



The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

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Brian Crawford
Editor

EDITORIAL

Once again, this Bulletin comes to you via the efforts of just three contributors, mainly those who have contributed to previous editions. What has happened to the rest of you? Gone into winter hibernation. IT'S THE CLOSE SEASON NOW - YOU SHOULD BE WRITING CONTRIBUTIONS NOW - NOT IN JUNE OR JULY - YOU MIGHT JUST BE FISHING THEN.

I am pleased to see a thinking response for you to consider on several issues. Deep hooking of eels, winter eeling - particularly in view of the 9:13 eel, thanks to Chris Price for giving me the story. I hope to add pictures of the eels and the account to my book, the next time it is printed. John Sidly raises interesting issues on the Session Reporting which are quite valid. I remember Terry Coulson telling us that ALL eels are statistically important for analysis work. However, as John says, by the inclusion of a very large percentage of small eels which may feed at all times of day or night, we may be masking important trends for the bigger eels which may have very different habits. However, I would not go along with his idea to record 4lb+ eels only, I still feel a limit should be lower at 2 or 3lbs, otherwise Terry will have little to do. However (again) with more time, Terry may be able to go over all the piles of past session reports for say, the past 10 years and extract data on a weight band process.

ie., All data for eels over 2lb
 All data for eels over 3lb
 All data for eels over 4lb
 All data for eels over 5lb

and see if this illustrates different trends of feeding habits.

By the time you read this Bulletin, many of you may have had your first eeling session of 1985. I had my first two early in April with John Sidley and Gerry Rogers in a water at Leominster. It is an ideal water and I am sure John & Gerry will land some fine eels from it. Indeed, in a letter received recently, John tells of an eel caught by Gerry of 3:11. The best reported so far this year. My weekend with them was unproductive due to cold water and very bad weather. The second night was fishing into a gale force wind and rain. It is the only time I have had to pack up fishing before I hoped to - at 4 am, but the conditions were so bad it was even worse than Bala can produce.....

I hope to be having more sessions soon on my local water in Telford. The lake is very old and up to 10 years ago had the Shropshire Union Canal running next to it as the Newport - River Severn arm. There must have been good access for the eels but 10 years ago it was filled in. The lake has a little overflow so some eels may have migrated, but some big ones may remain. It has not been fished for, for eels, but eels of 4 and 5 lb have been produced in recent years to anglers after tench and bream. I am on the Committee of the controlling club who have said that NAC members would be welcome during the close season - no charge. It has parking by the bank, easy access to most swims and a pub on the bankside selling Marston's Pedigree and food. Need I say more... I hope it produces eels to interest you. However, I am told that the water is full of crawfish..... Brian Crawford

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

For those who couldn't and didn't attend the Spring General Meeting at Daventry, you missed a very good meeting. Out of a current membership of twenty, only Keith Stephenson, A. Lister, S. Greene, A.H. Mills, J. Holliman and P. Dickinson did not attend. (Ed. KS, AHM have not renewed subs and assumed no longer members) (Also Stuart Greene lives in Ireland so cannot always attend) Come on lads, I know it is not always possible to get to Club meetings or trips, but surely it is easy enough to send your apologies in a letter or via a telephone call to the General Secretary, Brian Crawford. The view of the members who attended the Spring Meeting was that we wouldn't tolerate hangers on. Prove to us that you are not in that category.

It was nice to see all the provisional members at the meeting and to welcome our new junior provisional member, Matt Johnson. I hope you all get a lot of enjoyment out of your association with us.

As the weather gets warmer, I'll get out for a few late evening sessions, probably on the canal. I seem to be restricted at every turn. We cannot fish for eels in the close season in the North West Water Authority area as you know but now a club of which I am a member, Prince Albert of Macclesfield, has stopped all close season eel fishing, even in the Welsh and Severn Trent Water Authority areas on their waters. Why? I've written for an explanation but so far have yet to receive one. There seems to be a lot more interest in Club trips this year and I await the reports of our visit to an undisclosed Welsh water with bated breath. Baston Fen for a Summer trip sounds interesting and thanks to Dave Taylor and Peter Stickland (and our Secretary) for doing the initial spadework. Don't forget the two AJS wees on the meres, the first one commencing Saturday 20th July. Beautiful sceanery, good food and company and Ernie Orme basking like a seal in his underpants. UGH! We may even be able to persuade Dave Holman to come along.

I was surprised but pleased to see Dan at the meeting. He's agreed to become an Associate Member which would be a good idea for others to consider. How about Dave and Golly.

Lets have more articles on the items of tackle that we use as per Kevin Stephenson's article in the latest Bulletin. Every one of us has various bits and pieces that we swear by, so let the other members know what they are (i.e., E. Orme wears 56" Marks & Spencers underpants - why? - because Terry Jefferson can get in as well if it gets cold on a Club trip....

I very much enjoyed Terry Jefferson's little talk and slide show at the Spring Meeting which I felt ended the day very well. We were all drooling over the slides of Whittles and were very envious of Terry. I can remember that Dave Holman gave us a similar show at the Falconer's, some years back and this again was very well received. Does any other member feel like preparing something for the AGM?

As Dave Walker mentioned at the meeting, the NAC will be celebrating its first 25 years in 1987 - two years from now, and you may feel this important milestone should be celebrated in some way. Perhaps we could hear your suggestions for publication in the Bulletin.

I've heard on the grapevine that a number of water authorities are considering amending their byelaws regarding close season eel fishing. Remembering what happened in the North West, I would urge you all to write to your water authority asking what proposals they have re eels and eel fishing. I suspected that the Southern

Water Authority were up to something when I saw a notice in the angling press but the proposed amendments related to salmon and trout when I actually obtained a copy.

That's all for now.

Mark Davies

WAFFLING ON (as usual)

by Dave Walker

Good on 'yer Nev. A great article, the type of which is always welcome in the Bulletin. It makes a change to read of someone who uses methods that have been arrived at by experience and hard work and by adapting them to suit various circumstances. Further to the articles, I would like to make a few comments etc. They are in no way in a particular order just as they come out of your piece.

The comment that worms are useless does not surprise me, considering what you have told me about your waters and what I have gleaned from others, but I wonder if you have tried them on the surface rigs in the deeper waters? I shall say no more on that one!

God! I wish that everyone realised that there is more to deadbaiting than 'chuck and wait' tactics and I believe every eel angler should have your third paragraph tattooed on their body to remind them.

Some time ago, Tony Hollerbach wrote a couple of outstanding articles dealing with his thoughts on eels as individuals and you seem to have dropped into a similar line of thought. The only thing that I believe should be considered is the possibility that only a certain percentage of eels in a water will be caught on any one campaign and that by following Dave Holman's approach of having a number of waters that can be fished and rested during a season is probably the best idea. This is obviously not possible for everyone but I believe that it is the best way of ensuring that you are fishing for 'fresh' eels. I do sincerely believe that the capture of a number of eels from a water reduces the chances of producing success at a venue unless the water has a fantastic population of eels. This can be qualified by saying that I think very big waters or rivers probably do not need as much rest as smaller waters due to my belief that the eels travel much further in these venues and the caution is probably only transmitted to eels currently using that area to feed.

I don't exactly agree with you that eels can learn to become wary of certain baits but I do think that they can become very wary of an area of a water and as in margin fishing, leave the area to search for new feeding grounds.

The comment that the deeper waters did not seem to produce on surface baits surprised me a little, as most of my success with surface rigs has been in water over 15' deep, but I think we are now beginning to get a clearer picture of when and where to use surface baits. My own conclusions are as follows.

The moon doesn't matter, but if it is full - so much the better. Very windy weather or very heavy rain is not very promising, but often extremely good if you can fish as it ends. Baits don't seem to matter much as long as they are fresh, although preferences for individual waters should be borne in mind. Waters don't seem to

matter as I am now convinced that eels feed on or near the surface in every water. Where you find them feeding on the top in your water does though, so good location is really the key to successful surface fishing. Small waters that are shallow and weedy don't really present many problems as virtually anywhere will see surface feeding eels at some stage, but big, deep waters need thought. Any outcrops of land, jetties or surface obstructions that can provide shelter for small fish is the obvious choice, so is water above very dense weedbeds, even if they are growing in deep water - 15+ feet, coastal waters, or venues with almost constant wind will lead you to the windward shore. Any area of shallower water adjacent to deep water is worthy of a go as is the mouth of any inflow or outflow. I've probably missed a hundred and one points about surface fishing but that's the gist of it.

The big bait problem could be solved by using a double hook rig - (oops it's on the next page - sorry Nev) (Ed. you should read before you write Dave)

You say that most of your bigger eels have been caught at or around dawn but you didn't say on what methods. I would presume that they have fallen to ledgered deadbaits as you earlier stated that the surface rigs were producing at dusk. The 'dawn only' runs was a syndrome we found very common on Johnson's Lakes, in the early stages and indeed our first action of the night would often commence as it started to turn from black to grey.

Hope I have been of help and interest and I'm sure Brian will welcome the copy.

Dave Walker

A PROBLEM WATER by Neville Evans

A couple of seasons ago, we decided to fish a new water. The water in question is just over 50 acres, shallow and weedy. The resident fish population consists of natural brown trout, roach, rudd, perch and of course eels. With so little eeling done up here, the only way of finding out the potential of a water is to go out and fish it for ourselves.

Our first session saw us in a nice weed fringed bay. Our camp was set out neatly and a variety of baits cast out. As darkness fell the eels attacked, that's the only way I can describe it. Within the space of 10 minutes there was total confusion, with rods, lines and eels scattered all over the bank. It continued like this for most of the night with little chance of getting more than two rods out.

The eels themselves were all in the 1 - 1½ range with large heads. They pounced on whatever we threw at them, even large deadbaits were no deterrent. A case for eel steaks I hear you say. Not so. They loved them. No matter what we tried we could not catch anything bigger. At the time, we were of the opinion that if no 2lb eels were caught in the first couple of sessions, then we were wasting our time on that particular water. So we left in search of more productive waters.

However, towards the end of last season, our thoughts turned again to this lake as the roach and perch were of high average weight. It seemed strange that the eels remained on the small side. We wrote to a newly formed club which had taken control of part of the lake.

You can imagine our surprise when the reply came back that they had caught a couple of 3lb and one of 4lb during evening matches. All taken on match tackle, i.e., light lines and small baits. We were assured that they were of the pointed head variety. We managed one session before the weather turned cold. Again the night fishing was the same, producing many small predatory eels. This time however, we fished during the day. By scaling down to 6lb lines and doing away with wire traces, we managed to catch a couple over 2lb on worm baits and yes, they were the pointed head type. The trouble was, now we were getting pestered by the other fish in the lake. You just can't win - can you.

Well that's it for now. Has anyone else come up against this problem? If so, how did you solve it? I can see that a bait such as a paste might deter the other fish during the day, but what the hell do I do about the small predatory eels at night? I suppose I could fish for numbers, in the hope I contact one of these better eels, but there must be a better way than this. I'll be very interested to hear from fellow members on how they would go about it.

Neville Evans

MORE ON DEEP HOOKED EELS AND BAITs

by John Sidley

Apart from the letter from Mick Bowles regarding the BEAC, the SGM of the NAC on March 31st, was, in my view, a great day out with a great bunch of lads. The slide show given by Terry and his talk on his lake and eels was first class.

After Terry's talk on eels and putting forward his own view on deep hooked eels, I was most pleased to hear him say that if the hook could not be removed and the eel did not show any signs of distress, he returned his eels. During this talk, Phil Smith put forward his view that those eels deep hooked did die. He also said that he thought that even lip hooked eels sometimes did not survive the ordeal of being captured. These questions do bring food for thought, for I myself can not explain why, when we return our eels, the large ones especially, for we take note more of these fish, i.e., body marks, torn fins, one eye, etc., that we never seem to see again. Not only does this happen on large waters but on waters of only an acre in size.

I have two points to put forward in response to Phil's view on the eels dying when only lip hooked. I do not think that these fish die. I feel that the very big fish, say 4lb upwards, leave the water to move to pastures new. This is why our swims die a death after we have taken eels from them. The eels will move to another area of the lake to feed. It is then up to the angler to find them. Failing that, the eels could remove themselves from the water to a new home where they may feel safe. My second view is that the eels change their feeding habit and we as anglers are not willing to change our baits. As an example, I know of a very small lake in Birmingham where I have taken eels to 5lb using lobs. A couple of close friends fished the water for the past four years. What they found is interesting. The first season they fished the lake, all their eels fell to lobs. This season followed the one when I took two 4's, a 3 and a 5:2. They had eels to nearly 4lb on worm with no runs to deadbaits that first season. The second season they fished there, all the eels came to deadbaits and none

to lobs. The third season the eels fell to section deadbaits and none to full deadbaits. The fourth season saw success only with livebaits nothing to other baits. This next season should be interesting to see what the successful bait will be. Are we making the mistake of not keeping one step ahead of the eel. Do we need to keep offering eels different baits as they do in carp fishing? I feel that when those very big eels get hooked, the bait used can become blown (carp angler slang for no good). Let us not forget that those very big eels are crafty fish. They have to be to get to that size. A big eel is no dumb rod pulling creature that a lot of anglers try to make her out to be. A big eel can be and is in my book, as cunning as any big carp, tench or bream. Some of the bites I have had off eels would put them in a class of their own. From big girls as well. I've had bites - I say bites for that's what they were - no fast run at all - and it may have been mistaken for water drift or a line bite. If I didn't pick up my rod and wind down very slow to feel what was going on the other end, I'm sure I would have missed a lot of very big eels.

I can also show that not all deep hooked eels die. I feel I have done a great deal more than any other eel angler in bringing my deep hooked eels home with me and looking after them in my bath at home. I have not just left them in a tub and hoped they would recover, I had to nurse those fish. If they rolled over onto their backs or floated to the surface, I helped to support them by placing bricks around their body with two at each end to prevent them working their way out. Andy Barker once wrote in a mag that all his eels did die when he brought them back from the Fens. What Andy forgot to say was that all his eels were deep hooked with two size 10 trebles and they were just left altogether in his bait bucket. I dare say Andy never even changed the water for them. So if you are going to talk about deep hooked eels I feel one should have more experience on the subject. Andy only plays at eel fishing.

A few years back, I took a 4lb eel from a Birmingham lake. It was deep hooked with a size 2 Mustad 92641 worm hook. When landed the eel had blood coming from its gills. 'That's a dead eel' I thought. I brought the eel home as my dad and Mrs. like eating them, so the fish would not go to waste. When I returned home the next day, I got the Mrs. to take a picture of me holding the fish in my garden. After a couple of shots, the eel had blood all along one of its sides. I took the eel over to my garden pond to wipe it clean. As I placed the eel in the water it went berserk and slipped out from my hands. 'Not to worry' I told Jean, it would show up dead in a day or so. I could then remove the body. Over 12 months later I did remove the eel, alive and well. In fact I could have done with a rod and line to catch it. It was a very lively eel indeed, and well fed on the Mrs's goldfish, orfe and Koi carp. I placed the eel back in the Birmingham lake. So Phil, of the eels we never seem to see again, I can only put forward my views as above, but I do so from past experience, and know that not all deep hooked eels die. As Terry said in his talk, if they show no signs of ill effects, he gives them the chance. This is where I feel the NAC should put in a paper to NASA. There are lots of NASA members out there who still think a deep hooked eel is a dead one. You can not blame those anglers for not thinking different. We as an eel specialist club should put the information forward and let NASA know our feelings and our findings on this very evergreen subject.

MORE ON THE SESSION REPORTING by John Sidley

One of the members said at the SGM on 31st March, that an eel of 2lb is a big eel. I would not go as far as that to say an eel that size is a very big eel. It is however, a very good eel and one I would be most pleased to catch. In fact I would be pleased to catch an eel of any size in a session, but as with my pike fishing, I go out to try to catch big fish. I do the same with my eels. I fish water I know or hope that the big girls are present. Do not get me wrong, I'm not saying that a water that holds a big head of very small eels will not hold a big one, there are many waters that have done that. The waters I try to find are the ones where the runs are very slow in coming but when they do, the average size of the eels is bigger. Earlswood Lakes are a fine example. The two large lakes would produce eels on most nights, yet on the small lake, you could sit for nights, weeks even and sometimes months before you had an eel, but when you did, the average weight was over 4lb, with weights up to my 8:3 and Ian Mann's 7:12.

Reading the Session Reporting papers again, I feel we would gain more if the information recorded was just on eels of 4lb+. This is the data needed on big eels. Recording all the info on eels of 2lb will only cause confusion, for small eels are like jack pike and will feed in any type of weather conditions, yet their big sisters are a different breed. These only feed when the conditions are right. I don't want to sound big-headed, but if my eels do not look near on 4lb, I sometimes do not even bother to weigh them. They can be more trouble than they are worth, and as Phil Smith said, if the stress of just hooking eels is enough to kill them, I'm sure having them out of the water longer than is needed can do nothing but harm. On most, if not all the waters I intend fishing this eel season, I will have time to take down the notes required on the session reporting forms, yet if I'm ever lucky enough to find another water like Westwood Park, no way could I have spent time reporting the data. If I did I would never have had the great catches that I did. Once again, as I said to Phil, I took more eels by using one rod than I could have done using 3 or 4 rods. The action was too much for the mind to cope.

The aim of the Reporting Scheme must be to help us all catch bigger eels, so surely that would be the best info by just recording the capture of 4lb plus eels. I'm sure no self respecting angler would turn his nose up at an eel of 4lb or more. I'm quite sure that if the info was taken just on the very big eels, Terry could drop on some very worth while information on the big eels feeding habits. Sifting through all the info on the small eels could cause Terry to miss out on the very useful bits. It must be mind blowing, going through all that paper work. Once again, trying not to sound big headed, If Gerry and I had been in the NAC at the time we fished Westwood Park, poor old Terry would still be working out our session reports now. No, I feel there is no need to report the small eels. It is the info on the very big ones that is required. I'm sure it would make a few members a lot happy to only have to record the eels of 4lb+. It would me, anyway. Let's hear your views on this subject please. (Ed. that's an idea - let's have you all responding)

John Sidley

ONE IS O.K. - MORE ARE A PROBLEM

At the SGM, I was talking to Terry Jefferson about the type of runs he had encountered when fishing deadbaits or livebaits at Bala. (Ed. it was probably due to Jan's cooking... sorry Jan..)

Terry told me that most if not all the runs were Hell raisers. If left they could well empty ones reel spool of line. However, on many occasions when a strike was made, the fish was missed. He also said that other types of runs were missed. It did not make any difference as to the type of bait used, live, dead, sections, or how the hook was positioned, size of hook, timing of the strike etc.

Over the years I have also found this to happen, and you must admit it can get to you in a big way. The venues where I have found this to happen are where there is also a large head of eels present, with the large headed type outnumbering the small mouth type by a factor of 95%. As Gerry and I try to find and fish venues where the head of eels is small but the average size is large, the eels we seem to pick up when using fish baits are low in numbers, but when runs do come, we connect with 9 out of 10. However, the runs are slow in coming. For example, on one water we fish, I had a normal run on a roach tail section which resulted in an eel of 4:14. My next deadbait run on that water was almost a month later. That was with both Gerry and I fishing two rods on fishbaits every trip.

Like Terry, on the waters we fish and class as easy, the chances of getting a five was very remote. We also had this problem of missed runs, even when using worms. Before you ask why we fish such waters when you know better ones, the answer is simply that the odd trip to an easy water builds up your confidence after having many blanks on a hard water. Plus there was always the chance of a 3 or 4. Enough was enough, we had to try to find out the answer to all those missed runs, so we did and what we discovered was at first unbelievable.

Fishing the lower reaches of the River Severn in an area we call Dead Arm, I placed a small section of bleak deadbait close to the margins with a complete rig attached to my rod. With a very dim torch light, I sat for hours just watching my bait lying on the bottom. The depth was only about 18". All of a sudden, I saw at least 6 very small laces attack my bait. Not one of those boots were more than 4oz in weight. More of a shock was to follow for all the boots swam off in the same direction with at least 4 of them holding onto my bait. The line was coming off my spool with such a speed I would have said that a fair old eel was giving me a run. Of course I wound down as normal and missed the run. On that occasion I struck my bait off, on the next run I brought my bait back. I could plainly see the marks where the eel or eels had been hold of the bait. These gave the false impression that a big eel was responsible whereas in fact it was a few small laces.

I have tried to repeat that experiment on some of my still waters in the margins, but as yet have not had the same result. Mind you, I have found while margin eel fishing on still waters, the runs are few and far between, but the eels are very big. So sitting there with a dim torch light may not act the same as on our rivers. It will be interesting to see what happens at Bala for I will try it there. So that is my idea of why you have those missed runs. Food for thought.

John Sidley

WHERE TO FISH?MARK DAVIES

In late March/early April of every year I ask myself the question above. I've dusted down the tackle, and studied all my O.S. maps and club books looking for inspiration, but I'm still left scratching my head not knowing where to start. In the North-West Water Authority Area as you all know, despite opposition, the bye-laws were amended to stop close season eel fishing. Even prior to this, many clubs have barred it as the privilege was being abused. This means I have to drive at least 35 miles to get to fish on waters in either the Severn Trent Area or the Dee Division of the Welsh Water Authority. This means if I intend to fish on a Friday night in April or March I have to rush about to get to the waterside before it gets dark. Yet again things are not that simple because many clubs in these water authority areas ban both close season eel fishing and night fishing. The Prince Albert Club of Macclesfield has recently changed its rules to stop all close season eel fishing on all their waters.

I rate canals as the most promising of close season eel waters. They warm up quickly and hold a reasonable head of eels and depending on the state of boat traffic offer good sport. The Shropshire Union Canal is visited a lot by me throughout the eeling season but especially in the close season. It doesn't get a great deal of angling pressure except in certain spots and invariably offers easy access. Marina's are favoured by myself and there are a good number of them dotted along the canal's length: without doubt the length with the most potential is that which flows (yes it does flow!) up from Ellesmere to Welshpool then to Newtown and Abermule. It is derelict in that it is no longer navigable but holds all types of fish up to a very good size. Eels have easy access to this length of the canal which flows close by the River Severn throughout most of its length. Having said this I've only fished the water twice for eels with little success. However I intend to get up to those parts often this year.

Still waters in Shropshire and Cheshire are very puzzling and as a general rule do not fish well until later in the year. The Ellesmere lakes are a classic example. Whilst they can all be very slow in June/July/August they really reach peak form in September. Dave Holman has had some superb catches on Whitemeer in that month, whilst AJS and others have struggled in the early parts of the year despite concentrated efforts. The syndicate water that Dave Holman and I fish for Tench Bream and Rudd/Roach Bream hybrids can be fished throughout the close season up until October when the shooting starts. One or two eels have been caught unintentionally but my efforts in fishing for eels have drawn a complete blank. I don't know why this should be. The access is good and waters relatively nearby hold eels. As far as my enquiries have been able to ascertain no netting or trapping has been done within living memory. This water remains a mystery, although I feel that I should pay it further attention. Other species grow to specimen proportions i.e. the old unclaimed bream record came from one of these meres. One problem is that it is alive with natural food and one can see why it is difficult to persuade an eel to take your bait. Pre-baiting over a long period of time hasn't helped to bring eels to the net.

River fishing for eels in the immediate area of my home is something of an unknown quantity. It would be very difficult (although not impossible) for elvers to run up the rivers flowing into the Mersey Estuary, because of pollution. Having said that, elver runs have been recorded on the River Dane, so it is possible that they could enter local canals ie. Macclesfield Canal, Trent and Mersey Canal and local stillwaters. It would be worthwhile giving eeling a try in these waters, but I find it difficult to put any heart into it as the odds are against eels entering these waters. However if I caught one big one perhaps my attitude would change. It seems well established, certainly from the experiences of NAC members that big eels are not generally found in waters heavily populated by smaller eels.

The experience of Neville Evans in N. Wales has led me to have a re-think about certain stillwaters close to my home. Lakes in mountainous and hilly areas have never been considered by me to be worthy of attention. (I exclude Bala from this statement) as I always believed that only trout could thrive in acidic waters of low PH value. This is not the case and thus some of the stillwaters in and around the Pennine Hills may well bear fruit. There are at least fifteen reservoirs holding trout within 4 miles of my home. The only difficulty would be fishing them in accordance with club rules and of course I would not be able to fish in the close season whereas the eels have easy access to the Welsh Lakes this is not the case with the Pennine Lakes where the Mersey Estuary presents problems. If I did give these waters a try I would be saved a great deal of time and petrol.

I'm sorry to have rambled on, on this topic but I had intended to get out for my first session of the season but the cold wet weather has prevented this.

MARK DAVIES PROFILE

I consider all members of the NAC to be my good friends but having said that I know very little about you other than what you look like and that you are fascinated by eels and eel fishing. Therefore I'm going to set the ball rolling and give you some details about myself which may be of interest and perhaps amusing.

<u>NAME</u>	Mark Davies
<u>ADDRESS</u>	Higher Hardings Farm Red Lane Sutton Macclesfield Tel: 02605 - 2886
<u>AGE</u>	33 years
<u>OCCUPATION</u>	Solicitor - Senior Partner Mark Davies and Smith of Salford & Eccles. Qualified 1976.
<u>STATUS</u>	Married - No children

INTERESTS

FISHING - Since aged 4 (photographs to prove it) Eel fishing from age of 12 principally on G/U Canal in Warwickshire. Lone angler till 1979 when joined NAC and NASA. Favourite type of fishing other than eels, chub on Welsh border rivers.

FOOTBALL - Up until I moved North I was a fanatical supporter of Wolves. I am now a Vice President and Season Ticket Holder of Chester City Football Club. I was a not very distinguished Centre Forward up until four years ago, playing for many local League teams.

HUNTING - I am a keen follower of all forms of hunting with hounds. Member and Whipper-In of Cheshire Beagles.

TERRIERS - I work and breed Jack Russell terriers and have four at the moment, three of my own breeding, Belle Chloe, Bazeaway and Ruby which I use for hunting rats and mink during the Summer months with the Dadleston Rat Hounds, a pack of terriers that meet every Sunday. I also show terriers during Summer and judge terriers at a number of shows.

MUSIC - A player of the concertina and tenor banjo, principally folk music especially Irish Dance Music. Play in a club every Thursday evening. Have also played for group of clog dancers since 1976 who have toured Britain and Europe performing at Folk Festivals.

SHOOTING - Own a pair of English 12 bores and a double barrelled 410 and shoot when I have time.

FAVOURITE FOOD

Indian or Chinese

AMBITIONS

To retire before I'm 40 to fish on a club trip. To catch an eel over 5lbs on Ernie Orme's rod whilst he's sleeping. To put an end to animosity between eel specimen groups. To learn to make proper tea!

As you will realise time is in short supply with me, so please bear this in mind when considering the contribution I make (if you consider I make one!) to the NAC.

BITS AND PIECESMARK DAVIES

Following on from Kevin Stephenson's article 'Alternative Tackle Tests' in the March Bulletin I thought I would, as it were, go through my tackle box and explain to members the bits and pieces that I have picked up over the years which have been good buys.

STOVES - Without a doubt the finest stove that I've ever come across is the Trangla methalated spirit stove. It costs about £25 and is very durable being made completely of aluminium. It consists of a wind shield and base, two pans and a kettle with a pan lid that doubles as a frying pan. All these parts pack into the windshield and base and make a round container approximately 10" wide by 5" deep. It burns methalated spirits only and will boil a kettle full of water in about 4 minutes. It can be used inside your bivy or outside. The stronger the wind blows the better it burns. Methalated Spirits have one disadvantage. If you get it on your fingers and the smell is transferred to your bait it will kill your fishing stone dead. I've been using mine for four years and it shows no signs of wear. Both Dave Holman and Ernie Orme have seen it in action and can vouch for its effectiveness - although they would no doubt point out that it doesn't improve the flavour of my tea which I'm told is the foulest they've ever tasted!

BIVIES - I've extolled the virtues of car covers previously and I've not seen a proper bivy that comes anywhere near an adapted car cover for effectiveness. A PVC cover for a VW Beetle costs about £12. Fit plastic eyelets and you've made a very adaptable completely waterproof cover. Its only drawback is that in very hot weather it gets a bit smelly. I've been using the same car cover for the last five years. If torn its easily patched with PVC tape.

UMBERELLAS - A 50" WaveLock is my current model. I have bought a screw in umberella pole which is very useful when trying to erect the umberella in hard or stony ground. Using a car cover and elastic bungees over this size of umberella makes a very spacious and secure shelter.

TACKLE BOX - I use an Efgeeco Super box with shoulder straps and two side pockets. Its as good as a rucksack and doubles as a seat. It is also completely waterproof. A car cover and sleeping bag can be strapped on the top.

ALARMS - AJS Mark IV's and self contained Optonics. I can't afford to get my Optonics converted so that they are used only when I can sit near to the rods. I bought my set (3) of AJS's when I joined the club and have never had any trouble with them. The volume and tone control are very useful. I purchased mine via Bait 78 (Thanks Dave for ripping me off) only to be told I could have saved about £20 by buying direct from AJS!

BANK STICKS - Egeeco Long and short extending bank sticks are all I use and I have found them as good as any. If fishing from a hard bank or from a stage I use a Dellareed triadapta. Another good buy. Medium sized bamboo poles cut up into 3/4' lengths are also very useful and adaptable ie. for extending banksticks (with the aid of PVC tape) when boat fishing or stabilising buzzer bars.

SLEEPING BAG - In 1966 I bought a Blacks Icelandic Sleeping Bag which at the time cost a small fortune. Its filled with the best quality duck down and I'm still using it. Its been dreadfully abused and misused but is still going strong although the zips a bit toothless. I've recently priced up the 1985 model - £130 would you believe. So for the moment my old one will do. It always kept me warm in the most atrocious of conditions. It also folds up into a very compact bundle which is important if one is walking any distance to ones swim. At 6'3" in length it can be pulled up right over your head (thats if you want to sleep and not sit up waiting for bites). It has on more than one occasion been too comfortable. I can remember in years gone past rushing over to Ellesmere on a Friday after work setting up my rods, having something to eat, getting into my bag and waking up at 8 in the morning. Not the most productive type of session to say the least. I'll also admit to hearing the alarm go off and saying sod it. I'm nice and cosy!

CLOTHING - I don't go in for anything very fancy. A workmans bib and brace costs very little. (If your fashion conscious you'll know them as dungarees) about £5/£6. If worn over a jumper they keep your back nice and warm. They also keep mud and dirt off a decent pair of trousers. I tend to wear a pair of old shoes on my feet so I can slip them on or off very quickly. I don't usually wear waders or wellies unless the bank is very boggy. They are also not very warm. If I'm going for an evening session (as opposed to an all night) I wear an all in one suit and thermal boots. This gear is very useful in April/May but also later in the year on cold clear nights. Fingerless mittens are also handy to have in your tackle box as there is nothing worst than cold hands. A spare pair of thick socks can often be a godsend. A hat of some description also keeps in a lot of heat. NAC Sweat-shirts are not very bulky but very warm, so buy one. Thermal balaclavas keep your ears warm if you want to sit outside your bivvy keeping an eye on the rods.

SEATS/BEDCHAIRS - I've found nothing wrong with the 'cheaps' type. If it collapses you can buy another one, putting two covers on the frame makes it stronger. As a matter of interest what does Terry Jefferson sleep on? Did I notice a built in bed chair on the side of his swim at Whittles (built of Scaffolding tube!) You can buy the most sophisticated and expensive of bedchairs and covers. But ask yourself what a bed chair is for? Anglers can be persuaded to buy anything (Thank the Lord'says Ernie Orme).

KEEPNETS/SACKS - Keepnets are very bulky if you're travelling light. Black Industrial nylon keepsacks fold up into a very small space and keep eels safe and secure. Remember to dry them off as other wise they get very smelly.

TORCHES - I usually carry about four, one small one I can hold in my teeth for unhooking etc., a larger one for use inside the bivy and two adjustable lights with the flexible stem. These are very good as they can be clipped onto your jacket or side of the bivy. A supply of spare batteries often saves the day.

CANDLES - Don't laugh. They can supply subdued light and surprisingly will keep the inside of a bivy warm. Night lights serve a similar purpose.

RODS - I've got a very mixed bunch of rods that I use for eeling ranging from Simpsons Carp rods to Carbon Avons made by Terry Eustace. If fishing big waters ie Bala I'll go for 12' pike rods (with fugi reel grips) made for me by Arthur Smith. I personally don't think rods are crucial.

REELS - Again you may think I'm old fashioned but I've had very good service from the standard Mitchell 300 and 410's for use with Pike rods. I use 306's.

LINE - The line I use depends on the type of bottom I'm fishing on. Black Sylcast is good and for light coloured bottoms Sylcast Specimen. I've also used Veals Bluefin in past years and found it very good.

HOOKS - Jack Hilton Carp hooks, Stilletto's and Drennan and Partridge Specimen/Specialist hooks meet most of my requirements. The hook is always sharpened with a stone before use.

OTHER BITS AND PIECES - Drennan rings, beads, bombs, feeder links, Syringes, various floats for surface and sub-surface rigs. Fairy Liquid for de-greasing line. Musculin for making line float on the odd occasion that this is necessary. Various isotope bobbins, old pennies for resting on open spools in rough weather. Foam rubber (various uses). Gardner and Roberts line clips, windbeater indicators (I'm not convinced about these). PVC tape (very useful). Tape measure, thermometer, for air temp and one for water temp. Pocket Barometer (well to be honest Terry I've not got it yet but I've sent off for one). Pocket binoculars, baiting needles, pen knives, scissors, forceps, lighter (for the stove). Screw in rod rest tops, various types ie. Drennan, Chesney, Martin Steel for the odd occasion I use steel traces ie Bala. Wallet containing club books, rod licences 'Mark Davies Solicitor' cards, surprising how useful these can be. Transistor radio (I like to listen to the weather forecast). How the hell do I carry this lot with out making two trips!

Notebook - couple of pens. I've run out of ink so thats the lot.

MY 9:13 EELCHRIS PRICE

I arrived at Reevesley Reservoir on Saturday 9th March at 6.45a.m. with Richard Hall to fish for Pike. We met another friend Mike Donly who had been there for one hour, and we decided to fish near him at the far end of the lake away from the dam wall. We selected swims opposite the island, one of our favourite spots for Pike. This is the shallow end of the lake, about four or five feet deep with the course of the old stream running between the island and the bank providing the deepest water.

Sport during the day was slow, although conditions were good as we were in a mild spell with a steady west wind. Mike had the only outstanding fish, a Pike of 20lbs. I had taken a few small Pike on deadbaits one of which took the gudgeon which later caught the eel. The set up which took the eel was a Pike Rod 10 foot 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb test, ABU Cardinal and 10lbs Maxima, 8lbs braided alasticum wire trace with size 10 treble.

The bait was freelined. After catching a Pike on the gudgeon it was still in good shape so I recast it three quarters of the way to the island so that the gudgeon was lying just beyond the deep water chanel. This was about 2.00 p.m.

I had no runs on this rod until 5 p.m. when I noticed the indicator move slightly - I waited for a run to develop but the fish did not take any line for a long time: several minutes. Eventually a slow run started and I hit the fish, which felt very solid. It was not until a cloud of bubbles and mud surfaced and the line zig-zagged through the water that I suspected an eel had taken the bait.

The eel did not fight as well as one might have expected for a fish of that size. It weighed 9lbs 13ozs. Once I had pumped it clear of the bottom it was easy going until the struggle to land the fish. We had to get it into the net backwards. The water was still very cold, perhaps this had helped to subdue the fish.

In retrospect it is not too surprising to have caught an eel whilst Pike fishing as the methods and baits are often very similar for both species. Furthermore we had ground baited this particular area on many occasions, which could have attracted the eel to this end of the lake.

A further interesting point is that the reservoir was netted for eels for Commercial purposes not long ago, but the results were very poor with only £25 worth of eels taken and nothing of any size. Nevertheless the keeper has told me that there are a few big eels in the water. This eel weighed 9lbs 13ozs, was 4 feet long and 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch girth. It had a mark on its mouth like a hook mark. Another angler said a friend had caught an eel 18 months ago which weighed 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Could this be the same fish. I think it unlikely that it could have put on this amount of weight in such a space of time.

For the eel fisherman the disappointing facet of Reevesley is that all night fishing is not allowed.

MORE ON WINTER EELINGJOHN SIDLEY

I was very interested to read Kevin Stephenson's article on his exploits on fishing for eels in Winter, if its okay by you I would like to put forward my two pence worth.

Quite a few years ago I myself tried my luck at fishing in the Winter, at that time I had no interest in Pike, so carrying on eeling came easy to me, lets say I know no better. At that time most of my fishing was done on the River Seven and Avon, like Kevin I noticed over a period of time that the most productive times during the stint was in late afternoon, as the day drew near to dusk and the air temp started to drop so the eels became less active, I must admit I never did many early morning stints, getting to the river a good couple of hours after dawn, of the early mornings that I did get to do, no eels were forthcoming, mind you after the hard frosts of the night before I was not surprised. On the rivers I found no difference in depths being fished, the shallow water being as productive as the deeps, what I did find that fishing during the river was in spate, produced more eels, or when the Seven in its lower reaches was carrying heavy tides, the reasons being obvious the extra water moving the eels out of their Winter slumber, I also found that the eels hooked compared to Summer time fish but up more of a battler to the bank, also all of my eels were covered in a heavy coat of thick slime, size of baits never seemed to make any odds, those Winter eels would have a knock at anything I chucked at em. I also know the Fens produce eels in Winter from the many friends I have who fish there for Pike and Zander, again the most productive time being late afternoon or when some of the drains are being pumped or carrying heavy flood water.

Knowing all the above when I started to fish still waters for eels, I tried my luck at the Winter time, at first I started to fish the areas where one would not dream of fishing in the Summer months, i.e. on the deeps, it was not long before the blanks started to mount up believe me, all times of the day were fished and all types of baits used, I then thought on the idea of searching for my eels, I'd pick a likely looking spot, cast a bunch of lobs or a single lob in case the eel would reject a big bait, give the offering about half hour, if no response I would then find another good looking spot and repeat the procedure till I had covered all of the lake in question, at first I thought I would do well, it was only a matter of time before I would cast my bait near to an eel, it had to be the law of average, but it was not to be.

I now feel the best times to put the effort in on eels in Winter is when we have a prolonged mild spell, this is the time we should for-~~fit~~ our Winter Pike and head for those big eel waters, it takes a lot of doing for during that mild spell is usually the same period that those big Pike are more willing to go on the ramp, its then up to you to decide which one you would like to better, your P/Best Pike or Eel, I think if more of us were willing

to change our ideas on Winter eeling and for-fit our Pike fishing during these mild spells, it could prove very rewarding, one has only got to look at the eels taken and of their huge size by Pike anglers in Winter, whose going to be first then?

I now turn back to the eels taken in Winter from our rivers, as I've said these are normally taken as I've said, during heavy waters running down the rivers, so we can not put the same conditions to still water, simply because our still waters do not suffer the same way, if more of our still waters did then we could be in charge of a bonanza. A few years back, one of the lakes at Earlswood was near on drained out due to the water being taken off to top up the local canal system, it was October and the cold weather had set in, night frost were the norm. I had arranged to see Pete Burton, a close eeling friend in those magic days of Earlswood, at the sailing lake, to do a couple of days Pike fishing. It was a mid-week trip. I told Pete I'd see him on the dam wall at dawn. Due to my working at that time, I was unable to get to the lake to see Pete. Pete carried on without me. By mid-day he had not seen the smell of a Pike, It was then he decided to dig up some lobs out of the woods and see what he could pick up skimmer bream wise for future live bait. During the night before, we had a very heavy rain storm, the lake had near on filled up, the water was in bad colour, out went Petes worms on one rod. It was not long before Pete was into some action. In came eel after eel. Poor old Pete lost more than he hooked but at the end of his afternoon stint and digging half of Earlswood up for more worms, he had put half a dozen eels onto the bank, the best going a good 4lb. Still unable to get there the next day, Pete did the same. By the 3rd day the water level had dropped and the water cleared. Those eels stopped feeding as quick as they had started. During a mild spell when I was fishing the small lake, around the end of October, I fished during the day to catch live bait to take home for future Pike fishing, at the same time I put out a rod on the off chance of catching an eel, it payed off too, for at 4.30 in the afternoon I had what I thought was a bream bite, I struck and in came an eel of 6lb 14oz, the following day another eel of 5lb 10oz.

So there is my two pence worth on Winter eeling, I'm sure if somebody took the time and effort to forfit their Winter Pike pursuit when those mild conditions arrived it could prove very rewarding, me I think I'm a little too old to change in my ways I only hope the above proves helpful for those up and coming eel anglers that are now in our ranks, as I've always said, "You only get out of fishing w t you're prepared to put in". Tight Lines.

Letter from Kevin Stephenson received just after the SGM

Dear Brian,

Thanks for the latest Bulletin although Chris Davy doesn't look that old. The John Sidley article was very interesting, especially the deep hooking - or to be exact - not deep hooking at all. The idea John puts forward of a code of conduct/eel handling advice, would seem like an idea we could do something about, publicity etc.

I think the weeklies would be a much better bet than S.A. or the monthlies. What do other members think?

I would also like to add to Stuarts letter that I think it would be interesting to make a list of waters, say county by county on all eel waters that have produced eels over 4lb. (Dr. Terry Coulson did just that about 1970 and I have always intended bringing it up to date but have never yet found time - perhaps during my Summer break...Ed.)

I notice from the latest membership list many members of the NAC seem to have joined in the last few years. Would it be possible to reprint some of the more interesting older articles from the early years? (Blasts from the past - I'll see what I can do. Ed.)

Letter from Andy Barlow 5/4/85

Dear Mark.

I am writing to you to try and clear up the business of myself and the NAC. When Nev. told me what I'm supposed to have said, eg., 'Andy wants nothing to do with anyone connected with the NAC' This is a load of rubbish!!! I've also written to Terry Jefferson, Mick Dowles, John Sidley and Dave Walker on this subject, to try to clear this up.

Firstly I did not join the ESG (Nev will confirm this) simply to split the NAC. What reason could I have to do this?

The NAC members I have met have all been great blokes. Terry Jefferson has given me a lot of useful info on Bala eeling (at the time I was struggling eel wise at Bala) also Dave Holman helped a great deal through correspondance a few years ago. When we met Dave at Bala two years ago, he was most helpful and a really great bloke (and excellent eel angler).

Dave Walker I met at Westwood last year and have since kept in touch throughout the year to keep him up to date on catches etc. (and the same with Terry)

Finally I fail to see how I could have a 'grudge' against the NAC when my 'partner in crime', Nev, is a member of the NAC. In my letter to Dave Walker, I asked if this letter could be put into your Mag. to let the NAC see that all this is c--p.

As you can see from this letter, this has annoyed and upset me a great deal. All I am interested in, is eels and eeling. I'm not interested whatsoever in bickering between eel groups.

All the very best.

Andy Barlow