave the club. Matt I believe resigned over Brian Crawford's comments about the BEAC in the last Bulletin. Brian made a genuine mistake and he corrected it at the earliest opportunity. Why jump the gun by resigning? John Sidley's resignation is more of a mystery. It may be that John found unacceptable comments made by Ernie Orme and myself in the last Bulletin. Can anybody tell me what was unfair about my comments. Ernie's article was written in stronger terms. But why shouldn't a member express his feelings frankly in the Bulletin, that's what it's for. I wish more members would tell us what they think. It would have been far better for Matt and John to have done this rather than resign. If John couldn't take criticism then I don't think that the NAC was his kind of club in the first place. Our Bulletins seem to be able to reach places that others don't so I'm confident that this will be read by both members of the BEAC and ESG. Perhaps we could have your comments lads!!!!!!

The other week I managed to sneak out of my office to do a bit of chub fishing with Ernie Orme on the river Vrwyn at Meifod, up in the Welsh border country. I drove down the farm track to the river and parked next to the old mill. As soon as I got out of my car I met Ernie walking up from the river carrying a beautiful 3½ chub in his keepsack. A nice fish, but no monster you may say, but the pleasure of catching chub from this river is that fact that the fish are always in wonderful condition, with no torn fins and every scale in place. Despite a concentrated assault by us both we caught no more fish that day. I can't remember the last chub under 3lbs we caught from this river! We were intending to fish into the hours of darkness but the rain came, so we headed for the Saracens Head to down a few pints before returning home. Needless to say that as soon as we got in the pub it stopped raining. I don't think I know a more exciting form of fishing than fishing in the dark for chub. It's very exciting to see the isotope on your quiver tip swish round as a big chub bites with complete confidence. I especially like winter chub fishing and hope to get up to fish this river again before the years out. I believe Ernie has managed to persuade Terry and Jan to join him and Merrial at Meifod for a few days in November. I can assure you Terry you'll enjoy the fishing and helping Ernie finish a bottle of whiskey in the evening in front of a log fire. I will try and join you if you can find some floor space for my sleeping bag. Terry, Ernie and myself are what we call in the North 'good trougers' so Jan and Merrial take plenty of food. We don't want Meifod village to run out of supplies.

I've recently had one or two telephone conversations with Dave Holman who sends his regards to all his friends in the club..I dont think he's doing as much fishing as he did, but having said that he's caught some nice fish this year including some good eels.I still find Dave's articles from old Bulletins good reading and would recommend them to any new member. He really did put a lot of effort and thought into his fishing and obviously still does.

I couldn't make it to the Baston Fen trip, but I hope all members who did attend enjoyed themselves and caught a few fish.

Mark Davies

From the Sargasso Sea to the Tame

THEY swam and drifted on the currents from the Sargasso Sea, thousands of miles away. Reaching the tidal Severn, they headed for the fresh water stretches, driven by some innate instinct.

Just short of Gloucester, on night tides, they were netted out and deposited in containers.

From there they could have been flown by jet, still alive, to Holland, Spain, Italy...instead these tiny elvers were packed in ice and water and taken across

country to the Tame, part of the Trent river system.

In all, around 160,000 elvers, just a few inches long, and not much more than transparent threads, were gently placed in about 10 different locations in a river now fast recovering from the pollution which, for decades, left it fishless and lifeless.

The hope and the expectation is that sufficient numbers of these elvers will survive and help

establish a population of eels in the Tame and middle Trent.

Effectively the Trent above Holme Sluices, Nottingham, is devoid of eels. There is an annual elver run in the lower river, but it stops at the giant sluices.

The 160,000 elvers — weighing in total about 150lbs — should in the next eight or nine years produce mature eels which will head for the sea, and the Sargasso spawning grounds.

In the years before they mature and as they run down-river it is hoped they will provide

sport for the angler and, on the migration route, an exploitable 'crop' for eel netmen.

Severn-Trent bought the elvers from a commercial elver station at Gloucester. The 'seeding' of the Tame was carried out by fisheries inspector Tony Willetts who brought the elvers by car across country packed in ice and water in small polystyrene containers.

Earlier this year and during 1984 more elvers and eels have been placed in parts of the Tame and Trent.

It does seem that I have got up the back of some of the members in the N.A.C. I would just like to say that I am only human and abuse about myself plus my eel captures I will not take.

For members of the N.A.C. to say that their fishing or eeling is only a hobby makes me wonder why the hell they are in such a club, to be successful in any type of big fish angling one has to put in over that 100%. In big eel fishing it takes one hell of a lot more.

The club these anglers should join is the B.E.A.C. for with-in its ranks are anglers who just fish for eels, regardless of their size. Do not get me wrong there are some first-class eel anglers in the B.E.A.C. with many members landing some very big eels indeed, but the B.E.A.C. was formed to help the angler who shows an interest in eels, and for the angler who just does the odd trip out, some members of the N.A.C. fit that bill.

Why not take a leaf out of Phill Smith's book, i.e. 37 blanks at Queensford for two very big bream. Phill could have gone to any other lake and knocked out bream of 6,7,8lb, maybe even higher, but NO! Phill is a big fish angler and puts the time on the right waters, this is what I did myself way back in the 70s at Earlswood Lakes. I fished the lakes when I knew the goods were. In one stint I did 22 nights with out a run, my good friend Steve Meadhurst did 24 nights non-stop, ~~on~~ turning up at the lake each night became a local joke, 'another blank, lads they used to say, the joke was on them in the end, okay they had their 2lb and odd fish to 4lb from the other two lakes, but on my 25th night I took an eel weighing in at 5lb the next night a eel of 5lb 8oz, worth all those blanks you must agree. I feel if the N.A.C. does not sort itself very soon, and put more time and effort into their eel fishing, the club should fold up, for you are living on past members success. Since I have joined the club I have gained nothing from the club at all, if not for a few members who do go out eeling there would be nothing to put in your club Mag, please dont leave it to just a few, if we are to learn more about the catching of specimen eels i.e. fish of 5lb and above we must all pull as one-if not believe me you're flogging a dead horse.

For many, many years I have longed to be in the ranks of the N.A.C. the sun shone out of your arse as far as I was concerned, you were the top. I beg you not to ruin that dream, I ask you to stop and think, look back over past years, get out your old club mags and compare them to the last few years, I'm sure you will find a down-hill trend, I dont want to read about what Mark Davies takes eeling with him, those articles are for the Angling Papers, I dont want to know about a bloody tea bag being squashed, I want to read about big eel fishing and what makes them bloody tick, I want to know how I can be more successful in landing big eels, not just the odd fish every couple of years, or once in a blue moon, but on a season to season basis. I will end by saying read my book, and look at the time and effort I have put in to catch the eels I have been rewarded with, you have to do a little bit more than just cast a bait out, if your waters produce eel after eel with the odd fish upto 5lb, after a time you will know if your chances are in with a real big un i.e. those monsters of six and above, Do you say I will keep on trying on that water or move to where you know the eel population is less but the size a lot higher? In fact you have to say enough is enough, I feel if you can-not do that then you should not be in the N.A.C., for its members like you who are holding the rest of the club back, think about it? All I ask is dont knock the anglers who are willing to put in that 100% or more to be successful, dont just go to your venue and chuck a rod out on the off chance, stop and look at your venue, try and read the water, do as I do and think like a big eel, where would you hide and feed if you were a real big old fish with more brains than some of the anglers fishing for you, like I said, try to become the hunted and the hunter, believe me, you dont have to pack up work and sit for days on end to be successful. I will say it helps if you can, but it is not the do or die of big eel fishing.

REACTION !!

by D.P.Walker

The following may or may not cause a few people to sit up and think. I hope it does for as I can see, it will be the only constructive thing, club wise, that they have done recently. I am now past the point where I can sit back and not comment on recent articles in the bulletin and I am not bothered about the consequences in the slightest !

I am absolutely disgusted at the lack of understanding and tolerance, of a differing attitude, shown by two members of our club, both of whom I considered mature and reasonable adults. Unfortunately they both seem to be incapable of accepting the views and attitudes of an extremely successful eel angler (and provisional member), namely John Sidley. Whether John's approach is correct or not is totally immaterial and the fact that anyone has to suggest that he's got it all wrong only leads me to the conclusion that jealousy is at the bottom of it all. To tell someone who has dearly wanted to join our ranks for years, that he doesn't have to justify himself to the club is the pinnacle of ignorance considering the storm clouds that have hung over John's head in the past. Indeed we, as a club, should be proud and honoured to see someone who has caught more than the rest of the club put together trying to justify his membership of the National Anguilla Club in our own bulletin. If any member can't see this as I do then I suggest they climb out of their cardboard box and wake up!

I think it only right to point out at this stage that I do not think John Sidley is anything more than an extremely experienced and successful eel angler, the fact that I have fished on a number of occasions with him and enjoyed every single minute of it, is irrelevant. I have fished with a few anglers of John's stature for various species and every one has been great company and every one has enjoyed their fishing immensely.

I would now like (if anyone's still reading) to comment on certain particular points raised in two recent articles concerning John Sidley.

Anyone who has fished with John Sidley (& Gerry Rogers) on more than one occasion will testify that no-one enjoys his angling more and if more people had as many laughs, brews, shared fags, and general goodwill around when fishing then the angling world would be a much nicer place.

The suggestion that John hasn't got his eel fishing in perspective is laughable and not worthy of further comment, as is the use of the phrase "fana tical cranks" in one of the articles, nothing could be further from the truth in John Sidley's case.

Mr Orme is, in my humble opinion, destined to become a successful and respected tackle dealer, but for him to brush away angling politics as a waste of time is unbelievably naive and ultimately very damaging for his livelihood and the sport and enjoyment of his customers. ALL anglers need the support of organisations such as the NASA and more importantly organisations who actually try and do something (like the NASA) need the support, active or not, of as many anglers as possible, for make no mistakes, angling as a sport is doomed to be outlawed if we don't support those who DO fight on OUR behalf. If you doubt this statement then think back a few years and remember the greatest thinking anglers of our time, Mr Richard Walker & Mr Jack Hilton, both of whom warned us time and time again of the consequences of apathy ! !

The comment about no-one in the club being able, or wishing, to put the same commitment into their eel fishing as John Sidley, is, I believe, rather erroneous, I for one dearly wish I had the time to fish as much as John and if I was unfortunately not at work I would probably do just that. As it is I hold the attitude that my work pays for my enjoyment and that includes my fishing.

I have never considered the Club a purely one species organisation but I have always believed that the basic criterion for membership is "a willingness to spend the vast majority of ones summer fishing time in the pursuit of eels". Whether one has the time and inclination to devote as much time as John does is unimportant, what is, is that one must not think ill of someone who spends every spare moment eel fishing just because it is his only real interest. Mr Davies reasons for joining the National Anguilla Club have always puzzled me as has his strangely repeated request for members to express their opinion of him as a continuing member ?

My own opinion, for what it's worth, of why John is so successful is really his very hard work and devotion to the pursuit of really big eels. As to his methods and rigs, I find

it quite amusing that certain members seem to believe that there might be something magical in the type of rigs John Sidley uses, as if this had any real bearing on improving their own captures! I don't think standard legering rigs would impress them very much and John rarely uses anything else. No angler can improve his catch rate or size of captures unless he actually puts a bait in the water and a water that contains the size or quantity of fish they wish to catch at the time. This paragraph may appear a little condescending but I cannot think of any other way of putting it.

Mr Orme has, I believe, misinterpreted John Sidley's statement regarding 4lb eels. My own reading of the words are thus, John knows enough big eel venues and has had the experience to be able to set his sights on 4lb plus eels as a constant target every season. Therefore he has progressed to the enviable stage of being able to actually go eeling with the prospect of 4lb plus fish as a real possibility every session. Now personally I think that many other members should have that attitude, obviously not everyone has the opportunity to regularly fish waters with that sort of potential, but surely it is within the capabilities of us all to appreciate someone who does. No one I have met enjoys catching eels, of any size, more than John Sidley and I certainly would exchange all the eels under 3lb's I catch every year for one or two 4lb'er's or maybe a single 5lb'er. Terry Coulson I have never met, but I have respect for his statement "a 2lb eel is a big eel", nevertheless when one has waters and the time at ones disposal to make the capture of 2lb plus eels commonplace then the search for bigger fish becomes inevitable, John Sidley has done this, I am slowly following suit, although like John I am keeping the productive waters as a back up so that I don't forget what an eel looks like. As I said previously not everyone can do this, (it has taken me 8 years just to start the process) but can we not appreciate someone who has?

The fact that John does try and justify his eel captures is not so strange to me, and it obviously matters a great deal to John that we, the National Anguilla Club believe him. As I said I don't find that so strange and I don't think other members should. After all I cannot find anyone who

has applied 3 times for membership, and anyone who is that keen to join would obviously want to be accepted as an honest and truthful angler. I have often wondered what would have happened if someone with John Sidley's catch record had applied for membership without ever having gained a glimmer of the spotlight that seems to follow John around?
 Interesting eh !

Mr Davies comment about our fishing as a hobby is correct, but again I find it incredible that he does not seem to realise that some people's hobbies become an all consuming passion and that their overriding enthusiasm for that pastime tends to take over their lives to the exclusion of almost everything else. I don't think this is wrong in any way, as long as this passion does no-one any real harm and the person involved keeps on enjoying it. I personally envy those who can become totally dedicated to one hobby as much as those who can keep an active interest in several.

Finally let me say that I have never written an article such as this before and I sincerely hope I never have to do so again. I also wish to state that the National Anguilla Club has got to change drastically to survive and to this end I would urge a little more understanding and acceptance of other peoples attitudes along with a big reappraisal of how we present ourselves to the rest of angling.

D.P.WALKER

Gerry and I had been invited to this new lake in B, Ham to try our luck at a spot of eeling. After a couple of 3 stints on the lake and one at night I was putting a fair few good 3, and 2s under my belt, near on all the eels were falling to Roach Tail sections and a sub-surface rig fished with live baits, our worm rods were not doing all that much, but when they did go, it was a real steady run, you know the type, no mad rush, smoke a fag, close and check the baits with ease, what I did notice that the eels took were big on the lake.

On the 18th of September I had a phone call asking if I would like to do another eel stint on the very much private lake, a confirmed yes to the Game Keeper saw me on the water at 7 in the morning, by 7.30 my first R/Tail section was flying through the air some 80 yds out and in 1ft of water, the area being fished was a very large mud bank, thick in silt, this was the area that most of the big girls had been taken the record for the lake being an eel of 5lb 2oz.

At 9.25 I had my first run, the R/T had been took and it was screaming off I waited for the 2nd run, and made a firm strike, the new 1ft eel rods of J.S. took on a real good bend, and in came a 2lb 11oz eel, a good start. By 10.20, I was weighing a much better snake of 3lb 3oz, again on the R/T. A lull in action, the Game Keeper came down to see me and ask if I had got a very small boat he could have for his old man, explaining that I had put back the two eels I had took, and of their size, it was nice to hear him say, 'No they were much to big for the pot, we dont allow eels over 2lb to be taken away.' A good old chat followed about the water I was fishing, i.e the size of the pike and eels in the water, and a very much surprised look when I was told that some big cats were going to be put into the water?. As we spoke, my worm rod developed a classic steady run, no hanging about, my rod was in my hand and bail closed, monkey climber to the top of the rod, I wound down fast and pulled into the run hard, those J.S. 1fts just went double, for a few seconds I could not move the eel off bottom, then with out warning the pressure felt in the rod became easy as I started to very easy gain line, no bulking, just a very gentle wind and pump of the rod, the Game keeper stood there with my bait at the ready as I confirmed to him that this was, or felt like, a very good snake, some ten yds from the bank the eel surfaced, its head shaking from side to side and half its body under the water, that tail was looking and reaching for a firm hold on any snags.

The eel then netted, I put its weight at a high four or maybe just into a five, it was not until I went to pick the eel up that I felt its true weight, it was a solid fish and the gut full of food, my four lobs had been blown up the trace and my size 2 hook was in the back of its tongue, no problem in removing the hook, my weigh sack zeroed on the avons, the Game Keeper did the honours, 6lb 6oz came his reply, you have just broke the lake record, to tell you the truth I could not have give a shit if I'd broken the bloody lake record. As I was on my motorbike fishing this water I had not took my camera with me, I never do in case I damage it, a phone call to my wife at work asking if she could get out and bring my camera over to me, was met with a 'No', she was too busy doing the Holidy wages, Gerry was away on his Hells, no way would I be allowed to get a sailing paper reporter down to the lake, rule one 'NO PUBLICITY', my eel was kept in my net for 3 hours after, in that time the game keeper tried his best to get hold of a camera. I returned the eel at 6.00 and settled for having the fish weighed and witnessed by the Game Keeper, and two boat people who were sailing on the lake. My last run of the stint came at 6.25 again to a roach tail section that eel weighed in at 1lb 12oz.

All my gear packed up I was leaving the lake at just after 7.30 as I left two club members were setting up for a night stint, they had been told about my 6lb 6oz, after talking to them you could see by their faces that their hopes were very high, I have now been in touch with the Game Keeper to thank him once again for that phone call to fish his lake, he told me that the two anglers had took 15 eels all told, the best one falling after dawn and on lobworms.

she weighed in at 4lb 4oz. With the amount of 2, and 3 plus eels in this water, my good friend Gerry said it was a waste of time hitting the water, for he thought the chances were very slim in getting amongst a big un, it was like river eeling to him, in fact one night Gerry just packed up and went to sleep in the car, I only hope he has done well on his holls in Somerset if not, my life will be a bloody misery, but as I've always said "You only get out of fishing what you are prepared to put into it".

A SEASONS PLAN

Many of our members do not have the time to devote to their eeling that they would like to and I myself fall into this category. To this end I have started to formulate a seasons plan that I hope gives me the opportunity to gain the best from my time spent eeling.

My basic premise was to ignore the distances involved and concentrate on the type of waters available to me, thus I have done some long journeys but, I believe I have got good value in terms of eels caught. A couple of waters that had proved fairly easy were top of the list, the added bonus in both cases here, was that both waters chosen could produce big (5lb+) eels but also provide plenty of runs and quite a few eels up to 3lb+. Unfortunately one of these waters seems to have been netted to some extent and so only one was a really viable bet as an easy water.

The second class of water was to be a harder type where long blank periods were to be expected and perhaps a few good eels. 5 waters were chosen for this and as is usual with me I had given myself a wide choice as I need to actually really like a venue to give it any sustained effort. In the event I have only fished one of these waters at present (11-9-85), and a fascinating place it is too. I am certainly going to give it a good bashing next season and hopefully come up with a real monster of an anguilla.

The third class of venue that I allocate eeling time to is "specials", this group includes the spring and summer club trips and invitations to other peoples waters. I find these "special" trips very important and very rewarding as they give me a complete break from my normal fishing that I spend all on my own.

I don't know if this will be of any help to members, but it certainly helps me to enjoy my season more.

D.P.WALKER

LONG RANGE WORMING RIG 1985

This year I have had the chance to do a good deal of worm fishing at fairly long range, say 60 to 70 yards, and in some very deep water during the daylight.

The depth caused a few problems at first but I slowly overcame these and settled on a rig that has not let me down at all yet. The depth of the swim is around 40 feet where I am picking up the eels and the venue is a flooded chalk quarry, with vast beds of dense weeds that cause quite serious problems for most of the anglers, in the shallower areas of the pit.

The daylight action has allowed me to observe the runs quite closely and has resulted in the use of a bolt type of rig to ensure that the eels still have hold of the worms when the force of the strike reaches the hook...See Fig 1 for rig... Originally I used the same rig with the link leger bead replaced by a swivel and a bead between the swivel and trace, standard legering really. This resulted in a lot of dropped runs and all the eels deeply hooked when I finally contacted them. Next step was to try and frighten the eels into either dropping the bait before swallowing it, or alternatively get them to hook themselves against the lead, and thus also avoiding the gut hooking. This was simply tried by placing a split shot behind the swivel and preventing the link from sliding. Immediately the runs became slower and longer and virtually every one was hooked, with the vast majority in the mouth.

Now the rig needed refining, as I wasn't happy with the split shot and so the swivel and bead were replaced with a link leger bead that the line was passed through twice. This held the 1/1 bead fairly solid but still allowed movement if the link got hung up in dense weed whilst playing an eel. So far the slipping aspect of the rig has not been tested (that's good) but it does work on the bank and so in theory it should work in the water when it's really needed.

The trace is 20lb nylon attached to any reliable swivel and the hook has been a size 2 Kamatsu, because of the beautiful round bend and very sharp point, not because of the strength as I don't really think they are strong enough for general

eeling , but I have plenty of room here for playing fish so the hook strength is not that important. The link leger bead should be a John Roberts version, I have used the Drennan type but found them too hard and damaging on the line.

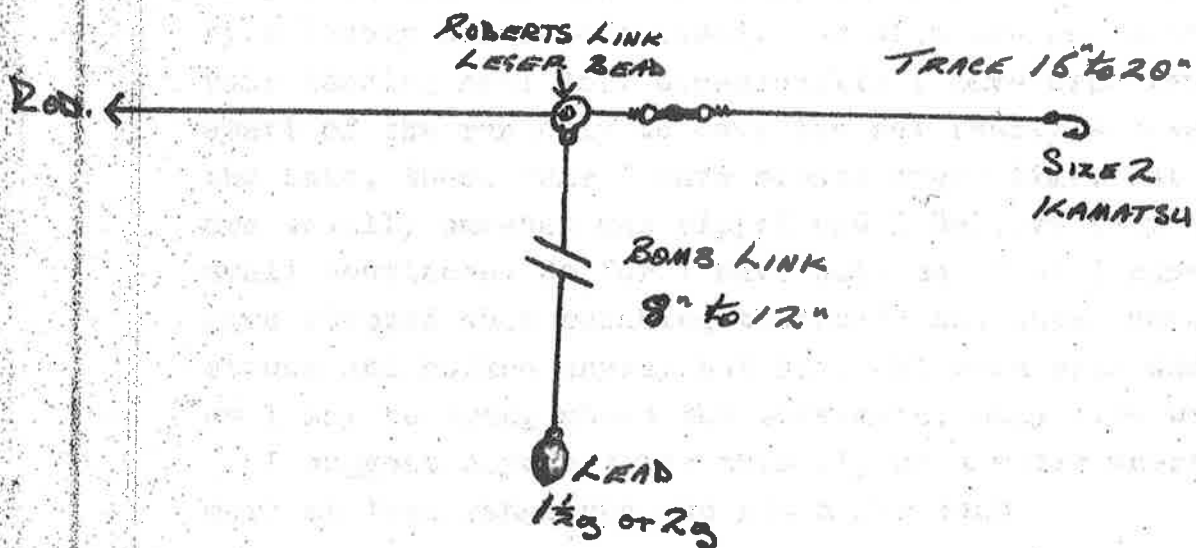
Most of the runs start as a couple of short twiches and then a fast pull, strike now and you miss every one, wait a couple of seconds and a good pull comes followed immediately by a lovely continuous steady run with the eel bound for your landing net! Very occasionally I have experienced the start of the run, only to have the eel really scream off with the bait, these runs I have missed every time, but the worms are usually smashed and ripped and I believe they are very small bootlaces. So far I have only had 2 or 3 runs that have stopped when reaching the "bolt" and these have been struck and hooked anyway but have all been eels under 1lb, so I may be wrong about the screamers, only time will tell.

I suggest anyone tries this rig on a water where worms work at long range and you get a few runs.

D.P.WALKER

BOLT RIG

FIG. 1



N.B. MAIN LINE PASSED TWICE THROUGH LEGER BEAD.

I'm very sorry if I have upset our Ernie by writing too much on my fish captures, yet I feel if Ernie or Mark had gone through all the stick and bare face lies that have been spread about myself, they too would be very upset, its okay you saying take no notice you should try doing that, its not very easy, for all those lies are very upsetting indeed. I'm also sorry if I have upset you all by saying I'm not interested in catching small eels, I love all eels regardless of their size and I'm pleased to catch any eel on the nights or days I fish, but I aim to land specimen eels, I am after all a big fish angler, so I fish the waters I know hold such fish, one can go on for so long in knocking out 1,2,3, or even four pound eels in ones venue, there then must come a time when enough is enough, my type of eeling is sitting on a water where maybe only one run in a month can be the norm, but when that run comes I know my chances will be high in hooking into one of those real monsters, Phill Smith has just proved my point while fishing Queensford Gravel pit 37 blanks yet in the end the goods have showed (Well done Phill).

I don't fish for any other species of fish during the summer months, I devote all of my fishing into the searching out and hopefully catching of big eels, I don't knock the members who go carp, tench, bream, or barbel bashing, please do not knock me. I do not think there is another angler in this country who can say he has devoted his whole fishing life into the capture of eels, you see Mark, you too Ernie, that's how I have got such a big list of big eels, I have put the time and effort, most important of all the effort on the waters where the big eels are, I have suffered the blanks, the rows with my wife and family, the lack of money, ill health, a nervous break down, the loss of my son 15 years ago, all for the sake of catching eels, as Mark has said, I have nothing to prove. Dick Walker once told me, I had reached the top in my field, I had nothing to prove to anybody. Barrie Rickards also said the same, call me a big head if you wish, keep saying you don't give a shit about how many big eels I have took, keep saying you don't care, yet if I knew a man who was being so successful in landing better eels than myself, I'd care I'd want to know.

My eel fishing is not just a hobby it is my whole life, with out it I'd rather be dead, I eat breath and sleep eels, nothing and I mean nothing can take its place, I have tried my best to be honest with you the members of the N.A.C. by doing so I am knocked by its members.

John Sidley.

John Sidley

Foot-Note

My phone has been ringing these last few weeks with anglers asking why I had left the N.A.C. which I did do after reading the clubs last Mag and the thick comment by Ernie Ows and Mark Davies, I took offence at what Mark and Ernie wrote, believe it or not I am not that thick minded, I have feelings like any body else.

After talking to David Walker and a phone call from Phill Smith I now realise that my leaving the club was a stupid mistake, so I withdrew my leaving letter to Brian. It has been said or put about by a member of the N.A.C. that I left the club because you would not let my good friend Gerry Rogers into your ranks, this is a bear-face lie my reasons for leaving were nothing to do with Gerry, in fact you would never get Gerry to join the N.A.C. if I had not talked Gerry into joining the E.S.G. he would not be in that club, the B.E.A.C. is another matter.

NOTABLE EELS - 1985 by Brian Crawford

<u>WEIGHT</u>	<u>MONTH</u>	<u>CAPTOR</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>BAIT</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
9:13	Feb	C. Price	Lincs	D.B.	A.T.
9:07	Aug	?	Somerset	?	A.T.
9:02	Sep	D. North	Lancs	M	A.T.
7:10	Aug	P. Miller	Bucks	W	A.T.
7:8	Aug	M. Smith	Lancs	DB	A.T.
7:6	Sep	P. Gustafson	Oxford	DB	P.G.
7:0	Aug	S. Pitts	GUC	W	A.T.
6:13	Aug	P. Gustafson	Oxford	DB	A.T.
6:06	Sep	J. Sidley	B'ham	W	NAC
6:04½	Aug	C. Dennison	Yorks	DB	A.T.
6:03	Aug	G. Sampson	Essex	W	A.T.
6:00	July	N. Evans	Clwyd	DB	NAC
6:00	Aug	A. Charlwood	Kent (Johnsons)	DB	A.M.
5:12	Aug	P. Miller	GUC	DB	A.T.
5:05	July	P. Loveridge	N'Hants	L.B.	A.T.
5:02	Sep	W. Rayner	Worcs	W	A.T.
5:02	Sep	A. Smith	Wraysbury	W	A.M.
5:00	Aug	P. Gustafson	Oxford	DB	A.T.
5:00	Aug	P. Tucker	South Cerney	M	A.T.
4:10	May	K. Stephenson	GUC	W	NAC
4:09	Aug	C. Dennison	Yorks	DB	A.T.
4:08	Aug	M. Riddle	R. Wey	W	A.T.
4:07	Aug	T. Jefferson	Essex	W	NAC
4:02	Aug	P. Fowler	Wilts	S	A.T.
4:00	Aug	"	"	S	A.T.
4:00	Aug	P. Gustafson	Oxford	DB	A.T.

Total 26 eels reported over 4lb.

A.T. = Angling Times
 A.M. = Anglers Mail
 NAC = National Anguilla Club Member
 DB = Dead bait
 W = Worm
 M = Maggot
 S = Special
 LB = Live bait

I have chatted to Paul Gustafson and the two anglers who fish with him. He has certainly found a great eel water. All his big eels are from the one water and he has also had very much bigger eels on and lost them - at least two well into double figures. I would put a bet on him being the next holder of the eel record - he goes fishing every night seven days a week from June 16th to October.....

I am hoping to have photographs of the 9:13 and the three upper 7's for a reprint of my book just after Xmas as the latest print is almost sold out.

Another good book on the market which just happens to have a chapter on eels by yours truly, is 'The Haig Whisky Guide To Coarse Fishing In Britain', Edited by Colin Dyson, published by William Collins, 1985, at £9.95. It is a collection by Colin Dyson (pike), Mike Wilson (carp), John Wilson (roach), Vic Bellars (perch), Graham Marsden (bream), Tim Marks (tench), me (eel), Nev Flockling (zander), Dave Plummer (chub), + 4 others.

VIEW FROM THE BIV' by 'Stormies'

Well actually, I'm a pair of storm sides and I have the dubious pleasure of being attached to a broolly owned by one Dave Walker and as part of my life I have to accompany this human reject on his fishing trips. This can be a most revealing experience and so I have decided to share my observations with you - the illustrious members of the National Anguilla Club. I hope you find them worth the effort as it has taken me ages to learn to write. As you can imagine, this alone is no mean feat for a pair of storm sides, as just putting up with Dave Walker is a real trial of patience!

Now my year began with a trip to Bala in North Wales. I renewed my friendship with 'old rod bag' and off we went in a new companion, 'Granny' the Grenada. Well, the less said about Bala the better. Walker was not very impressed with the weather and did not catch much except a bootlace or two. He did however, comment on the exceptional hospitality of one Ernie Orme and the dreadfully hostile and unfriendly locals.

June 15th saw me once again in 'Granny' and heading down the M25 and through the Dartford Tunnel and into Kent. Cotton Farm was our destination and Walker was most relieved to find that he could delve 'Granny' almost to his swim. Being rather lazy, this put him in a pleasant frame of mind and so he set me up in a cozy little swim at the entrance to an offshoot of the lake. Not much happened until about 2300 when Walker started to get itchy and by 2330 he started fishing and although feeling guilty, he felt he redeemed himself by putting 0000 as a start time on his session report. Nothing much happened except a couple of bootlaces and a couple of 1lb plus eels while it was dark. Walker was rather upset at getting a lot of short sharp takes on worms and the old rods were leant up against me at least a dozen times as the hooks were ripped clean. When daylight appeared it was hot and breezy and Walker decided to launch some worms into orbit and really bent into his first heave-ho cast of the season. But I was just too quick for him and grabbed the worms and hook as they accelerated past my door and to my great pleasure, old Walker saw the funny side of it all, but then left the worms dangling down my side.

The drop off indicator screamed twice during the morning of 16th June and the result was two 2lb+ eels, that made Walker very happy, but the following night was a disaster with only two bootlaces to show for our efforts. A conversation that Walker had suggested that the eel netters who had been working the nearby dykes, could have been in the lake as well and so his confidence slumped and he packed me up and we headed home. The crafty angler sneaked out for a couple of stalking sessions on a nearby gravel pit during the week, after carp apparently, or at least that's what 'Granny' said on the following Friday as once again we headed down the M25 towards Kent.

This season was a complete disaster and Walker was very uptight especially as the very expensive whelks he had bought proved useless and when the wind got up and blew forcefully straight at my opening, a sickening tearing sound signalled the death of two of my eyelets and so mortally wounded, I was packed away to nurse my wounds and convalesce.

Well, by 1800 on Saturday, Walker had had enough of Cotton Farm and packed up and moved a few miles further into Kent to the Blue Lake. I was re-erected as it was now raining quite heavily and as I fended off the evil wetness, Walker noticed that the swim he wanted was about to be vacated and so while it was still belting down, he actually moved. Now this is very unusual for Walker as he loathes the rain and so I

guessed that he must be pretty keen to fish this particular swim, a small gravelly beach at the southern end of this large chalk pit. Well the rain continued and with renewed enthusiasm, Walker busied himself with preparing for what he obviously felt was going to be a good session. Then he even groundbaited with the whelks and while happily talking to himself, he grew and grew in confidence. The rain stopped at 0100 and the first eel hit the bank at 0215 and weighed 1:07. Long range worm was the bait and so it was for the other eels that weighed in at 1:15 and 1:12, both caught in mid afternoon.

The last weekend in June proved to be really busy for old Walker and it was a joy to see him covered in slime and smiling from head to toe. The swim was the little beach at the Blue and from 1600 on the Saturday until 1800 on the Sunday, 11 eels hit the bank and all of these in the daylight. Nine of these were caught between noon and 1800 on the Sunday. The weights in order of capture were 1:01, 2:07, lace, 3:01, lace, 1L00, 1:02, 1:01, 1:04, 2:07, 1:06, all on long range worm with at one point, all three rods out of the water at once. Walker was pretty satisfied with himself but blow me if he didnt worry about not getting runs during darkness. I suppose you cant please every fat slob all the time. We'll just have to wait and see what July brings. Hopefully, a few biggies along with plenty of sessions. Walker has got a couple of new waters for me to visit and so maybe I can give you all something interesting to read next month instead of this load of drivel....

Gerry Rogers - The Silent One by John Sidley

I could well land up as prebait for an eel swim after writing this article on my very good friend Gerry Rogers, but what the hell, its about time my old mate got himself a bit of glory.

I first met Gerry while fishing Earlswood Lakes for pike way back in 1976. I had just founded the 'Put Eels Back' campaign, and wrote a letter in all the angling papers asking for support. At that time the Pike Society, of which I was a member, had just packed up, so another letter from me appeared in the papers asking for support in forming the Eel and Pike Conservation Committee. It was from my letters that Gerry wrote to me giving his full support and asking if we could meet each other. A date and place was fixed to see each other at the small lake at Earlswood on a Sunday morning. It was from that first meeting that our friendship grew.

Gerry was an all out dedicated pike angler in the winter months, taking some first class pike up to 21:06. His other love in angling was carp, tench, bream and roach. He had taken carp up to 18lb from Combwich pond in Somerset - maybe not big by some carp anglers standards but a very good fish from a very hard water. His bream fishing was done mainly on the Norfolk Broads, where he banked fish to over 8lb. His tench fishing was done at Saunton Harrold Reservoir where fish of good size were to fall to his rods. Roach to well over 1lb came from local ponds and rivers, all in all, a first class all rounder. However, that was all to end when he teamed up with old Sidley. I was to put Gerry onto the big eel scene, a fish he had up-till our meeting, shown no interest in. After only the first few months of us fishing together, I knew Gerry was not the type to see his name or picture in the angling papers. All he wanted to do was to go out, catch a few fish and mind his own business. Many a time I have seen Gerry land a good otke or eel and put the fish back in the water without a second thought about getting a photo of the fish. After weighing, the fish was returned. Many a time I gave him a right talking to but my words went in one ear and out the other, his only concern was for the safe return of the fish.

Pictures and a camera were secondary to Gerry, in fact I think Gerry is the only angler I have ever known who has shown so much concern for his fish. There is not many of us I'm sure who would just forfeit a picture of your best pike or eel. At times we have all had to return a good fish, either because there was no one around to take a picture or your friends were too far away or you had forgotten your camera. How many of us have put back a very big fish with your mate and camera at the ready just 30 yards away?

Then also Gerry has no interest in the inscene of the specimen hunting world, he thinks we are all a load of posers, slagging each other, all in all, a load of nuts. At times I think he is right. I only wish sometimes I was like Gerry. The bloke has no care in the world. The few times Gerry has been in the papers and mags were because yours truly put his mug there and boy, I had some stick over doing it. The man just doesn't want anything to do with that scene at all. If approached on the bank by other anglers, you will get a good morning out of Gerry, or good luck, as you pass him by. In most cases it ends there. In fact Gerry was nick-named 'the dummy' in the big fish world. He kept himself to himself and got on with the job of catching big fish. But, take my word for it, Gerry is no dummy, he is a first class big fish angler. An angler who thinks a lot about his fishing and is willing to put 100% into everything he does. If not for our friendship, you could call him the perfect loner. Many a time Gerry has given me a good mouthful about going in papers with my catches. 'You're there again are you Sidley, posing again...' comes his comment. 'You'll be crying next week when somebody starts knocking you and your fish captures. Do as I do and there will be no aggro...' The truth is, he is dead right. If they dont know you they cant knock you.

I've gone too far now to stop seeing my mug in the papers. If I could turn the clock back I think I would very much like to be another Gerry Rogers. As yet, I've never heard a bad word said against Gerry, only praise, and its praise that is in order for a first class big fish angler. Its a friendship I hope never breaks up, Gerry and myself. We are a team, we fish as one. The big hauls of pike taken by Gerry and myself are a result of team work. I have yet to meet another angler who I would like to share my fishing with so much as Gerry. The silent one is a giant of a man.

Apart from his tench, bream and roach catches of years gone by, Gerry has now two carp over 20lb, best at 22lbs 5oz, a great deal of zander to 12lbs, pike to 21lb 9oz and now his first love, big eels. a good number over 1, 2, 3 and 4lbs with one of 5lb and 2 over 6lb, his best at 6lb 10oz. So next time you see me and Gerry on the banks, Gerry is only willing to help other anglers out if he can. He you do have any trouble getting Gerry to speak, dont think he is rude, or the dummy, as some people call him, you will be talking to a first class big fish angler and a man I am proud to fish with and class as a close friend. Gerry Rogers, the silent one - is one hell of a guy..

A LOST CHAIRMAN'S PAGEby MARK DAVIES

(Ed. actually it was not so much lost as I had a spare 'Chairman's Page' when I combined two months into one edition of the Bulletin.)

By the time you read this the Bala Whit trip will have come and gone. I've no doubt that whether or not lots of eels were caught or whether or not the weather was good or bad, everyone would enjoy themselves. We may also now be clearer as to the situation regarding relations between the various eel specimen groups.

Since the last Bulletin, I've had a chance to talk to ex-member Dave Holman. It would be fair to say that he has lost a little of his enthusiasm for fishing and for eeling especially, but having said that, he'll no doubt be spending a good deal of his spare time on the bank this summer. He sends his good wishes to all NAC members and wishes the Club well for the future. He told me he had received a letter from Kevin Richmond asking him to join the Eel Study Group. Dave had been approached some years ago when Kevin formed the original ESG. On both occasions Dave has declined the invitation.

Whatever you may think or feel about other eel fishing groups, it at least shows that there is a healthy interest in eels and their conservation. In the past, many well known names in specimen hunting circles have paid eels attention for a short period of time and then gone on to concentrate on other species. There are now a good many anglers (other than those in the Anguilla Club) who have specialised in the species for some years. This interest has been confirmed by the publication of Brian Crawford and John Sidley's book on eel fishing. Brian's book has of course sold well and is now in its second edition. I noticed in Angling Times of 8/5/85 that six copies of Brian's book were being given away in a junior angling competition. It mentioned that Brian was Chairman of NASA but, to my dismay, made no mention at all of his connection to the NAC. Why not? (Ed. I don't know.)

At the time of writing this piece, I've been out for my first session of 1985 on the Montgomery Canal in Wales. A good venue for a Club trip. Three bootlaces were caught but I've caught eels which is very encouraging despite a really hard overnight frost. My pocket barometer was used and the session report completed accordingly. I feel Terry may well have put us onto an interesting aspect of our fishing by getting us to record barometric details. It will clearly take some years to get enough material for analysis but I feel the end result will be very thought provoking. Although in previous years I feel we went over the top as far as session reports were concerned, it is still an important aspect of the Club's activities.

In part of my garden I've got a stream which flows from the hillside at the back of my house and into a stone trough. I realised this would make a superb livebait enclosure without the need for a pump. I bought five rainbow trout of about 5/6 oz size and put them in. The first day three jumped out and died but the other two have settled in very well. I get a lot of amusement out of feeding them with worms, slugs and woodlice. I just hope they don't eat my small livebaits when I put them in. I put about 60 roach fry into the trough and within 2/3 hours they'd all been eaten. You will realise the trout are now very fat.

Do any of you want to sell any items of tackle or acquire some? If so why not put a small ad in the next Bulletin or Newsletter. I seem to have a lot of tackle I never use and to start the ball rolling - would anyone like to buy a 13' boron float rod, model Mach II made by Shakespeare. It cost me £120 and has been used once. I'd be prepared to let it go for £80. (no offers). Why did I buy it? to catch livebait.

Mad you say!! I agree.

You will have read in the last Bulletin of my aged sleeping bag. The teeth have been dropping out of the zip at an amazing rate of knots and now the zip has gone completely! Thus it looks like I'll have to buy a new one.

Best wishes and good fishing,

Mark Davies.

FIRST SESSION 1985 by Mark Davies

I have mentioned on a number of occasions in previous Bulletins that I felt the Montgomery branch of the Shropshire Union Canal had a lot of potential as far as eel fishing was concerned. It has a number of factors which make it an interesting proposition for the eel angler.

Over recent years the main arms of the SUC, that is to say from Ellesmere Port to Market Drayton and from Nantwich up to Ellesmere have suffered from a great increase in boat traffic. This often, in high Summer, makes fishing very difficult, with boat traffic throughout the daylight hours and often into the night (contrary to BWB regulations). The Montgomery branch however, doesn't have this problem (but see below), as from Queenstead (just the other side of Ellesmere) it is disused, and along one or two lengths, de-watered. After knocking down many bridges and sending the canal through culverts in the late sixties and early seventies, boating people are now trying to open it up again as it passes through some very attractive countryside. For the time being however, boats are not a problem. As the canal is no longer navigable almost all the canal is very shallow and very weedy. All the locks are derelict and they look very attractive as places where large eels could hide. The water is clear and teeming with natural life and small fry and all species grow to a good size. They are however, very difficult to catch and this goes for the large eels also.

To say the canal is underfished is very much an understatement. Although I have not fished it very much up to date, I pass it very often and have yet to see another angler. Having said that, the local authority are trying to promote it for leisure pursuits and a number of walkways and countryside parks have been constructed on its banks, it was near to the small countryside park at Ven between Four Crosses and Welshpool that I fished on the night of 6/7th May.

I'd made no specific plans where to fish and was just going to go along to try a likely looking spot. I turned off the main road at Four Crosses to get to the canal and stopped on the canalside and walked a short way down to a basin where the main branch splits into two. One arm of which goes to Abermule. This looked a superb place but as it was overlooked by a farmhouse I decided not to fish it. I'm very funny when it comes to fishing. I either like to fish by myself or with one other (ie. Ernie or Dave). I'm not happy with a lot of people about and would never fish near another angler. I think this has something to do with why I'm not that keen to attend Club trips. I feel the disturbance caused by 6 or 7 anglers fishing along a short stretch of bank to be very detrimental to our fishing. I know it is very sociable and enjoyable to be near to other members (thats one of the important aspects of Club trips) but it doesn't improve the fishing.

Getting back to the subject, I got back into my car and drove down to Ven where a car park/country park has been constructed. The car park

is small with room for perhaps 6 or 7 cars but you are then right on the banks of the canal. I left my tackle in the car and walked along the bank until I came to an area where the canal had been widened and a boat slipway recently constructed (this was a bad sign). However, it looked attractive as there was plenty of weed growth and fry were constantly breaking the surface. I had plenty of time to set up as it was only 7pm. so I made two trips to collect my tackle and started to get settled. I decided to fish three rods, one freelined trout deadbait and the other two worms ledgered. I was in no rush to get the baits in so I just sat enjoying the last hours of daylight. Having said that, no one ever fishes the canal, who should come along and fish directly opposite me but dad and little Johnny (they'd only got 40 other miles of bank to chose from...) Little Johnny proceeded to thrash about with a short rod and bread paste to no avail. Thankfully they departed at 8.30pm saying the fishing was so poor they wouldn't be back. (thank god). On their departure I cast in the baits. I'd had a lot of trouble in previous seasons with bobbins attached to the line by clips so I decided this season to stop using them. I now simply rest old pennies (painted white so I don't lose them) on the spool. You can often hear them drop before the alarm give an indication.

The first indication of a run was on one of the worm rods. I struck quickly and tightened up and eventually played into the net what looked to be a log. However, on close inspection, I had in the net a jack pike of about 4lbs (you're not going to believe this) across its jaws was another jack of about 1lb and across its jaws was another jack of about 6oz which had taken the worm!!! They all released their grip and the two larger fish returned whilst the smaller one was kept to use as a section bait (it was not effective and remained untouched). To cut a long story short, I caught 3 bootlaces on worm. The night was clear and it was getting so cold that I took my sleeping bag and slept in my car with a terrier in my sleeping bag to keep me warm. At first light I returned to the bank to pack up to find the thermometer had plunged to below zero and my line had frozen to the rings. I couldn't believe this as the day had been beautiful and sunny. The lack of cloud cover had sent the temperature right down, I got into the car and drove home with the heater full on and stopped at a 'Little Chef' for breakfast. (this is for Ernie's information)

I recorded the weather details on my session report and used my pocket barometer for the first time. As I've said before, I feel we might find barometric pressure etc., very interesting related to the feeding patterns of eels. I hope that all members will cooperate with this aspect of the reporting scheme. The model that Terry recommended us to buy is good value and seems reliable. Thus my first session of 1985 had ended. I'd caught eels and wetted my appetite on a water which I feel has great potential. Members who like a drink will note how many pubs there are adjacent to the canal!! It would make a good venue for a Club trip. It might be possible for those planning to fish with Author on the meres to drive over and have a night on the Montgomery canal. Access to the canal is excellent as all the controlling clubs issue day tickets.

This was to be an account of my first session of 1985. Please excuse me if I've wandered a little.

(Ed. you are excused - at least you have given us lots of articles this year.....)