THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB

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EDITORIAL

We publish in this issue a letter from a Correspondent who has taken part in the treatment of a lake with rotenone, to destroy its existing fish population preparatory to developing it as a first-class fishery. We were asked to remove all local detail from the letter, on account of the prejudice which exists among anglers, angling clubs and riparian owners against this type of operation. Our Correspondent's wishes have been met, of course, because we know the well-intentioned but thick-headed prejudice he refers to.

It takes many forms. At one extreme are men whose woolly brains lack the ability to conceive a single constructive thought or design, who compensate for their creative bankruptcy by taking a sniggering pleasure in adopting what they imagine to be a "holier-than-thou" attitude. On the lunatic fringe of this class is the League Against Cruel Sports, a group of moral defectives who affect to see virtue in the capture of a fish if it is to be knocked on the head and eaten, but sin if it is to be lovingly returned to the water; whose mealy-mouthed diatribes are forever directed against the gentle pleasures of angling, and never against the big-business interests whose pollution and abstraction kill and main more fish than ever angling did; nor against the commercial fishing which trawls up fish in their countless thousands and dumps them flapping into the ships' holds; who care not a jot for the inherent cruelty in trying to deprive millions of anglers of their harmless joy.

In the middle are the simple souls who are worried about their fisheries and have got no further than thinking they must preserve what's left.

At the other extreme are anglers whose gentle natures sincerely revolt against killing of any kind, who feel they would rather give up their angling than kill a fish. I know a few such, and whilst I respect the sincerity of their feelings, I say respectfully to them that they are grossly and sadly mistaken; and that their deep feelings would be more laudable if they were accompanied by the resolve to adopt a more balanced and rational attitude.

We live in an age when fish and fisheries suffer not merely the threat but the reality of wholesale annihilation. The remedy, if there is one, lies with action, not inaction. We can no longer afford the Waltonian luxury of passively contemplating the natural scene. Instead, amongst other things, we must try to develop something akin to the attitude of the farmer, to learn the disciplines of good husbandry. Good husbandry has always involved hard decisions, has always needed resolve and strength of purpose - whether in strangling the runt of the litter, or in felling a stand of beautiful but diseased elms.

It is not good husbandry to preserve a population of fish already far in excess of the water's ability to sustain it. It is not good husbandry to leave alone a fishery where the species present are in dour competition for the limited food supply, none doing well. It is not good husbandry to return to the water a fish which may be suffering from an infectious disease, nor one which has a congenital deformity. It is neither good husbandry nor is it humane to return a fish which has been mortally injured during capture - in particular, it seems to me indefensible to return an eel with the hook still inside it: that it "might survive" is scarcely to the point, it is all too likely to die slowly and uselessly from its injuries, or even more slowly from inability to feed or digest its food. Far better to kill it: if its flesh is only eaten, at least it has died to some purpose; and if its body can be made to contribute to knowledge (of diet or growth rate or parasitology or whatever) then we have exchanged the likelihood of a meaningless death for the certainty of a useful one. The decisions of good husbandry can be harsh, and they must be based on knowledge as soundly as possible. To lack the resolve to kill fish in the execution of those decisions, or in the pursuit of that knowledge, is as irresponsible as to kill sadistically, indiscriminately or carelessly.

- Terence Coulson.

ROSWELL PITS

by Brian Knott

Roswell Pits is described by geologists as an inexplicable puzzle. One theory put forward is that it is a mass of greensand, gault and chalk that tumbled into this ancient East Anglian valley during the glacial era. When first given a name, this area was called Roslyn Pits but through the years it has come to be known as Roswell Pits although traces of the older name remain. For instance, a house front in the City of Ely carries a name-plate bearing the words "Roslyn House".

Roswell Pits is to found on the B.1382 between Ely and Queen Adelaide in the Isle of Ely - the county-within-a-county, the mother county being Cambridgeshire. Though called Roswell Pits in the plural, it is actually a series of pits interjoined to make one large stretch of water. It is shared by anglers and yachtsmen, the area of approximately fifty acres being sufficient to allow both to follow their pursuits without infringing on each other's pleasure.

When man first began to extract Nature's products from Roswell has not been established but local history states that clay for pottery was being taken from the pits in the early sixteenth century. Since then, the clay (or gault as it is known locally) has been used for making bricks and for reinforcing the river banks to prevent flooding. Tugs and barges are still to be seen making their way across the pits, conveying clay to the main river. The particular type of clay found in Roswell is known as Kimeridge Clay, as distinct from the Oxford Clay that is found in lower levels. All round the edges of the water are to be found ice-scratched chalk boulders, presumably deposited by the supposed glacier.

The natural history of the area makes it a happy hunting ground, night and day, for the naturalist, for it abounds with countless varieties of insects, rodents and birds, including Kingfisher and Wild Duck.

The water itself has a healthy content of freshwater mussels and various types of plant life. Most species of fish are to be found, as in other stillwaters, but carp and tench seem to be absent. The eel population cannot be fully evaluated as statistics have not been kept until recently. However, the eels appear to be plentiful although the quality is inconsistent, perhaps due to the fact that the pits have an outlet to the main river. No doubt this outlet also accounts for the fluctuation of the water level and the unpredictable under-currents.

The fishing facilities are varied, providing the angler with depths from 3 to 14 feet, the banks alternating from absolute comfort on the edges of concrete paths to the angler's nightmare of sheer cliff faces. Like most established waters, the pitches have earned their own particular nicknames. We have the "Lagoon", a little haven set in a peaceful corner; and at the other extreme, the "Assault Course", any good commando's testing-ground! Then we have "Chapman's Corner", the "Railway Bridge Swim" and "Slipway Corner" to name a few more.

The fishing rights are held by the British Sugar Corporation (Ely), tickets costing £1 per year. Very few matches take place in the pits as the number of pitches is limited, the usual procedure being to hold B.S.C. (Ely) matches in the main river, part of which the Club tickets also cover. Anglers are allowed to use their own boats, enabling some of the more inaccessible swims to be

approached from a different direction. In the summer months, the use of boats gives one the impression of a pleasure-boating lake but in the winter one can go fishing for days without seeing another boat.

As a footnote, it should be pointed out that this water has two disadvantages for the night-fisher, apart from those provided by Nature's vegetation. The first is objects on the bed of the pits: coils of wire, angle-iron, bicycle components, live "ammo" and other articles dumped there by litterbugs. The other trouble to be contended with, though it has its humourous side, is the parties held in the yachting club's headquarters. These are lengthy affairs that last until the small hours of the morning. Coloured lights blaze across the water's surface and the music issuing from the loudspeakers makes concentration impossible. But, as relationships between anglers and yachtsmen can be said to be unusually good, these affairs are accepted in good part. It can honestly be said that no eels are caught on such occasions but it does not prevent determined Anguilla-hunters from pursuing their quarry.

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Comment: The Author is unduly modest about the statistics he and Rian Tingay have recorded for Roswell Pits. In all, details of 42 eels are now on record: 18 from 1966, 14 from 1967 and 10 from June and July, 1968.

Taking the 1967 and 1968 results, 7 of the eels were caught on worm baits and had an average (median) weight of 5 oz. These 7 eels came in 53 rod-hours, an average of 7.6 rod-hours per eel. None exceeded 1 lb.

Dead-baits accounted for the remaining 17 eels which had an average weight of just 1 lb. and a spread (IQR) of 13 oz. between quartiles of 1:8 and 0:11. These 17 eels came in 546 rod-hours, an average of 32 RH/E. Two of the eels were over 2 lb.

It is instructive to compare these results with those from some of our other waters. For example, comparing with Butler's (see p. 30) the eels taken on worms average about the same weight, but come about twice as fast in Roswell. This certainly supports the idea that, in numbers alone, the eels are plentiful in Roswell. On deadbaits, the Roswell eels average about 4 oz. better than the Butler's eels, and they are caught appreciably faster, too; but the spread of weights is narrow - the Roswell IQR is only about half that of the Butler's IQR, implying that there are proportionately more of the bigger eels in Butler's than in Roswell. It takes about half as long again to catch a 2 lb.+ eel at Roswell. The fact that the Butler's average is a little lower probably means that smaller dead-baits are sometimes used there. It is interesting to make further comparisons with the statistics for other waters from the 1967 Detail Sheets.

Nor should we omit to mention the fine 4½ pounder taken by Rian Tingay in July, 1966.

An extraordinary feature of the Roswell eels is that they seem to remain of about the same "fatness" as they grow bigger, whereas in all the other waters we have studied they get proportionately fatter the bigger they grow. Or, putting it another way, in most waters the eels "improve in condition" as they grow bigger, whereas in Roswell they remain about the same. Whether this is a real feature of the eels or only due to some peculiarity of the weighing and/or measuring of the Roswell eels remains to be seen; but if it is real, a possible explanation could be that bigger eels in Roswell do not find the search for food an easy one. - Editor.

HOW TO FISH BUTLER'S

by Terence Coulson

(A reprint of the handout issued for the August Bank Holiday trip)

Introduction

During 1967, members recorded 1,890 rod-hours and 47 eels at Butler's; up to and including the July reports, 1,060 RH and 44 eels have been recorded in 1968. The object of this paper is to summarise the experience represented by these 2,950 RH and 91 eels, drawing attention to any patterns which seem to emerge, as a guide to assist members to fish more effectively during the August Bank Holiday trip, 1968.

How To Choose Your Bait

Disregarding size, the Butler's eels are caught about 3 times more quickly on worms (about 15 RH/E) than on dead-baits (about 42 RH/E). However, the eels caught on worms run to a much smaller average size (median 0:5 - 0:6) than those caught on dead-baits (median about 0:12).

On experience to date, fishing with worms may be expected to yield one eel upwards of 2 lb. in weight in a total of about 30 eels caught i.e. about 438 RH per 2 lb.+ eel. Fishing with dead-baits, on the other hand, may be expected to yield 2 eels upwards of 2 lb. in a total of about 9 eels caught i.e. about 189 RH per 2 lb.+ eel. Obviously, dead-baits are much more effective than worms for the better eels at Butler's.

Results are still too limited to derive much guidance on the best size of dead-bait to choose. On 2 - 4" dead-baits, the median weight is 0:13 and the rate of catch 25 RH/E. On 4 - 6" dead-baits (in fact, only 4" dead-baits are involved in the data, so far) the median weight is 0:15 and the rate of catch 44 RH/E. The rates of catch for 1 lb.+ eels are about 56 RH/E with 2 - 4" baits and about 89 RH/E with 4 - 6" baits. Insofaras a valid conclusion can be drawn at this stage, the results suggest that baits below 4" should be preferred to baits above 4" in length.

Again, results are too limited to give firm guidance on the best species to choose for dead-baits, but the indications are that perch are to be preferred (176/8 = 22 RH/E). Rudd (183/5 = 37 RH/E) and roach (191/5 = 38 RH/E) are about equal second choice, while bleak (162/3 = 54 RH/E) is the only other species for which results have been reported this year. Dace and whole small eel have been used (14 RH each) without result. No eels have been caught on other baits, including freshwater fish steaks, eel steaks and kippers, in a total of 147 RH of use during 1967 and 1968.

When To Concentrate Your Effort

As on other waters, prospects differ greatly at different times. Combining the 1967 and 1968 results indicates that eels may be expected at a rate of about 200 RH/E during the day; 67 RH/E during twilight; and 21 RH/E at night. The 1968 results give further interesting guidance in that dusk (96/5 = 19 RH/E) seems to be very much better than dawn (148/1 = 148 RH/E).

Apart from two eels caught at about 08.30 hours, the remaining 42 eels

caught so far in 1968 all came between 21.00 and 06.00 hours; the rod-hours recorded on either side of these two times falls away, but is nevertheless very substantial for 3 - 4 hours on either side. Contrary to popular belief, there is no sign of any peaking of catches around dusk and dawn; the rate of catch rises to a maximum between 00.00 and 01.00 hours and then falls away again steadily.

During the August Bank Holiday, it may be anticipated that the period of best prospects will be extended to 19.00 - 07.00 hours; that the very best prospects will be during the middle hours of the night; and that this is therefore the period during which the maximum effort should be concentrated.

Like other waters, prospects at Butler's are better during "dark night periods" (18 RH/E) than "bright night periods" (35 RH/E) and we shall be entering a full moon period during the August Bank Holiday. However, we have no control over this and in any case during most of the nights (especially in the later parts) the moon will be down; whether this gives a relative improvement in prospects around dawn remains to be seen. If there is any appreciable cloud cover, the water may be expected to fish very much as during a dark night period.

Where To Fish

Detailed choice of swim is obviously a matter for personal preference and local knowledge of the water. However, the swim details on the 1968 Session Reports should, in principle, enable general guide-lines to be established. Unfortunately, results reported so far are not sufficiently extensive, nor representative enough, to permit very much to be said at this stage. Results on dead-baits suggest that areas upwards of 20 ft. in depth may be more productive (14 RH/E) than areas of 5 - 20 ft. (42 RH/E) but shallows up to 5 ft. in depth have not been fished at all this year. There are indications from some waters that the eels come right into the shallows at night to feed, and this would be worth investigating at Butler's - indeed, it is conceivable that some areas which appear to have been "fished out" at medium-to-deep water could be productive if fished in the shallows.

Results on worms this year suggest that prospects at medium distances of 4 - 15 yards are better (6 RH/E) than at greater distances of upwards of 15 yards (9 RH/E). Since there is a rough connection between depth and distance, this tends to support the above point, and again suggests trials at short ranges of up to 4 yards.

There is little choice in the nature of the bottom at Butler's unless one is prepared to hazard a bait on the dumps of loose bricks; and results so far do not suggest any marked difference in prospects as between snaggy and snag-free areas.

Conclusion

Of course, it is entirely possible that the best individual results might be obtained by a member fishing (say) kipper at great range and depth during the middle of the day! Indeed, it is possible that results during the August Bank Holiday may diverge widely from the patterns which have emerged so far, as summarised above. Nevertheless, the guide-lines indicated provide a rational approach for the member who wishes to improve his chances of getting good results. We know that anything is possible; but these notes indicate what is probable, and I hope they will help every member to get results a little better than would otherwise have been the case.

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EELS IN ESTUARIES

by David Marlborough

When, in one of our earlier questionnaires, I was asked what aspect of eeling I was going to concentrate on this year, I answered "eels in Essex creeks". Surprisingly, I've kept this resolve since Whitsun, and added the Dorset and Cheshire estuaries for good measure. I've been camping around and taken tackle with me.

I thought I would try and put my observations down on paper for other NAC men. When I suggested it, the Editor leaped at the suggestion like a hungry dog at an Angus steak! Now, I'd better warn you, gentle reader, that these are most unscientific surmises on my part: but I feel an attempt has to made to fix estuarine eeling into some sort of pattern, particularly as that pattern is wholly different from the patterns inherent in inland eeling. Nor shall I give a success story; my eels so far have been the sort that the dreaded Goodrum was so picturesquely naming while I was inventing new terms for a reel on the Wnit trip! My voice carries further, that's all!

First, why fish the "tidal"? Well, the numbers are there, certainly - mostly small eels, which we are told are mainly males. But there <u>are</u> bigger fish about: not all the females head upstream! Certainly, the Essex Blackwater produces two- and three-pounders quite regularly. The only reason they are not taken more regularly is that they are taken accidentally while after bass, stingray or flatties.

How do these big estuary-eel reports originate? A few may be mis-identified congers: but an experienced sea angler is unlikely to confude the two. Some may be returning silver eels, making their way back. For unlike the pundits, I believe silver eels <u>do</u> feed - at least, until they are finally ready to head westwards. The third source is, as I say, normal yellow female eels which have not gone up-river.

If, again like me, you are suspicious of the "prison water" theory, there is no inherent objection to the idea of big eels in estuaries: they are as likely to grow big there as anywhere else. Heaven knows, there is enough food for them: all sorts of molluscs, worms, crabs, shrimps, small fish - and in extreme abundance.

So one can fish for a big eel in categories two and three: still-hungry silvers, and lazy females.

The paramount factor in all tidal fishing is the tide, itself. Certainly, from June to August any other factor comes a very poor second, though probably (and here I'm guessing) night tides may prove better in the long run than daytime tides. This seems to be true of inshore conger - and bass, mullet and cod.

The best time of the tide seems to be slack low and the young flood tide, when the sea water is coming up the river mouth. The same pattern emerges on the Essex Blackwater, the Sussex Arun and the Chester Dee in the last two years, and similarly in Dorset, Suffolk and Somerset going back to 1953.

So tied are bites to a relatively few hours in the tidal cycle that one may fish almost wholly in vain during the rest of the time. One rod-hour at the right time is worth six or more, at a guess, outside it. Such a sharp difference rather lessens the value of simply adding up rod-hours to guage the

effectiveness of a given method. The calculation of rod-hours per eel is useful in freshwaters, where one expects bites to be spaced well out, with long hours in between. "Tidal" eel bites come crowded into perhaps four hours out of the twenty-four, and a simple totting-up of the hours put in between will falsely bias the record. I've put in 65 RH for 14 eels in the "tidal" this year; a lot of that was fishing right through the tidal cycles to determine which were the best periods. I would judge that two-thirds of those rod-hours were spent with not much more chance than if my bait had been on the bank.

Another freshwater practice which needs modification is that of tackle. I use light beachcasting gear: $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. test-curve rod, 15 lb. BS monofil or Terylene, on a multiplier (Penn Surfmaster 150M). The terminal tackle is a sea leger: clip-swivel for the lead, stopped by a normal swivel 3 ft. from the hook.

There are several reasons for this gear: (a) I prefer multipliers for playing heavy fish; and (b) many estuaries need 2 or 3 oz. of lead to hold in the tide, at a fishing range of 30 to 70 yards: a multiplier casts this much better than a fixed-spool.

This modifies tactics, and the bite. I fish with the rod upright in a rest, taking it down and winding up slack when the first knock comes. If the eel wants line, I can feed it; but usually I belt it on the second knock. I've not needed a trace: they've nearly all been lip-hooked on long-shanked hooks this year, even with fish baits e.g. kipper.

Estuary conditions (fast tides etc.) make the normal free-line dead-bait and run-pause-run-wallop sequence of biting quite out of the question. Beach-casting rigs are hence no disadvantage, especially as estuary eels are quite greedy, and in a fast tide a little drag seems of no account to them. If you had to let an eel run on a dead-bait, you could still do it: using a drum-braked multiplier such as an ABU 6000 or Intrepid Seastreak.

No doubt, there is some of this style which we could use in freshwater, especially with (say) a paternostered or legered live-bait. I'm all for varying our styles, especially as we may be getting into a rut with our legered dead-baits - a method described and perfected in detail in 1952!

A word on baits, which no doubt helps to explain why my "tidals" are lip-hooked: most of them are taken on worms. Surprisingly, lobs seem to do as well as locally-gathered lug - they may even be better than lug. Put in salt water, lobs shrivel and become more durable to the attentions of crabs, which are also most active around slack tides.

Like all worm baits, though, you pick up small eels on them, which is why I tried kipper slivers: and also got small eels. But kipper is taken well and is moderately crab-proof; and it can be used in big chunks to evade small eels. Peeler crab may be the answer for the better specimens, or whole dead-baits. The field is wide open still, and the main step will be to find a bait capable of selecting the better eels, remaining crab-proof, and yet not needing to be gorged to be struck.

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Notable Eels: HERTFORDSHIRE

LOCATION	CLASS	WEIGHT	LENGTH	GIRTH	DATE	TIME	BAIT	CAPTOR	SOURCE
R. Beane, Hertford	1.	5:1			Sep 62		Lobworm	G.Wright	AT 12.10.62, p. 17
Tring Reservoir	2.1	6:8	45½		Sep 63	dusk	Worm	G.Worman	AT 4.10.63, p. 1
Northmet Pit, Cheshunt	2.2	6:0	44		18 Jun 61	21.30	Gudgeon db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:11½			10 Jul 61	20.00	Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:8	43		19 Jun 61			A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:2			9 Aug 65	23.10	Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:13			22 Aug 59	12.30	Mouse	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:12			22 Sep 60			A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:8½			12 Sep 61		Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:6			12 Jul 61	21.25	Sparrow	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:5			11 Aug 65	22.35	Bleak db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:5	38		12 Jul 61	22.30	Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
Dean's Farm Pond, Hertford	2.2	7:2			17 Sep 60	00.30	Bleak db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		6:3	45¾		21 Jun 60	20.30	Bleak db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
Wilstone Reservoir, Tring	2.	5:4			12 Aug 58	11.30	Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:4			58	day	Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
West Hyde Lake, Rickmansworth	2.	5:10			18 Oct 67	22.30	Lob + paste	F.Wooton	AT 26.10.67, p. 8
		4:4¾			Jul 55		Worm	A.Dimmock	(AT 22.7.55, p. 12 (E:H.T.C.T.
R. Lea Navigation Canal	2.3	7:1	51	12½	Feb 54		Dace db	J.H.Baker	AT 25.2.54, p. 2
		5:2			23 Aug 59		Roach	J.Smith	A.J.Sutton
		4:12			23 Aug 59		Bleak steak	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:12			23 Aug 59		Bleak db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:12			16 Sep 66		Roach steak	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:8			25 Aug 59		Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:7½			28 Aug 59		Gudgeon db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:7½	41	7½	15 Sep 66		Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:7	40	7⅞	21 Sep 66		Bleak tail	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:7	41	8⅛	28 Sep 66		Gudgeon db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton

(Herts., contd.)

R. Lea Navigation Canal (contd.)	2.3	4:6			18 Jun 62		Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:6			23 Jun 62		Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:6	39½		24 Jun 62			A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:6	41	7 1/32	28 Sep 66		Roach tail	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:5	40	7 3/8	9 Aug 66		Bleak tail	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:5	43	7	15 Sep 66		Gudgeon lb	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		4:3	35 7/8	8 3/8	21 Jul 68		Bleak db	A.Wilkie	A.Wilkie
		4:2½			23 Aug 59		Mouse	J.Smith	A.J.Sutton
		4:1			23 Aug 59		Mouse	J.Smith	A.J.Sutton
		4:1			7 Oct 66		Gudgeon db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton

Notable Eels: HUNTINGDONSHIRE

R. Gt. Ouse, Offord	1.	5:11½	41		17 Jun 61			A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:11	42		23 Jun 61		Mouse	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:10			10 Jul 59	23.30	Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:10			24 Jul 59	22.00	Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:10			25 Jul 59	22.00	Roach db	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:7	43		24 Jun 61			A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:1			9 Oct 61	12.30	Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
		5:1			8 Aug 62	22.00	Lobworm	A.J.Sutton	A.J.Sutton
St. Ives' Staunch		7:0			1869				(E:H.T.C.T. quoting (Buckland (1873) & ("Land & Water".
Hemingford Grey Mills		ca 6:0 (two)			1869				- ditto -
Butler's Pit, Old Fletton	2.1	5:0	37½	9 1/8	15 Jul 67	02.15	Bleak db	D.Goodrum	D.Goodrum
		4:14	38½	8 7/8	2 Sep 67	08.30	Bleak db	D.Goodrum	D.Goodrum
		4:9	38	9	26 Aug 66	02.05	Roach db	S.Hill	S.Hill

CORRESPONDENCE

EFFECTS OF ROTENONE

From A Correspondent: This year, with the full support of the River Authority, we poisoned a water which we intend to turn into a carp fishery. The operation had to be carried out in utmost secrecy, with only four of our Group and the River Authority Fisheries Officer and assistant being present. It was done at night in late May on a warm evening with the water temperature at 68°F. It is a shallow lake of some 4 acres in size. We used a lethal dose of rotenone which amounted to 4 gal. liquid derris (5% active rotenone in pine oil). This was mixed with 4 gal. of water, making 8 gal. in all, and poured off the back of an outboard which mixed it in to the water.

Very few fish died straightaway but although the lake had been netted thoroughly, many died later. However, nothing really happened until about midnight, 2 hours after introduction, when we noticed thousands of eels dying and many more charging about the surface. Large eels died and appeared more vulnerable than small fellows. The small eels quite uncannily made their way to the edge of the pit, with their heads out of the water and swimming like snakes. In their thousands, they threw themselves upon the bank and attempted to wriggle out of the water. Had it not been a dry period, I am sure many of them would have made it. This was still going on some 12 hours later when the rest of the fish were dead and the pit had suffered a terrible slaughter.

The pit has a drain on two sides and it was without exception that the eels headed towards these sides. Coincidence perhaps? - I don't know. But it occurred to me that if the eels could behave thus under these conditions, there might be a time when they would do this of their own free will and without anywhere near such difficulty - say, on a very wet night. I am convinced that had this night been very wet, we would have seen large numbers of them make it into this drain.

** We are indebted to our Correspondent for this first-hand account, which is of considerable interest to us in several ways, and for permission to publish it. This permission was given on condition that clues to the whereabouts of the water were removed, because of the prejudice which exists against the type of operation described. We entirely understand the reasons for this condition, which will remain with us until the requirements of proper fishery management are much more widely appreciated. There is no doubt that there are very many potentially good fisheries which are simply overstocked or stocked with species which are in direct competition with one another - leading to "stunting" - or stocked with fish of indifferent strains and unwanted or unsuitable species. There is only one way to treat such cases, and our Correspondent's Group has shown the courage, enlightenment and resolve to do it.