

NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BULLETIN



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Brian Crawford
Editor

EDITORIAL

I still do have quite a few articles in stock but I am using up those sent to me typed first, as I do not have the time I thought I would have, to type them. I will try to type them as I can so if you have sent me hand written articles - be patient. If any one of you have access to a typewriter and could type out articles let me know. Remember, I now prefer typed articles. If you type them, leave a large margin either side of the text as per this page. If you photocopy your article to keep a copy - remember to send me a top copy otherwise the scanner will not pick it up. I have several copies of typed articles that I have to re-type.

In my report on Bala in my Editorial in the last Bulletin, I made comments about the row I heard from across the lake and as it was coming from the direction of where the BEAC lads said they would be fishing, I said that the BEAC appeared to be holding a sing-song by a huge bonfire. That editorial resulted in quite a few replies from BEAC members. Some of the letters simply explained the situation that the BEAC found themselves surrounded by boy scouts and other campers who were having the sing-song and bonfire, (that was Nev's letter) to other letters that I will make no attempt to quote from. I am sorry to say Matt sent one of these. As soon as my error was pointed out to me I wrote to Mick Bowles and offered my apologies for jumping to the wrong conclusion about the source of the row.

I am pleased to be able to say that John Sidley's book 'Successful Eel Fishing' is now published and makes excellent reading and will of course be an essential part of anyone's library of eel books.

After spending the last 20 years or so on long sessions for eels and pike both during the day and night on all kinds of seats in all kinds of swims and uncomfortable positions, I now feel very comfortable whatever the contours of the bank. I have acquired one of the D.P. adjustable bed chairs and ordinary chairs and both can be adjusted to give me maximum comfort every session. They are very reasonably priced, indeed are half the price of anything else similar on the market. Demand is expected to be high for these products. If you are interested - I will be bringing both to the Summer Trip at Boston. I may have room to bring a couple if you wish to buy one now and save the postage.

In this edition of the Bulletin are the analysis results for March April and May. I hope you all read and digest the information presented and that you have all sent in your session reports for June and July to Terry. Remember to let me know of any good eels or eel catches you may make for me to include in Newsletter. Also remember that I require an article about evenr eel of 4lb plus you catch.

I feel I have to make a comment about this year's poor summer. It is no joy to sit out all night in pouring rain and gale force winds. That sums up my sessions so far. They began like that at Easter, continued at Whitsun at Bala and are still the same now. My garage is continually full of smelly, damp items of fishing gear trying to dry before my next session. Usually it is just my nets. Let us all hope for a good Autumn and some late sport with big eels.

Brian Crawford
Editor

This is being written in early June, but will probably be included in a Bulletin of a much later date. We have just experienced the wettest and coldest two weeks I can remember in the month of June. In nine days time it will be Midsummers Day, the longest day and yet I've only fished three sessions (two of these being over the weekend of the Bala Trip) I only hope that the good weather of a normal summer extends a little longer, to compensate for this poor start. I look forward to those sweltering days on the Meres with AJS and Ernie, succulent steaks and cans of beer cooling in the shallows!

I would like the membership to give some consideration to one of them preparing a talk and perhaps a slide show, which could be given at the AGM in November. Both Dave Holman and Terry Jefferson have done this at previous meetings and without doubt were very well received. This type of thing rounds the meetings off in fine style, and inspires the membership. If you were prepared to do something along these lines you would not find a more appreciative audience.

I hope that our three provisional members are finding their association with us worthwhile. I believe they all have great potential and let's hope the committee will be in the happy position of offering them all full membership (this excludes Matt, who as a junior will have to serve a two year provisional period) at the November AGM.

It cannot often be the case that a single specimen group (ie. The National Anguilla Club) has within its ranks, persons who have written the only two books in publication on eel angling. We have Brian Crawford and John Sidley. I am eagerly awaiting John's book, whose contents will be very revealing. For some reason he seems to be very reluctant to reveal his methods in the material he's written for the Bulletin. Perhaps he doesn't want the sale of the book effected!

Although I started writing this early in June, it's now early July and I'm just finishing it. Since I started to write it I've fished one further session for eels. I fished on a Marina on the Shropshire Union Canal and had eels of 2.14, 1.14, 1.10 and a bootlace during an evening session. In my books a good session, even though no monsters were banked. I fished in my favourite marina which always produces good sport. It's not easy to fish as eels can quickly become snagged around the walkway supports. A quick strike is essential and deadbaits are liphooked.

I don't know about you, but I'm always appalled to see large spawn bound tench displayed in the angling press. It would give me no pride to catch them and display them in that way. They should be returned to the water immediately and not even kept in keepnets or sacks.

I'm still left wondering why, even now there are a few members who cannot be bothered to make any contribution towards the Club's activities. I'll say again what I've said previously, if you do nothing at all you shouldn't be in the Club.

Mark Davies

COMMENT by MARK DAVIES (on)

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY by John Sidley

I felt that John's article should be commented upon by me and I hope other members will repond to it as well. Firstly, John, I doubt there is one member of the National Anguilla Club who is bothered about whether or not you have caught the large eels that have been attributed to you in the past. If you didn't catch them your only deceiving yourself no one else and secondly if you did congratulations on such a fine acheivement. But it doesn't matter, thats history. If the NAC thought that you warranted provisional membership then we believed you. If we had any doubts you wouldn't be in the Club. So stop trying to justify your existence. I have said previously that we should enjoy our fishing and enjoy being members of the NAC. Everybody contributes to the club in different ways. It is not possible to equate effort simply in terms of the number of sessions or how many four pound eels you catch. We are not a group of fanatical cranks, We have got together because we enjoy the same HOBBY (and thats all it is). We enjoy fishing and fishing for eels (hopefully big ones) in particular. I do not want to devote my life to. catching big eels. I would find that very boring. In this respect John I believe you have got things totally out of proportion. I dont want to become an eel even when I'm fishing for them. Nobody in the club can or would want to make such a commitment to eel fishing as you do. If I can get out once a week fishing (for any species!) I'm doing well, let alone fishing for eels. Some members may think that because of my attitude I shouldn't be in the Club. If you do lets hear why. John, you have obviously got a great contribution to make to the NAC, but could I make a request? You have the greatest record of all time for catching large eels. Could we hear how you do it. I would be most interested to hear about your tackle baits and types of swim you like to fish in. You are preaching to the converted when you write about col... With the greatest of respect, the NAC were doing their bit in this regard in the 1970's. Nobody in the NAC has called you a liar so you've no need to worry on that score. You are clearly a thinking angler, so lets have some of your thoughts on paper. Please don't tell us we'll have to buy your book to find out about them. Well that's all I'm going to say and remember, enjoy your HOBBY!

THE CAPTURE⁴ OF THE SIX

This fishing's a funny old game , since mid-April I've travelled hundreds of miles in search of big eels , I then go and catch the fish of a life-time from a local lake.

It came from a water I just didn't rate , you know the type , easy access , full of bootlaces , and a struggle to catch a two-pounder , all fish falling to worm , with a run on dead-bait being a very rare occurrence .

Well , that's all in the past , this year there seems a change in the eels diet , now you get run after run on dead-bait , with many fish in the 2-3lb range . The only explanation I can give for this , is the huge increase in small roach/perch that have appeared over the last two seasons . So much for the background .

The story starts on Sat. 6 of July , although I caught fish of 2lb 08oz and 2lb 12oz , I lost a really big eel , in a close-quarter fight , which picked up my perch-head , fished in the margin , I've never felt such power from a fish , It bit straight through my wire trace . I've never felt so gutted over losing a fish .

Two days later I was back to try again . The night passed quietly with just four small eels of 1lb+ to show for my efforts . Just before dawn , my friend John arrived to see how I'd got on , we sat there chatting as it grew light . Nearly an hour later , at 04-55 am. I had a fast run on my middle rod, the bait , a perch-tail fished on a Sidley-rig, had until then , remained untouched in about 18ft. of water . I wound down , and struck, and with a good heave brought her to the surface , where she lay twisting and spinning, I quickly dragged her across the surface , and into my eagerly awaiting landing-net . I can't give you a tale of a terrific fight , she came in as simple as that .

As she lay quietly , curled up in the bottom of my landing-net , you could see she was a big fish , by the girth on her . Out with the scales and with the needle bouncing around the 6lb. mark , I had to give the scales to John as I was shaking so much . After re-checking , the weight was confirmed at exactly 6lb. She measured 39" long , with a girth of 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". After a few photo's she was slipped into the keepnet , while John went to wake up another friend . Considering they got her dragged out of bed at 05-30 in the morning , Alan and his wife were quite good about it . After a few more photo's the eel was slipped back into lake , where she swam away strongly .

As you can imagine , I was on cloud-nine , after a couple of phone calls and a few hours sleep , we all met in the local to celebrate .

Although it doesn't sound much on paper , it's an experience I'll never forget .

Nev. Evans.

ALL ALONG THE MARGINS: OR TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE FLOAT

Dave Holman used to push the idea that it wasn't necessary to cast as far as possible to catch eels: on the contrary, he suggested that we should pay much more attention to the water directly under our rod tops: the margins.

I'd like to be able to tell you that I followed Dave's suggestions and met with great success. Such is not quite the case. I have tried the idea and fished the margins on more than a few occasions last year and felt remarkably confident whilst doing so. However, the eels have so far evaded me with this particular approach.

The margin fishing I have done so far has been mainly limited to my syndicate water, so the lack of success does not concern me as the place, as most of you are aware, is notoriously slow in producing eels.

What I would like to do is try to convince you all that the idea of margin fishing is one which you could all try, not just anywhere or at any time, but in particular circumstances and locations.

Firstly, let me give you some idea of the circumstances under which I fished the margins last summer, and will continue to do so this year.

Most of the swims at the pit offer the opportunity to fish baits in specific locations rather than just casting baits at random into open expanses of water. With channels and islands all over the place, it is seldom necessary to cast more than ten yards, and at times much less in order to place a bait in a likely holding or patrol area. In fact, there is sufficient water depth close in to literally fish any bait hanging vertically from the rod tip. Under these circumstances, I dispensed with more conventional eel gear and used a 12' through-actioned tench rod and fished with an isofloat of my own making for bite indication. More of that later.

Now I would like to suggest a couple of possible locations where the method could be well worth a try. Obviously you know your own waters and whether or not this approach could be used, but anyone fishing gravel pits in particular has the ideal venue as there is invariably deepish water close to the banks and that is all you require; many lakes and meres offer the same deep water close in; another venue that would be ideal for the "close-in" approach would be static or very slow moving canals.

Back to the gear to use - and I am not suggesting for one minute that you sit up all night staring at a float. You can fish the margins quite happily with normal gear but you should be most cautious when dealing with a run, bearing in mind how near to you the eel might be, not just when it picks up the bait, but when you strike just remember that you are not trying to set the hook at 70 yards plus range. I have found that the use of a float at night comes into its own in two particular instances.

If you fancy a short evening session, say up to midnight, you can fish behind a couple of rods using isofloats quite easily. Three or four hours staring at a single isofloat is enough to have anyone's eyesight playing tricks on them, but if you fish two and not too far apart, you can switch your gaze from one to the other without them appearing to "dance" around or merge into one, and when you are used to them, it is surprising how readily you can read bites positively.

Another instance when I would "float fish" and the time I have used the method most, is when I have set up for a normal session with say two or three rods fished in conventional fashion. The float rod is then used to one side of the swim but only for as long as I am able to concentrate on it without eyestrain, because then it becomes impossible to differentiate between real and imaginary bites.

One of the biggest advantages of this close-in approach, and for this reason alone it deserves everyone's attention, is the fact that ground-baiting could be devastatingly effective because you can be pinpoint accurate with the placing of your bait and the groundbait whether it be a carpet of maggots, chopped lobworm or any concoction or mixture you care to experiment with.

I would strongly recommend you try the float fishing approach soon, for not only will it add a new dimension to your eel fishing, it stops you settling down on the bed chair too early in the session!!

I will describe in more detail the gear I use and hope you give it a try.

The rod is an old Olivers "tench", twelve feet long with a test curve of about 1lb 4oz, built of hollow glass. This type of rod is so forgiving that given a reasonable hookhold, you could never pull the hook out of a fish, yet it is capable of holding almost anything hooked at close range and I have no worries at all about the rod if I do hook a big 'un close in.

I am a confirmed "Mitchell" man but use whatever reel you like, but make sure for your own good that the clutch works perfectly. I use 6lb b.s. line, usually Sylcast or Maxima and if I am using worms, I join a 12" length of 12-15lb mono to the reel line for the trace using a four-turn water knot or "cove" knot. For deadbaits, I would use a multi-strand wire trace.

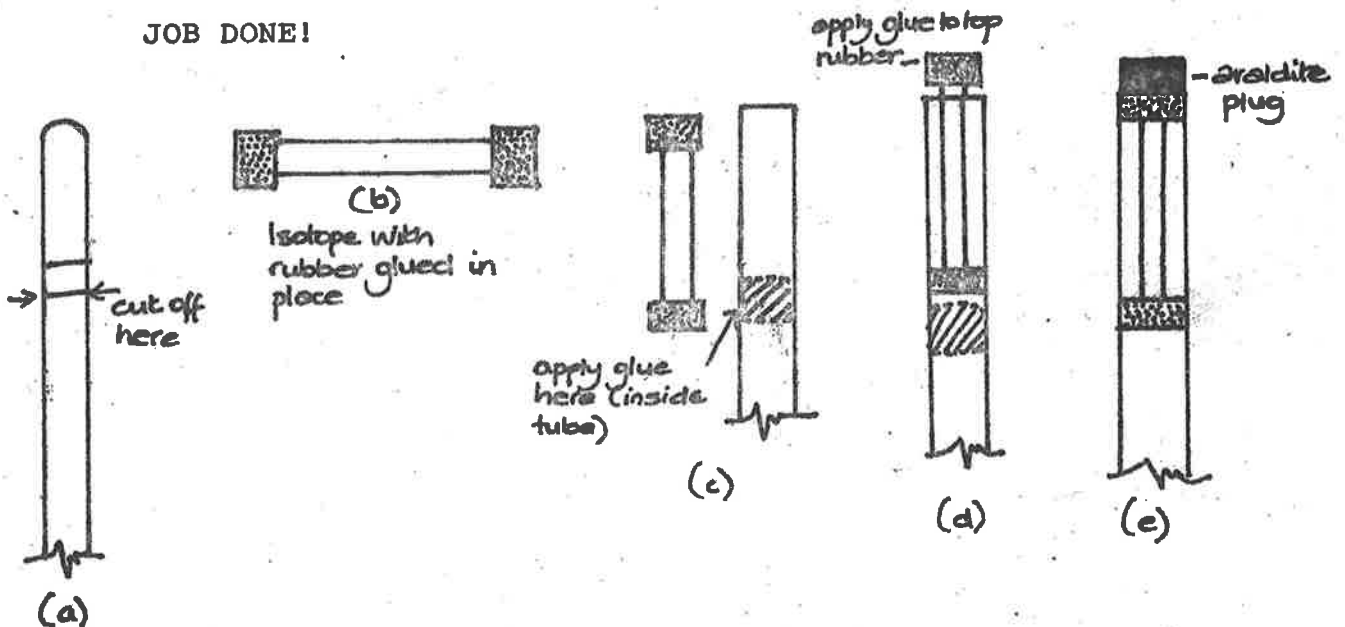
The thing that makes this tactic possible is the float. It is possible to use "Starlights" on a conventional float which provide a brilliant light for several hours, but could work out a bit expensive if you take to the method and fish it a lot. As I mentioned earlier, I prefer to use an isofloat of my own making. It is simple to make and I have found it extremely effective. I have provided diagrams to show how I make the float, but all you need is an isotope (the more powerful the better - I would recommend a minimum of 500 microlambert power) and one of the Peter Drennan range of "crystal waggler" or similar. Mine is made from a 3 1/2 AA model.

The fact that the "crystal" floats are clear plastic tube means that the isotope only has to be fixed inside the tube and the job is done.

Here's how:

- (a) Cut the top painted section off the float.
- (b) Superglue a short length (1/8") of silicone rubber tubing to each end of the isotope.
- (c) Check the position of the lower end of the isotope against the tube and place a smear of superglue inside the tube at this point with a matchstick. (Try not to smear too much glue inside the top of the tube or it may impair the isotope's visibility.)
- (d) Push the isotope inside the float tube applying another smear of superglue to the top rubber before you push it inside the tube so that it finishes just below the level of the top of the float.
- (e) Cap and seal the float with a plug of araldite.

JOB DONE!



That's all there is to it, so why not give it a try. After all, what can you lose, apart from a couple of hour's kip on the bedchair!

TERRY JEFFERSON

A LETTER FROM THE CLUB SHRINK? OR SHOULD IT BE ANALYST?

Dear Member,

Included in this Bulletin should be an interim report of results received up to the end of May.

Before I go on to pick out one or two points from the report, I would first like to thank all those who have fished during the close season and sent in their Session Reports on time. On the whole, the completion of the reports has been very accurate and comprehensive though I must stress again the need for all sections of the form to be filled in as indicated in the Reporting Guide. It might take you an extra two or three minutes to complete your forms that way, but it will save me an extra two or three hours work in sorting out details at this end. Thank you.

On to the report, and before you all go screaming off to hide at the prospect of wading through pages of numbers, particularly some of our newer members who probably haven't seen a report quite like this before, I would suggest that you study one page at a time, and the various details contained in each section.

Each page concerns different aspects of the fishing that has been done, and I shall try to deal with each page in turn:

Overall effort

Quite simply, this page tells you who has sent in reports, how many sessions, how many hours fished, how many eels caught, how many larger eels caught and the number of hours each bait was fished together with the eels caught on the different baits and whether usage and captures are day or night.

Running down the list there is also the standard (RH/item) figure which averages the time required to catch an eel with a given bait at a particular part of day or by a particular angler.

That may all sound complicated, but if you take each section in turn you should find it fairly straightforward, and it might make all the forms easier to understand if you study a session report and the guide at the same time and see how the various sections fill into the report. The column on the right of the page gives the total figures for the collective effort from all the reports.

Effect of weather against catch rate and size

This form deals with the possible influence of various weather details on the size of the eels we catch and the frequency at which we catch them.

Each aspect of weather is detailed separately together with the eels caught under a particular category, the number of rod hours fished in particular conditions, the number of larger eels caught in given conditions and once again the RH/E averages.

Effect of bait type and additive etc

This form is split into two halves. The top section deals with day rod hours fished with various bait, additive, pre-bait and ground-baiting and the eels caught under each heading and, the averages again. It doesn't take a genius to see that day-time eeling has so far been a complete waste of time!

The lower half of the form deals with the same information but for night hours.

I am doing a separate analysis of the various additive, pre-baiting and ground-baiting done, but I will need much more effort in these aspects before any analysis will be worthwhile.

Eels caught (2:00+)

Easiest form of the lot this one. I have not included the name of water or captor on this form but future reports should contain this information. You could easily work out who caught them by referring to the overall effort page, but I'll save you the trouble.

The 4:10 the best eel I've heard of so far this year, is a personal best for Kevin Stephenson. It came from the good old GU canal at 23:50 hours on three lobworms, and as you will see on the chart, Kevin ground-baited (chopped worms) so lets see some more effort in that direction. Congratulations Kevin.

The rest of the eels over 2:00 were all taken by John Sidley who seems to have found the gate key to Westwood Park Lake again!! All John's eels were taken in two sessions and all on four lobworm baits. They must be hungry buggers John? Incidentally, John fished from a boat.

In all the averages contained in the report, I expect particular trends to show up. They are not very clear at the moment, but they will become clearer as the amount of recorded effort increases as the season goes on, and as I have said before and I will say it many times over, that effort must come from you lot and please, please, please send those session reports in on time.

Terry Jefferson

MORE ON NEV'S PROBLEM WATERby JOHN SIDLEY

I took a great interest in our Nev's article 'A Problem Water'. If Nev does not mind I would like to tell you about a similar water a good friend of mine has been fishing. The lake is just outside Birmingham. It is a private Club water and can only be fished by non-Club members with a special invitation ticket. I have fished the lake myself with my good friend John Neath on such a special ticket. The lake is very old, being built many years ago as a top up reservoir for the Worcester canal. The lake is just over 100 acres. The deepest area being by the main dam wall. At its fullest, the depth is 40 feet. The lake also has many bays and shallows. Weed growth in the Summer is very dense in water under 5 feet. There is a great head of very small roach and bream fry with many large shoals of fish in the 3oz to 8oz bracket. The lake also holds specimen roach to over 3lb, carp to over 30lb, bream into double figures, big perch and pike with the best so far at 36:8. There is also present, a very large number of the big mouth type eels. In fact, these eels being the biggest deadbait mouth type eels I have ever seen. To look at they seem like baby congers.

Like Nev, no matter what John chucked out at those eels, they would rip it apart. On the nights I fished with John, it was action all night long, with both of us using over 30 baits a night on two rods. One eel I saw Chris Tarrant land took a near 12oz roach deadbait intended for pike. The eel had bent the roach in its jaws and got it half way down its throat. That fish weighed in at just 2:8.

As Nev said, eel steaks were tried but still those ones and twos would have a go at the bait. Perch were tried also, so were small pike up to 6" long, but still those eels were a pain in the neck.

Talking to John about the problem and trying to think of a way to get amongst the better eels - for one was found dead on the water weighing in at over 7lb. John said that as the dawn broke, the amount of runs started to drop off and a couple of the eels that he caught on a couple of lobs fished for carp or tench were of a better size. More important - the shape of the eel's heads were a lot different. Pictures that John showed me confirmed that they were the small mouth type eels. At this time I was fishing Westwood Park with Gerry and could not drag myself away to have a knock with John. I suggested to John to try his luck during the day-time. To his surprise, the runs from the eels were being counted on one hand, but the weight bracket of his eels were higher and they all showed the small mouth features. Deadbaits were not touched apart from the odd pike picking one up.

John now does very little night stints on the water and who can blame him. He has taken eels to 5:11, 4:1 and a good few upper 3s. So Nev, would it pay you to do more stints on the water during the day light hours, with the amount of fish eating eels active at night. Could those big girls be lying dog-on awaiting dawn to feed. It may seem so going by what you have said about the match lads and yourself taking better sized eels while it is still light. On the question of what deads to use, even though no matter what size bait was put at these eels, they would still have a knock at them. Gerry and I had the same problem at a couple of waters near Somerset. We did take a couple of eels over 4lb using what we thought were large eel sections. I passed on the info to another good friend in Birmingham, who was going to eel fish the water the next week-end. The info passed on, my mate fished lobs on his first night stint.

It was not long before he took an eel of 1:8 on the worm and it had the big head and mouth features. Now a 1:8 deadbait feeding eels head is one very big mouth full for any eel to take, but my mate cut the head off and out it went. A couple of hours later, a screaming run developed on the head section. After about 40 yards of line had been taken he wound down and pulled into a good fish. When weighed she went 5:14. The head of the 1:8 was way down the five's throat.

So Nev, could that be your answer as well on your water. Chuck 'em a bloody big meal. Food for thought(....) don't you think.

Failing the above methods Nev, all you can do is keep knocking out all those little devils and hope a big girl comes along. I wish you well mate - best of luck.

(Ed. See Nev's article - this issue for John's answer from Nev.)

THEY DO GO WALKIES OUR ARTHUR by JOHN SIDLEY

I've had many thoughts on this subject, why a water dies a death for eels regardless of their size, once anglers have fished the water for eels. We all know that the first on a water in pursuit of eels with any know-how will be the first to score. The water then keeps dropping off each year to a point where you would think every eel has gone walkies or worst still - the old eel trappers have paid a visit.

I have my own ideas that the eel may avoid our baits once captured and we need to keep one step ahead of them as in carp fishing. Maybe the eels hooked can pass on info to other eels that certain baits are a danger - far fetched it may sound but going to the moon was at one time also. There is Phil's idea put forward that most eels hooked die after being returned. Like Arthur, I have proved this wrong by keeping many an eel in my bath at home. What I do know is that eels will leave the lake for I have seen it happen on two waters I have fished. I have seen eels leaving two lakes via a brook in great numbers on night. I counted over 39 eels and this was going on most nights of the week. Eels of all sizes, not just fish going off to spawn but eels that were doing a bunck because the angling pressure was too great. A fair few had been hooked. Could they have communicated to each other that it was too dangerous to stay? Or was it just a mass run down to the river? The eels I saw and held showed no signs of the going back features one gets with eels on the way back to the sea. I even caught them on rod and line in the brook. Was it a new home to them and did they feel safe in taking my bait because they had left the pool? The two lakes in question died a death for eels. It was a great sight seeing all those eels swimming down that brook but sad for the lakes for they have yet to come back to their former glory.

So Arthur, I know for sure that eels will leave a water when the pressure is put onto them. I saw it going on. I watched in amazement as those wrigglers went walkies. It was a grand sight to see but one I hope never to see again on one of my waters.

AT LONG LAST AN EEL ROD IS ON THE MARKET by JOHN SIDLEY

For many years the angler who is new to eel fishing has been faced with the problem of what rod would be best to use for the capture of those power packed fighters. When asking in tackle shops for an eel rod, he is forced into buying a rod which is either as thick as a barge pole and only bends when you hook into a great white - or a rod which is so soft one could use it for trout fishing. The truth is that these shop owners don't know a thing about eeling and are only looking for a quick sale. Over the years I have been in contact with many rod companies asking if they would be interested in building a rod designed for the eel angler. The answer sadly has always been no - the market is too small. Not enough could be sold to make a profit - the eel is not a sought after fish. Therefore most of us make do with what we have which is either a pike rod or a stepped-up carp rod.

I have for many years tried all types of rods and blanks. Over those years I have designed a rod in my mind which would be the ideal tool, one which does the work at long ranges, medium ranges and for close-in work. One that will be as good for soft baits such as worms, pastes, etc., but will also handle dead or live fish baits. I am also convinced the rod will handle any pike I am ever going to catch using small or large baits.

Going over the rod design with one or two mates who fish for catfish and have caught them to over 30lb, it seems the rod will be okay on that scene also. Sounds too good to be true doesn't it... Well at long last I have got a rod builder who is going to put this rod on the market. His name is Paul Boote (Marseer). He has just taken over the Graham Phillips Company. In the next month or so, he will be sending over to me a couple of rods to test. 11 foot jobs with a test curve of either 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb or 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb with a compound taper. It will be from one of these rod blanks the first ever eel rod will come on the market. There will be no bullshit - the rod will be field-tested to the full on all aspects of eeling and pike fishing. The rod will be 'A1' before it is put on the market. If my design can not be put together, the idea will be scrapped. If okay and what we say the rod will do is the truth, there should be plenty of fish pictures to back our statements. We all know that what suits one angler may not suit another, I've got a very sneaky feeling that this tool is going to please all that use it. I will keep you informed on our progress on the first ever blank to have the name *Anguilla anguilla* put on it. Better late than never. The rod can only do eeling the power of good. It will help put the eel on the map in the angling world - to my mind it has been long overdue. If you are interested in this new rod then drop me a line I will be very interested to hear your comments.

(Ed. Better still - send comments into me for publication in the Bulletin - If the rod is ready John, why not bring it to the AGM in November or the SGM in March?)

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT MAKES THE BIG ONES TICK - TERRY by JOHN SIDLEY

Once again, it was with great interest that I read Terry's article 'Session Reporting In Perspective' (Vol. 22 No. 5)

Tell me if I'm wrong Terry, but did John Watson knock out the amount of 3 and 4lb eels that you and Chris Davy did at Abberton? I feel not. I bet John's water was a very slow one and eels very few and far between. I well remember John landing his 5 and of the huge hauls of eels from Abberton by friends who knew and fished with John and fished Abberton.

What I am trying to get over Terry, is this, on the waters where those massive eels live, the eel angling is very hard and slow, sometimes waiting a month or more for a run. I bet my life that if you had gone over to John's water with the info gained on all those 3lb plus eels it would have made no improvement on John's catches simply because the head of eels were not present in the water. The eels that were present were of a higher standard than Abberton, which takes me back to the days of Earlswood. On the two large lakes, eels could be taken every night of the week up to 3lb with the odd one of 4lb. Yet on those same nights the small lake did not produce. If the conditions were right on the night in the two large lakes then why not on the small lake? Again, simply the head of eels in the small lake was smaller but a hell of a lot bigger. So, how can we put to good use the info on all those small eels on waters such as John's, Earlswood and even Kingfisher Lake where the amount of eels can be counted on one hand but just look at their size. What I think we need really, is all the info on those proven waters producing big eels, waters where 2 and 3lb plus eels are very few, the average being 4 and above. Surely as eel specialists, that's where we should all be putting in our efforts. Once our waters are proven big eel venues we should stick at them and get as much info as we can. I am fishing 3 very hard waters this season - all of them proven 6 and 7lb waters. I have one water where I can drop back onto to knock out a few 2 and 3lb fish just to keep my spirit up. To me, that's eeling. I'd rather see my bobbin go up once all night and hook into a big 5 than see it go up every hour or so with 2s and 3s knowing the chance of a big one or two is nil. Don't knock Westwood in your answer. We fished it with Andy Barker, I helped land and weigh a 6 for a local. Andy even took the pics of the fish. The same reason you fished Abberton was because you knew that a double or near double had been removed from the valve tower when it was cleaned out. Reading what you said about John's water and of your exploits at Abberton, to me, I knew John would score with the big eels first. He had to if he, as I think, was not going through loads of other smaller eels, his chances were higher. No Terry, we don't need all this info on 2s and 3lb plus eels. Maybe we don't even need the info on the 4s and upwards. It's the info on those proven big eel waters like Earlswood, Kingfisher Lake, Greystones, Balvide etc., and of waters where big eels have been found dead. Maybe then we could start to get a real picture on the feeding habits of those monsters we hope to get on our scales. Maybe I am speaking out of turn, but can you tell me now, have you found out anything with all the info collected so far?

(Ed. Let's have comments on these thoughts from all members please as it does concern all of you and the accountability of the Club. Decisions on the format of the Reporting Scheme can only be changed at AGMs. What are your views? Don't just sit there and read other members efforts - don't sit on the fence - put pen to paper.)

4:10 - 10:4 by KEVIN STEPHENSON

A few days after and I've just come down to Earth to enable me to write this piece for the Bulletin. This was my first large eel whilst either fishing for them or since joining the Club. Although I had landed an eel of just under 4lbs whilst tench fishing.

My arrangements made with a fishing companion, Carl Hill from Derby, was for him to stay over at my house on the Saturday evening and to travel down to the NASA AGM on Sunday morning, I suggested that we have a few hours down on the G.U. canal and 'promised' him an eel to better his personal best of 13oz.

We arrived around 8.20pm and elected to fish either side of a road-bridge. My side of the canal was quite narrow with a few large hawthorne bushes on the far bank. Quickly latched up 4 rods (well to tell the truth - took the elastic bands off and clipped them together). Past experience told me to fish with worms on 3 rods and a frozen dead bait on the fourth. This also allows me to experiment with sub-surface baits etc, on the worms and still fee confident.

The night itself 'screamed' big fish, heavy rain on the way down then very light drizzel as we arrived and very muggy and close. The sort of session that every time you sat down after attending the rods you broke into a sweat.

No sooner had I tackled up and sat down when Carl came round to say he had missed a run on a margin fished worm. As the evening progressed, the drizzel died away but the evening was still very warm and the eels continued to feed, in Carl's swim at least.

Just before midnight, I popped round to where Carl was fishing to find out the bad news on how many fish he had caught. The result was about a dozen runs, 3 boats and a tench. He then asked me how I had got on with a 'one up on you mate' type look on his face. He knew anyway but was just rubbing it in. I had fished all evening and not even had a run and commented to Carl two or three times that the reason for this must be because a large eel was around.

At this point we agreed to give it ten more minutes and pack up at midnight, when I suddenly picked up the sound of my drop-off on the still night air. I rushed round to my rods and saw it was the furthest rod away which had line slowly being taken off, the one with ledgered worms fished in the boat channel. Winding quickly down I made contact with a heavy fish of what I thought was around 2lb+. After quite a long 'see-saw' battle, I landed the eel. At this point I was very lucky, the eel, just as it came to the net, became very stiff and rigid - so much so in fact it almost came over the spreader block. At this point the trace gave way - more on this later. It wasn't until we shon the torch down into the landing net that we found out how big it was. The weigh sling was zeroed on the Avons and the eel popped in to reveal a weight of 4lb 10oz and vital statistics were 38½ x 8". It was a bright silver eel with quite visible spots that seemed to fade a little after capture. Also the rear half of its dorsal fin had been damaged and an odd wound on its side suggesting boat damage perhaps. I decided to take the eel home to photograph in the morning. The eel was kept in the bath overnight and dropped back in the canal after photographing on the way down to the AGM at Hatfield.

This is my first eel of any large size from the G.U., in fact it is around twice as big as anything else I have had from there.

The decision to fish short sections on the canal had paid off because 90% of my canal runs/fish have been before midnight.

On stretches that produce none or very few runs it may be worth a little more attention.

The eel was caught on a Dacron trace which in my tests is around twice as abrasive resistant than 11lb Sylcast. Another test is that I find it quite easy to bite through 11lb Sylcast with my teeth. The Dacron trace is much more difficult. My mistake on playing the eel and causing the trace to fray and break was that I played the eel with the rod held high and the eel splashing around on the top and I could hear its teeth grabbing across the Dacron as I played it. Next time, the rod tip should be almost touching the water to avoid these problems.

PUTTING MY THOUGHTS ONTO PAPER by ERNIE ORME

For some time now our honourable Chairman, Mark Davies, has been prompting me to do an article for our Bulletin on the perils of being a fishing tackle dealer. Perhaps after this Summer season I'll get round to it. It is, to say the least, very interesting and very exhausting and my first reaction is to advise you not to own a tackle shop....

However, what is foremost in my mind right now is to express my comments on the recent Bulletins, most of what I've read is great stuff and being one of the (so-called) dead-wood in our Club, I'm heated and humbled at what I've read.

I am puzzled, confused and dismayed though, by a lot of what John Sidley has written and my thoughts are this.... Let us not get involved with NASA or any other angling body in seeking help with regard to eel conservation, I've always been against angling politics. Let's face it, netting and trapping in one form or another has been going on for hundreds of years and there is sweet nothing we or anyone else can do about it. So let us carry on fishing for big eels and little eels and try to enjoy ourselves whilst doing so. Now John, allow me to quote a friend, a gentleman and a very good cat-angler by the name of Dr. Terry Coulson, who said some years ago 'a two pound plus eel is a big eel'. His thoughts and observations have always stuck in my mind because he enjoyed his eel fishing and always had it in perspective. Now John, for you to say you are not interested in eels under 4lb is to say the least is diabolical. My view is, an eel is an eel be it 1lb or 4lb, and I suggest you preach that fact to the young and old would be eel angler. It may help them from becoming very disillusioned in the quest for a big eel, as I was in my early years.

Oh John, why are you always defending yourself when quoting your big eels. It just isn't necessary because frankly, I and many others just do not give a shit whether you have or have not had more than your share of big eels.

What is more important, do you enjoy your eel fishing? What would be more interesting is what rigs or rigs you were using, was it a black night, was it raining, what bait, what depth, was you cold, wet, etc., did you blank, did you share a laugh, a brew, a fag, a bacon sandwich with a friend on a particular session????????????? After all John, it is only a sport to be enjoyed and shared with a friend or friends. Yes John, I agree with you - you are a pain in the arse and I'm sick as a dog over the NAC/ESG/BEAC controversy. Long live the NAC and my many friends in the Club. See you on the waters edge Terry, Mark and Arthur - make a brew.....

END LINES

Book review - 'THE NEW COMPLEAT ANGLER' Stephen Downes and Martin Knowelden, Orbis Publishing, London. ISBN 85613 553 4. £9.95
First published 1983.

The book contains chapters on various fish species and is excellently written. There is a chapter on the eel, 11 pages titled 'The Mysterious Eel'. I really enjoyed reading the book but particularly the chapter on eels and can recommend it - if you cannot buy it do like I did and get it through my local library.
(you all should be going to your local libraries anyway and ordering 'Fishing For Big Eels' and 'Successful Eel Fishing' it will help to generate more interest in eels and help reduce my large overdraft)

Letter from Terry Jefferson:

Dear Brian,

Following my slide show and Bulletin article telling of the eel stocking I've done at Whittles so far, I have since scrounged another 5 eels for the pit bringing the total to 9 as follows: 5:00, 5:08, 5:04, 4:08, 5:01, 3:12, 4:09, 4:05 and 4:01.

On the subject of eel trapping or poaching, with the sort of money involved the problem is not going to disappear but will probably get worse. Poachers fyke nets have even been found in Abberton...

Letter from John Staley,

Dear Brian,

Congratulations to Kevin on his great eel of 4:10. My eeling is now picking up. Two trips to Westwood Park and fishing from a boat has produced eel of 3:1, 2:1, 3:10, 3:7, 3:4, 3:3, 2:15, 2:4 and 1:3, plus a 15:8 pike and 6lb tench.

Ode to 2000 Perforations by Dave Walker....

Once I was a tea bag in a cup of tea, doing for us tea bags what comes so naturally. Then a spoon it lifts me out, a thumb it presses me. Oh. How I wonder what will happen to this little bag that's me? Then flavour gone and squashed quite flat, I fly through the air and land with a squishy splat.....

Anglers Mail June 29th 1985 feature on the National Anguilla Club.
Angling Times April 24th, National Anguilla Club mentioned by John Crossman.

Angling Times, May 15th, National Anguilla Club again mentioned in despatches although I'm still called Chairman - not my fault Mark..)

Keep up the good work lads, let's see the Club in the news.

Remember I want to see you all at the Summer Trip at Baston.

Brian Crawford