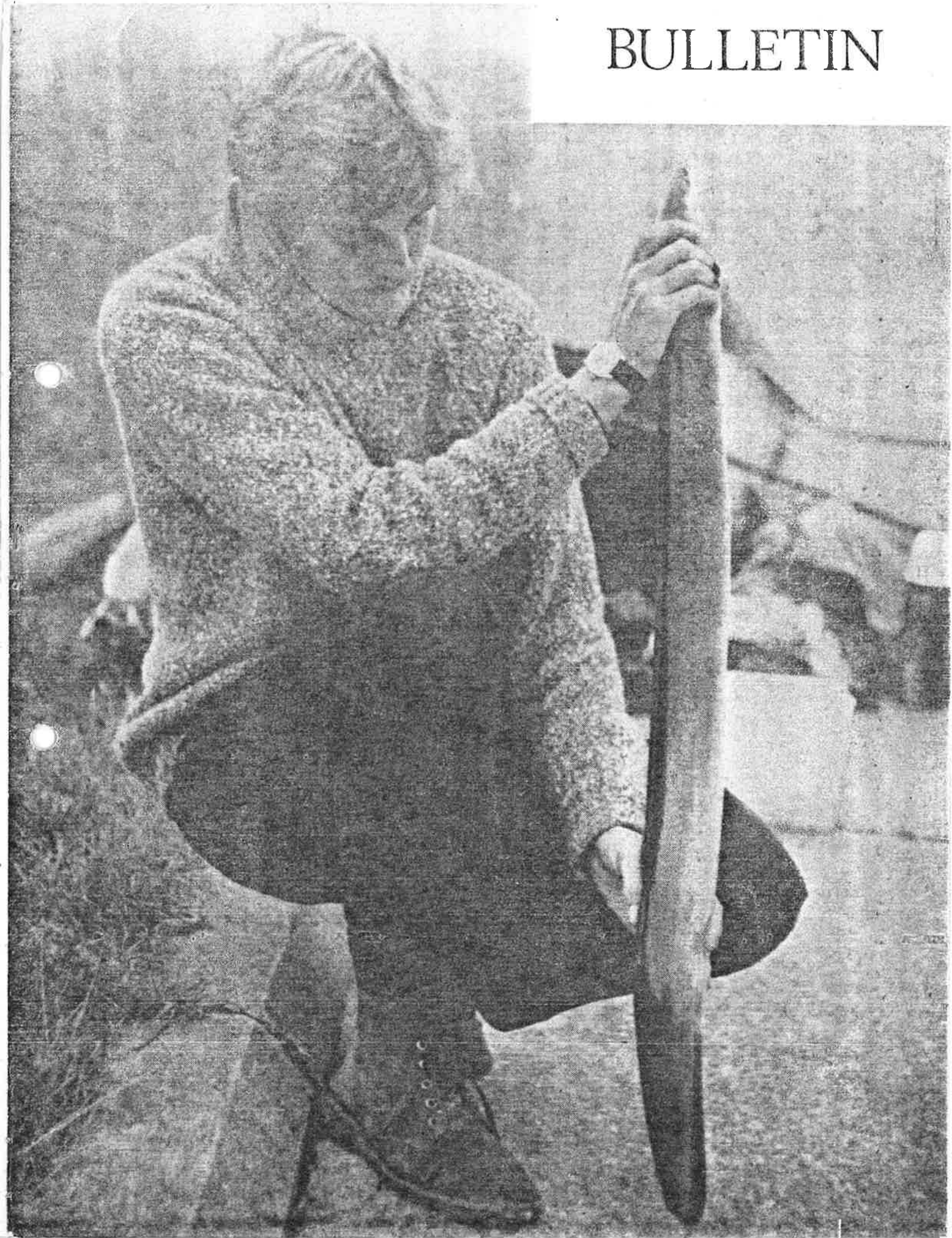


NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BULLETIN



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VOLUME 23

NUMBER 6

DECEMBER 1986

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David P. Walker

EDITOR

EDITORIAL

I hope this Bulletin finds you all fit and well and still enjoying or indeed recovering from the holiday festivities, you naughty little eel anglers.

It's been a strange year for the Club, but I hope a rewarding one. Lets see if we can't ALL make it an even more rewarding year in 1987 with loads of effort and plenty of big eels on the bank for every member. All our present membership is capable of contributing to the well being of the Club in what-ever small way is required to help push us up towards former glories. A healthy and vibrant Bulletin is the obvious start to build on, so get those xmas pressy pens scribbling and send me an article or two and maybe you won't get bored to death my Old Sidley and Mouth of the South Me during 87!

Now we've had the nice bit I'll get on to the strong bit for this edition:-

Our title is The National Anguilla Club - Eel Angling Specialists . Yes? all agreed? Now my dictionary defines a "specialist" as "one who devotes himself to a particular branch of a subject". My understanding of this definition as applied to us, is that our subject is angling, and our branch of that subject is eel fishing. Still all agreed at this stage, I hope?

Now if we accept that one has to be a "specialist" to be a member of the National Anguilla Club then we have to ask ourselves if we are indeed devoting enough time and effort to our chosen speciality to warrant membership of an organisation for Eel Angling Specialists?

I would suggest that all of us are not!!

We have two excellant new members in the shape of my mates Tom Riley and John Pearce, and I sincerely hope that some of the older members do not allow them to become disheartened and discouraged by showing a distinct lack of effort and enthusiasm. For make no mistake these two lads will be very quick to show some of our present membership just what can be achieved with a little effort and enthusiasm. I warn you all, don't let them down and don't let the Club down this coming season. Tom and John will prove this year that they are very worthy of the label "Eel Angling Specialists", will YOU do the same in 1987?????

I hope I have made my point clear already, but if not then I suggest you read the letter in this edition from the Clubs leading member (and I choose my words very carefully) who echoes my feelings very well and indeed expresses the point perhaps better than I have.

One last comment for now on this subject. At a recent PAC meeting I was talking to a very well known angler who commented that he thought the only qualification for membership of the Anguilla Club was "proof that you had given up actually catching eels".!!!!!!!

Once again this edition is written by only a handful of members. Are the rest of you illiterate? because it would appear so from the amount of material forthcoming. It's lucky that I saved some of Johns articles, just in case. As John points out in his letter, there was enough of interest in the last couple of Bulletins to have kept a

flood of comments going only a few years ago. Why do we not have the pleasure of YOUR thoughts and views on ideas and theories put forward within these pages, pages that belong to YOU as much as the next member.

Or are you of the opinion that you know it all? If so, for Gods sake write and tell it all to me as I certainly don't! Come on lads you must have something to say about the last few Bulletins they were crammed full of juicy topics for discussion.

I must thank Brian for his superb diagrams in this edition and to do justice to them I decided to delay sending out the Bulletin until I had made a 120 mile round trip to use a good photocopier. To try and reproduce those excellent drawings on the Clubs equipment would have only led to your Editor having a nervous breakdown. The copier and the paper was kindly allowed our use by Mr Ron Kentfield (a non-angler) of Modern Heating Merchants in Rushden, Northants, and I thank Ron for his generous offer. You will notice that "Tatty 'at" Sidley has crept into the end of Brians written part, and as a special New Year bonus I thought I would use this photo of "Tatty 'at" as a special Guess the Weight competition.

So send your entries to me and win a tackle prize that I have donated.

Only rules of the competition are that "Tatty 'at" can't enter and those entries that are accompanied by a Bulletin article stand more chance of winning in the event of a tie. Good guessing and writting. (For those of you who want to cheat Johns phone number is 021 777 9802**!).

Thanks must go to Mark Davies for the information he supplied on Mr Bird and his commercial eel netting business. Mark obtained the literature after seeing an advert in the Shooting Times, Mark also comments in his letter to me that "It should surely arouse some comment".

Lets hope it does.

I thought that I would leave you with some of my thoughts for the New Year.

What do you think about the following?

Thought....With only 20 members do we need so many Club officers ? and such a cumbersome thing as a full set of rules and a constitution ?

Thought....Have you paid your subs yet?????????????

Thought....Did you take any photos of eels last year and did you send me a copy for the Clubs display boards?

Thought....If our poorest member John Sidley can donate 500 envelopes to the Club, where does that leave YOU?

Thought....Have you paid your subs yet?????????????????

Thought....The latest BEAC mag is 50 pages and Mick Bowles has material coming out of his ears for the next one, a lucky man indeed, I say. Just think 50 pages of members and eels, eels, and more eels!!!!

Thought....An eel is a long thin fish, and you have to go fishing to catch them, comprensa?

Thought....Have you paid your subs yet?????????????????????

A-Ha thought you'd get rid of me that easily didn't you. No such luck!

Thought....If John Sidley didn't write any more articles would we ever see another Bulletin?

Thought....An ideal New Year present for your Editor would be a few reams of paper!

Thought....John "Tatty 'at" Sidley was 40 years old on 1st Dec, so theres hope for us younger eel anglers yet!

Thought....HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBS YET??

Thats all folks.....Happy New Year everyone.....See you all in 1987.....

DPW EDITOR

CHAIRMANS PAGE

I shall keep things brief for the time being. Dave's been nagging me for this page again so that he can get on with the Bulletin. (So right! ED.)

It was good to see everyone at the AGM, and despite there being a relatively small number compared to recent years, there was plenty of input from everybody there.

As far as the 25th year goes, we now have an organising committee of Brian and Dave, and anyone else they care to enlist, so be warned! We have a fair idea of what we hopefully would like to do, but the hard work has barely started.

I hear from Dave that our membership has grown even since the AGM. I heartily welcome our new members and hope the situation continues.

Dave will hopefully get this Bulletin to you all before Christmas (No such luck. ED.) so I shall just take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Make someone happy and write something for the Bulletin, and get your subs paid. (Terry wrote that sentance, honest lads. ED.)

Terry Jefferson
Chairman

~~~~~

As a matter of interest the following members HAVE NOT paid their 1987 subs, YET!!

- Andy Lister
- Bob Layland...naughty General Secretary!!
- Mark Davies...naughty,naughty Ex Chairman!!!
- Dave Taylor
- Pete Stickland
- Phil Smith

- Kev Stephenson
- John Sidley
- John Mitchell
- &
- Eric "broken car" Bushell.

EDITORS INFORMATION SERVICE.....

You should all have recieved your Specialist Angler with the chub painting on the front by now. If not please let me know right away.

Kev Stephenson informs me that Paul Gustafson will NOT be doing the eel paper at the Conference this year as he will be abroad at the time. Whilst discussing this point Kev asked if I would be willing to do the paper!!!!!! Well I can tell you that was quite some shock. Even I was lost for some thing to say!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Now you know how to shut me up!

On the subject of our Kev, he has moved and here is his new address is:-

Kev Stephenson  
White Rose Cottage  
3 Church Lane  
Asfordby  
Melton Mowbray  
Leics, LE 12

Tel. 0664 812065

Kev tells me that the cottage is only a stones through from the river Eye, so I hope we don't lose Kev to all those big chub and roach that live in that delightful little river. One tip for you Kev, check out Asfordby Angling Club, you may be pleasantly surprized old mate.

Please remember that your subs are £5.00 Anguilla Club & £8.50 NASA. If you don't pay by the 30th January 1987 you have to pay a rejoining fee of £1.00 extra to NASA and you may also consider yourself to have left the Anguilla Club and will have to reapply for membership. You have been warned!

Our other new members are as follows:-

(127) Mr Eric Bushell 56 Chesterton St. Garston Liverpool 19 8LB 051-427-7915

(128) Mr Tom Riley 4 Penrose Court. Grovehill Hemel Hempstead Herts  
0442-66821

(129) Mr John Pearce 37 Avon Square. Grovehill Hemel Hempstead Herts HP2 6DZ  
0442-43593

Give these lads a good old Anguilla Club welcome and write a few lines to them to make them feel at home and part of the greatest specimen group of all time.

I will produce a full new membership list during the latter half of January and so if you don't pay your subs then this will be the last bit of "stuff" you get from the Anguilla Club. Please let me have any other changes of address ect as soon as possible especially you Mr General Secretary, who hopefully has moved by now? Eh Bob!

A little about our new members from me now:-

Tom and John were introduced to me by the dreaded Dylan "mines a pint" Wrathall at a NASA Chiltern Region (The Wonder Region) meeting. They are a team who fish very well together for all sorts of species and recently a great deal for eels. Tom "I'm not really going bald" Riley and John "I'm not really a cradle snatcher" Pearce will, I'm sure prove to be a great couple of members, but I'll leave them to tell you about how they came to get involved in eel fishing. Thats dropped you both in it hasn't it lads!

Eric Bushell has phoned me a couple of times and seems a really nice bloke. He was, for his sins, persuaded to join by that great recruiting officer Brian "back on the committee again" Crawford, whilst they were both fishing Colemere last year. Eric recently managed to smack up his car but is now back on the road and raring to go. Talking on the phone he mentioned that he has done a fair amount of piking on the Dee over the years, so there is something to write to him about Mark and Ernie!!

Mentioning Brian reminds me that our illustrious new President has promised not to be a naughty boy next time and will indeed write a Presidents Page, if only I can make sense of his writting (or is it my spelling??).

I thought that Steve "deepocket" Griffiths was going to join. You lads in Peterbro' need to get your blow torches out and extract some hard earned cash from our Steve! Come to think of it none of you lot have paid either so get your fingers out!!!!

OK lads I think I've gone on long enough this time so I will at last shut up.

.....  
.....  
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Re the mag, I was a bit upset to read that Terry is knocking the S.R. Forms on the head as I've put a hell of a lot of effort into filling out those forms on every bloody trip out, yet because of lack of interest by the other members its not worth him carrying on with them. What is the matter with the NAC does it want to die a death? (John did over 125 sessions this past year! ED.)

Apart from AJS, Terrys bit and yourself, the mag is full of nothing Dave, believe me old mate the NAC is becoming a joke.

I feel very sad indeed when I hear other people taking the piss out of the Club. When I was younger the Anguilla Club was the cream and ruled the eel angling world, but not today Dave. You and I, plus a couple of other members have written pieces that could have commented on for bloody seasons, but nothing is coming through. You cannot expect me or you or the other few people to keep writing for ever, for one, we will dry up and then only repeat ourselves, apart from people getting bored with us.

NO it's about time some members of the NAC either put more effort into the Bulletin as well as their fishing, if not then it is best for them to leave the Anguilla Club as at present they are only holding it back. They know who they are and they know that when they do put anything in the mag it is only to knock another member or to talk a load of crap. Strong words, I know, but I feel very strongly indeed about the way the Club, in my view, is going downhill. As I said the Anguilla Club was the real cream of the big fish world only a few years ago. Its about time it climbed the ladder again, and that can only be achieved if every member puts in 100% more effort into their eeling and the Bulletin. True Dave? You can even print this letter in the mag, for as Ive said it really saddens me to see the Club fall by the wayside. And this a Club I have held great respect for, a Club that I longed to join, a Club that I should be very proud to be a member of, full of anglers who I longed to meet and chat with about our surpussed favourite fish. But at the moment I am a very sad eel angler, cheer me up.

I have long been very interested in the use of various attractors and appetite stimulators in fishing. It all probably started in the 1960's when I read of anglers using pilchard oil soaked in cotton wool inside plastic hair curlers and the whole issue tied onto the business end of ones line.

In the early 1970's, I graduated from the University of Sussex with a degree in chemistry and became a science teacher. This gave me the background and facilities to further my investigations in attractors and appetite stimulators.

Attractors are defined as additives that will induce various fish species to a particular position where perhaps they will wish to feed. Appetite stimulators are defined as additives that induce various fish species to feed on a particular food item or items. For example, the smell from an open fish and chip shop acts as both an attractor and appetite stimulator.

The advantages of groundbaiting and pre-baiting are well known and the methods described here can be used to compliment these techniques or replace them.

I first started writing about these methods as described here in about 1974 and the technique was mentioned in my first book on eels and eel fishing - 'CATCHMORE EELS' in 1975. Now unfortunately, the book is out of print but my new book 'FISHING FOR BIG EELS' fully develops the concept of this area of attractants and stimulators.

The diagrams (Figs 1, 2 and 3) illustrate several options of using the basic swimfeeder rig (Fig 1). This basic rig uses a round-ended, block-end feeder with the lead removed. Various sizes can be used. Line is threaded through both ends in the middle of the caps to give it balance. Beads are then inserted on the line after the swimfeeder is packed with cotton wool or absorbant foam. Loops are then tied at both ends. |

sometimes put half-inch polystyrene balls under one cap to give me a floating feeder for surface, sub-surface or mid-water rigs as shown. A problem when used for eel fishing is that sometimes the 'tail' of line gets wrapped round the eel and requires resetting up, but this is no hassle if it sorts out the bigger eels - which it often does. The bolt-rig as in Fig 4 can be used with or without the (bolt) swivel on if required to give very free-running bites. This rig in fact can be cast very long distances.

I normally store my swimfeeders in screwtop coffee jars, filled and labelled clearly, with various additives ranging from 'ACE' worm extract, (used by me to capture a fine eel of 4lb 8oz in April and by John Sidley in the capture of several of his 14 eels over 4lb this season) to assorted fruity flavours for carp, tench and barbel fishing, fish flavours, clam, freshwater mussel, crayfish, sweetcorn, hemp, luncheon meat, squid, smelt, pilchard oil (emulsified) etc. I have found that a rod fished using this technique will generally outfish a rod using just a plain bait.

The swimfeeder could of course be packed instead with chopped worms, maggots, fish pieces, squid, luncheon meat, casters, maggots, sweetcorn, etc., if required, with the respective additives also added possibly. I have had success with this method with most species of fish. Early in September I had my first double figure pike using the sub-surface rig. In August, I was on a camping holiday in Tenby, South-West Wales and had a day out deep-sea fishing on the 'Girl Eileen' skippered by Phil Hoyland. There were twelve anglers on the boat, the usual mixture of holiday makers and locals, several with their own deep-sea rods, reels, etc. I took pot luck on what tackle was on board, which was not too bad really. We were out for about eight hours fishing a selection of marks. It was not a particularly fruitful day as our total catch was only 5 rays and 7 dogfish, plus a bucket of mackerel. I tied a swimfeeder packed with cotton wool which had been soaked in various fish additives, to my weight so that it would send out an attractive stream downtide of the boat.

My catch was 2 of the 5 rays and 2 of the 7 dogfish. Two young anglers fishing by me on the stern of the boat so that their baits were presented near my attractor, accounted for most of the other fish. Luke Downs of Gloucester had 1 ray and 1 dogfish and Antony Lewis of Bushey, Herts, had 2 rays and a couple of dogfish. The other nine anglers on the boat who's baits were not near mine were either fishless or just had a single dogfish. Coincidence? I think not. Why dont you try the method to see if it works. It may result in that very 'special' fish.

Tight Lines.

Note: 'Fishing For Big Eels' is published by Big E Publications of 29 Canonbie Lea, Madeley, Telford. Shropshire. TF7 5RL. Price £7.00 inclusive of postage. The 2nd edition of the book was reprinted during the summer of 1986. Send a S.A.E. to the above address, for full details of the book and John Sidley's book 'Successful Eel Angling' (£6.00 inc. postage)

Brian Crawford

September 1986

GUESS  
THE  
WEIGHT?



OFF - BOTTOM SWIMFEEDER RIG FIG 2

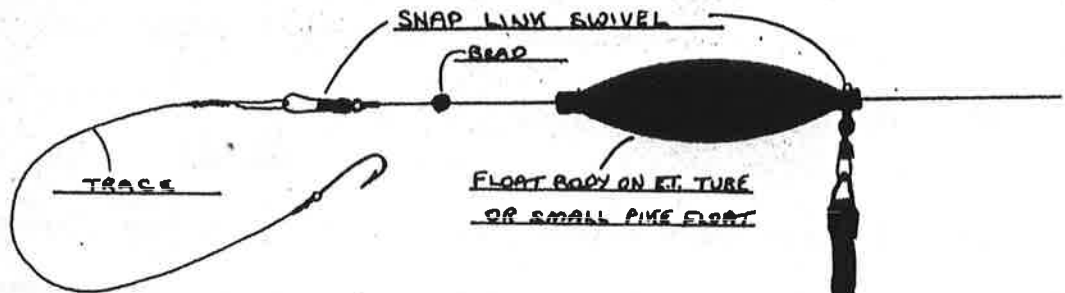
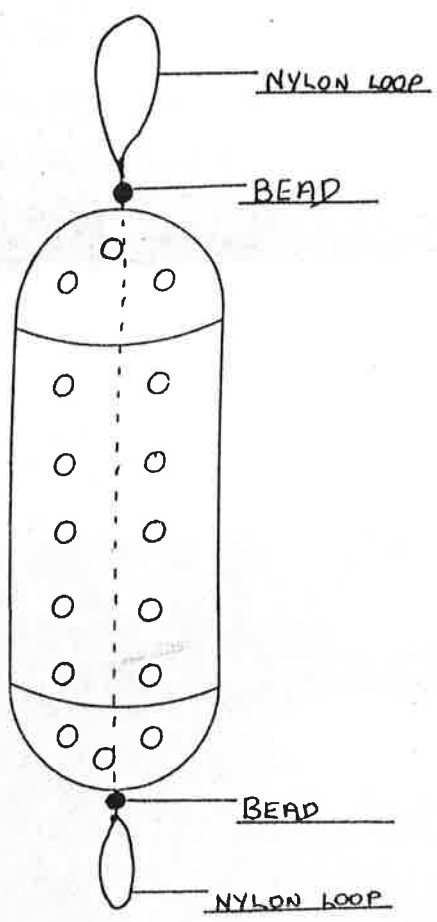
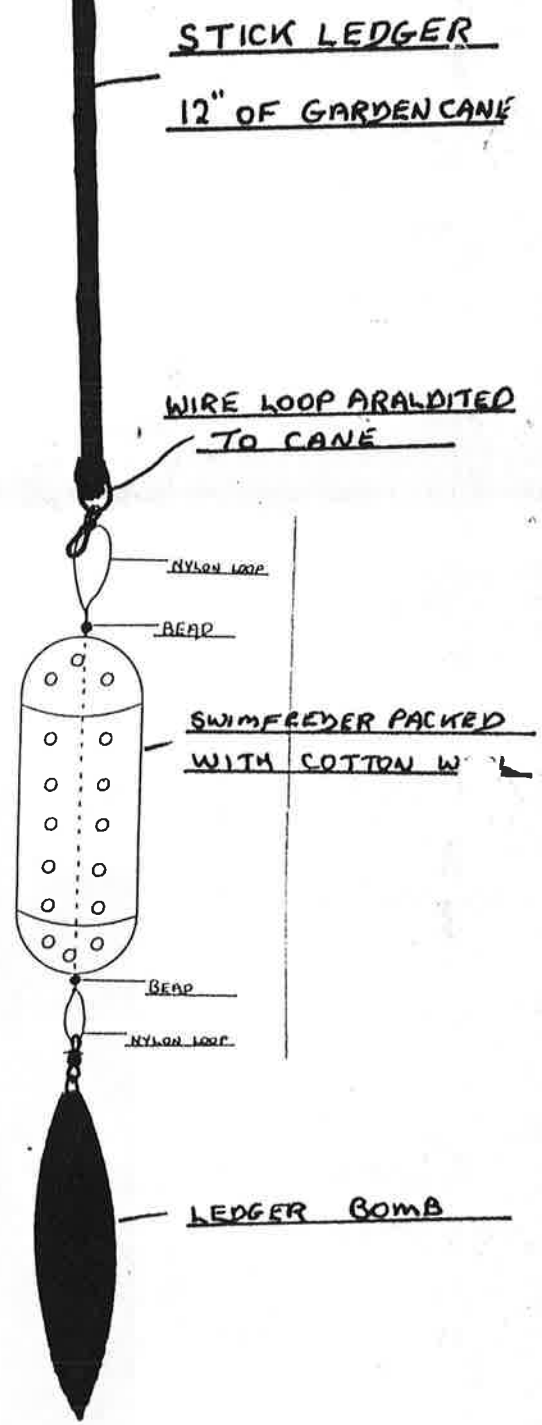


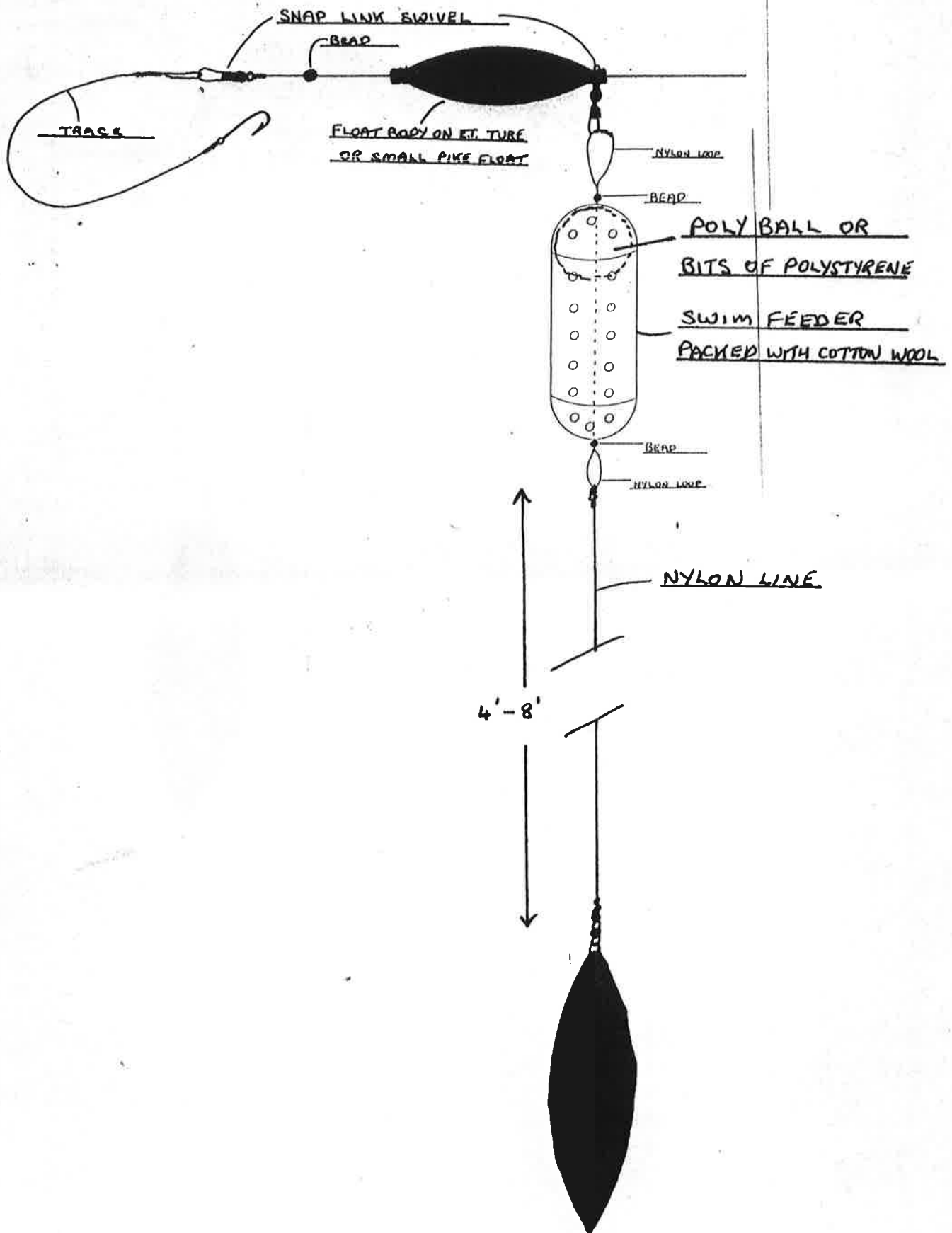
FIG 1  
BASIC SWIMFEEDER ARRANGEMENT



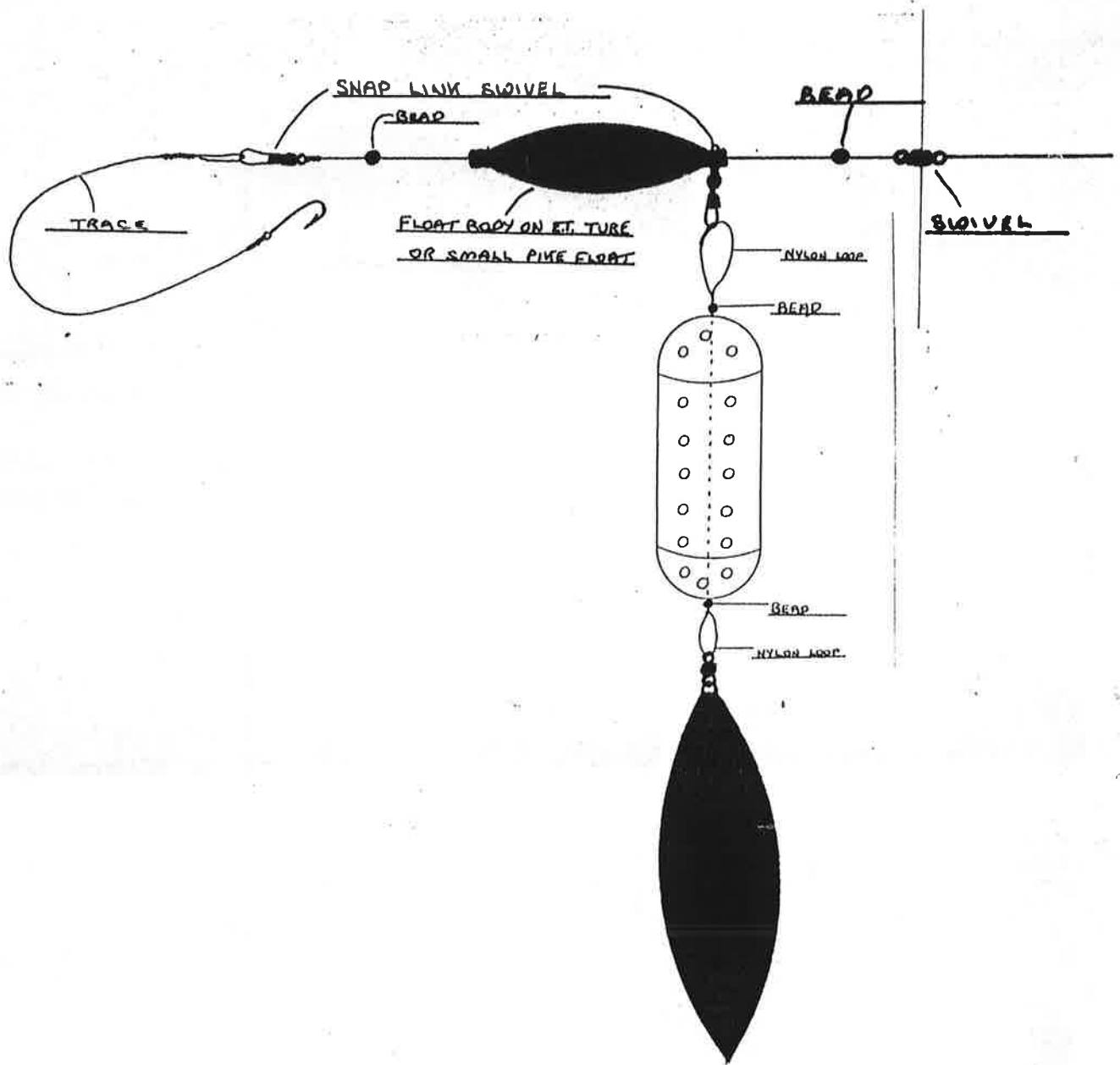
(LEAD STRIP REMOVED)  
(PACKED WITH COTTON WOOL OR FOAM)



SUB-SURFACE OR MID-WATER SWIMFEEDER RIG - FIG 3



BOLT - RIG USING SWIMFEEDER FIG 4



SPRING 86/87

P. D. BIRD,

COMMERCIAL EEL FISHING EQUIPMENT

Catalogue and Price List.

51 Allestree Drive,  
GRIMSBY,  
South Humberside. DN33 3DX

TeL. 0472 825347

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SALE:

OWNERSHIP: THE TITLE OF OWNERSHIP of goods remains with P. D. Bird, and for which a deposit may have been paid, and does not pass to the customer placing the order until FULL SETTLEMENT HAS BEEN RECEIVED by P. D. BIRD.

DEFECTIVE GOODS: Customers should inspect goods purchased. If found to be defective, goods must be returned within a maximum of 10 days from invoice date and on receipt will be replaced or credited according to customers wishes, providing GOODS ARE RETURNED IN UNUSED CONDITION AND AS PURCHASED.

EVERY EFFORT IS TAKEN TO ENSURE ALL GOODS ARE OF THE VERY HIGHEST QUALITY.

SETTLEMENT:

1. Payment is advance by Cheque.
2. C.O.D. Payment via Post Office, Maximum value of goods £350 (including VAT) weight not exceed 22½ K.G. per single delivery.
3. Agreed settlement terms and Prices for large orders.

DELIVERY:

1. Orders exceeding £100 will be charged £1.50 for every £100 of order, Fractions of £50. to be rounded up to £100 and below £49 down to nearest £100
2. Small Orders - A charge of £2.50 per order to cover postage and packing will be added to all orders of less than £100, unless the order is under £25 when actual postage will be charged.

COMMERCIAL 3 TRAP:

GREEN NYLON No. 4Z 7 Stainless Steel rings.

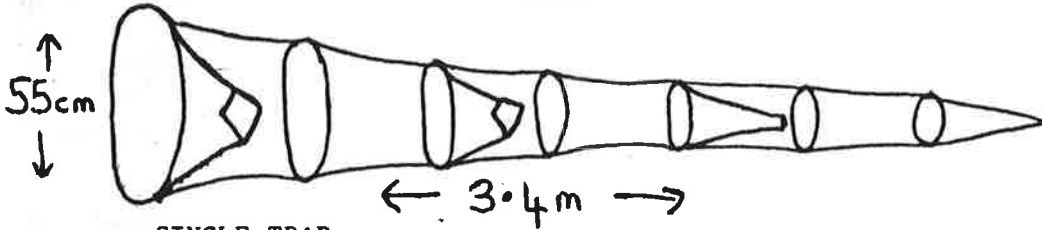
MESH SIZES:

| 1st Section | 2nd Section | 3rd Section |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 17 mm       | 14 mm       | 11 mm       |

TOTAL LENGTH OF NET - 3.4 metre

FRONT RING DIAMETER - 55 cm.

COD END CAPACITY - 45 kg.



- |                                               |      |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| SINGLE TRAP                                   | 1000 |
| DOUBLE TRAP WITH 6 METRE LEADER               | 1001 |
| PER SINGLE TRAP WITH 4 METRE WINGS AND FUNNEL | 1002 |

STANDARD 3 TRAP

GREEN NYLON No. 32 5 Stainless Steel reings.

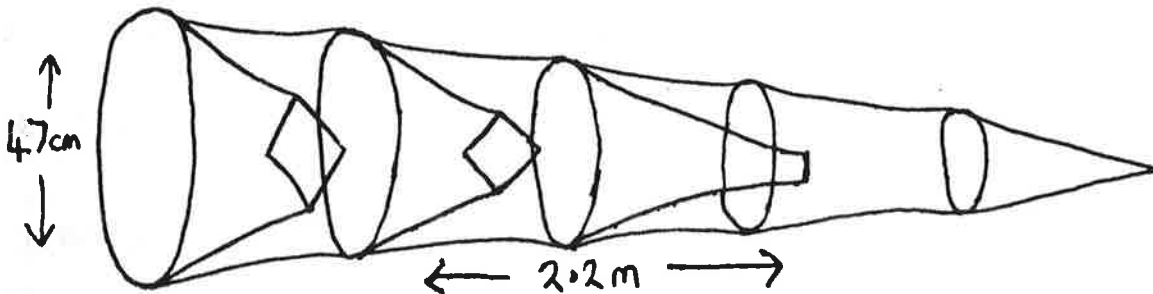
MESH SIZES:

| 1st Section | 2nd Section | 3rd Section |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 17 mm       | 14 mm       | 11 mm       |

TOTAL LENGTH OF NET - 2.2 metres

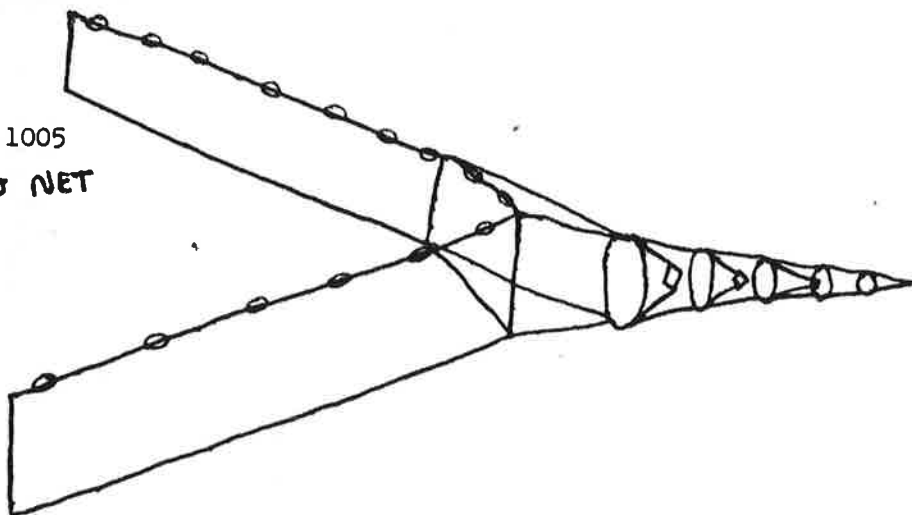
FRONT RING DIAMETER - 47 cm.

COD END CAPACITY - 35 Kg.



- |                                               |      |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| SINGLE TRAP                                   | 1003 |
| DOUBLE TRAP WITH 5 METRE LEADER               | 1004 |
| PER SINGLE TRAP WITH 4 METRE WINGS AND FUNNEL | 1005 |

1005  
WING NET



ECONOMY 2 TRAP

GREEN NYLON n0.32 4 Stainless Steel rings.

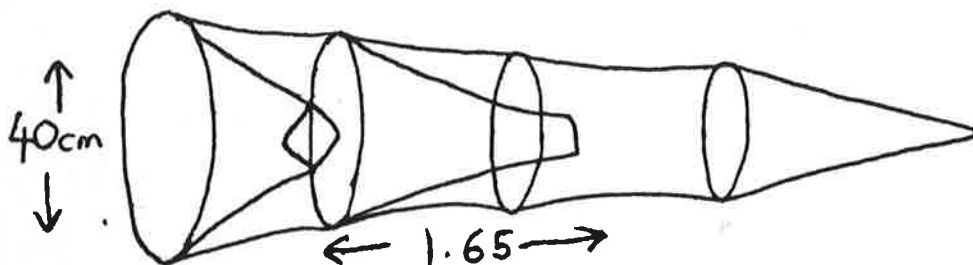
MESH SIZES:

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1st Section | 2nd Section |
| 14 mm       | 11 mm       |

TOTAL LENGTH OF NET - 1.65 metres

FRONT RING DIAMETER - 40 cm.

COD END CAPACITY - 30 kg.



|                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| SINGLE TRAP                     | 1006 |
| DOUBLE TRAP WITH 5 METRE LEADER | 1007 |

NOTES ON NETS:

ANY VARIATION OF FYKE NET CAN BE MADE TO CUSTOMERS REQUIREMENTS. PRICES NEGOTIABLE. THE WORKMANSHIP OF ALL THESE NETS IS OF A VERY HIGH STANDARD AND THEY ARE MOST COMPETITIVELY PRICED.

COMMERCIAL - SIMPLY THE BEST - VERY EFFECTIVE DESIGN. WILL CATCH BREEM, PIKE, TENCH ETC. AS WELL AS EELS

STANDARD - NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS THE COMMERCIAL BECAUSE OF SHORTENED CHAMBER LENGTHS BETWEEN TRAPS. HOWEVER, REPRESENTS GOOD VALUE.

ECONOMY - THESE NETS ALTHOUGH RELATIVELY CHEAP CAN STILL TAKE GOOD CATCHES.

EEL CARRYING BAGS:

Made of Strong 62 Netting, complete with drawcord.

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| 1 m. length   | 1008 |
| 1.3 m. Length | 1009 |

LAAGERS - FOR HOLDING LIVE EELS

Strong 6Z Knottles Green Netting

Mounted on 3 Stainless Steel rings.

LENGTH - 2 m. Capacity Approx. 50 lbs.

Small Ref. No. 1010

Large 6Z Knottles Green Netting

Mounted on 4 Stainless Steel rings

Length 3.3m Capacity Approx. 100 lbs.

Large Ref. No. 1011

REPAIR TWINE No.8 250 g. per spool 1012

NETTING NEEDLES 1013

HELLY HANSEN CHEST WADERS 1014

BARBOUR - GAMEFAIR JACKET 1015

BARBOUR - SLOWAY ZIPPER 1016

If there is anything connected with Eel Fishing which you can not obtain in this catalogue please do not hesitate to enquire and I will do my utmost to accommodate your requests.

Yours faithfully,

*P. D. Bird*

P.D. BIRD.

PRICE LIST

SPRING 86/87

P. D. BIRD,  
51 Allestree,  
Scartho,  
GRIMSBY

South Humberside. DN33 3DX

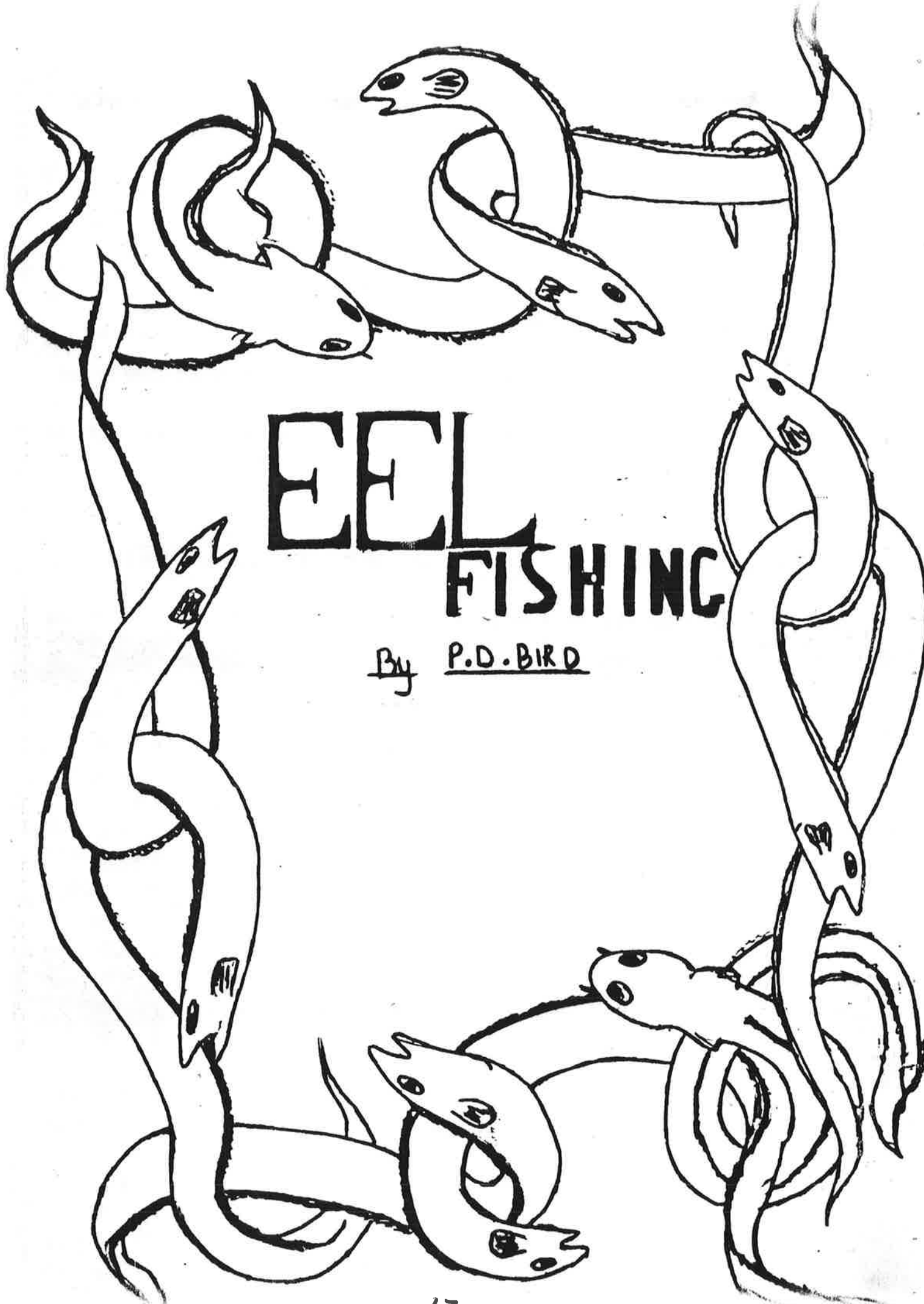
Phone: 0472 825347

ALL PRICES INCLUSIVE EXCEPT FOR P&P OF £2.50 PER ORDER OF UNDER £100 UNLESS ORDER IS UNDER £25 WHEN ACTUAL POSTAGE ONLY WILL BE CHARGED.  
ORDERS OVER £100 CHARGED £1.50 PER £100 OF ORDER FRACTIONS OVER £50 TO BE ROUNDED UP TO NEAREST £100 BELOW £49 TO BE ROUNDED DOWN TO NEAREST £100

WINTER DISCOUNT OF 10% ON ALL FYKE NETS UNTIL FEB, 29th, 1987

ALL ORDERS ARE MADE UP AS NO STOCK IS CARRIED OVER WINTER MONTHS. THEREFORE THE PERIOD BETWEEN ARRIVAL OF ORDER AND DESPATCH MAY TAKE A COUPLE OF WEEKS.

| REF NO. | DESCRIPTION               | PRICE.      |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1000    | Single Commercial         | £ 34.50     |
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| 1002    | Single Wing Commercial    | £ 53.50     |
| 1003    | Single Standard           | £ 28.50     |
| 1004    | Double Standard           | £ 64.50     |
| 1005    | Single Standard Wing      | £ 44.50     |
| 1006    | Single Economy            | £ 19.65     |
| 1007    | Double Economy            | £ 46.00     |
| 1008    | Eel Carrying Bag 1 m.     | £ 4.00      |
| 1009    | Eel Carrying Bag 1.3 m    | £ 5.00      |
| 1010    | Laager Small 50 lb.       | £ 11.55     |
| 1011    | Laager Large 100 lb.      | £ 19.65     |
| 1012    | Repair Twine 250 g Spool  | £ 2.75 each |
| 1013    | Netting Needle            | £ 0.30 each |
| 1014    | Helly Hansen Chest Waders | £ 34.65     |
| 1015    | Barbour Gamefair          | £ 58.50     |
| 1016    | Barbour Solway            | £ 56.50     |



# EEL FISHING

By P.D. BIRD

## EEL FISHING

### CHAPTER ONE:

#### THE EEL

THE EEL IS A FASCINATING FISH. The European eel which frequents our rivers, lakes and estuaries starts life when the fully mature silver eels with their large eyes and silvery pink colouring return to their own birthplace, the Sargasso Sea. Here they breed at great depths and produce billions of eel larva. One mature female eel produces between 5-10 million ova. These larva stay at depths of 200-300 m. and feed, they grow quickly and within 4 months are 25 mm. long, they then move into the upper most layers of water and begin a three year drift across the Atlantic towards Europe. Just off the continental shelf they halt temporarily and metamorphasise into the elver stage. They then continue the drift into European costal waters and congregate in huge numbers in the top layers of Eeasturine waters.

In early Spring elvers run up the estuaries in large numbers, the only significant runs are always on big tides (spring tides), and at night. The range of these elvers is incredible needless to say. There are few waters that do not hold at least some eels. Once the elver reaches its freshwater destination, it begins to feed and grow. The richer the eels enviornment the quicker it grows and reaches maturity. On average, male eels take 9 years to mature and females 13. At this mature stage the eel lies up and turns into the silver eel and begins its downward migration back to the Sargasso Sea.

### CHAPTER TWO:

#### THE COMMERCIAL EEL FISHERY IN ENGLAND \*

There are very few full time eel fisherman, perhaps 50 in total. However, there are as many as 200-300 part timers who range from those who make a sizable part of their income from capturing eels to those who catch eels as a profitable summer hobby down to those who catch a few eels for the pot.

#### FULL TIME EEL FISHING

If one is thinking of going into eel fishing full time it is essential to have alternative winter work. Eel fishing is seasonal catching begins in April and ends in October. The top eel fisherman earn very good money, this is hardly surprising when they can take catches of over 500 lbs. a night in a good lake when the eels are moving well. To make these big catches they use a lot of large and extremely effective 3 trap Fyke nets combined with their acquired experience of just where and how to set their nets in any given water. A lot of full timers do some of their fishing in marine estuaries and tidal waters. In these very large waters they can work a lot of nets, and, or pots, working on smaller catches per net than inland waters - say 2-6 lbs. of eels a pair a week. The mantain good catches by working up to 200 pair of Fykes.

\* England also refers to Scotland and Wales.

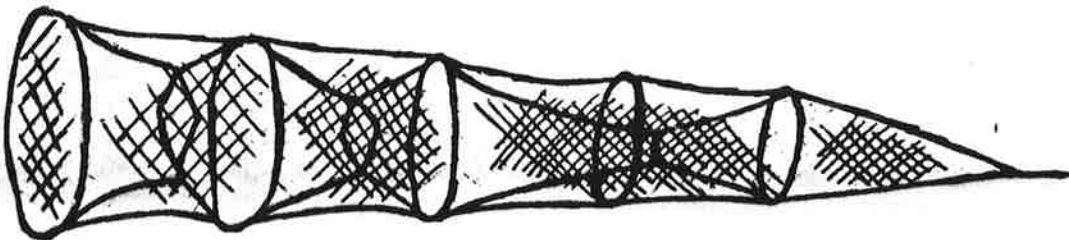
## PART TIME EEL FISHING

Part time eel fishing is varied and often very profitable. Small insignificant looking streams, becks, ditches, dykes, drains, canals and ponds etc. can provide rich pickings for the part timer who knows his patch well. To hunt down all the possible places to catch eels you will need to refer to the Eel Fisherman's Bible, the Landranger 1-500:000 map \* See "Tips" Chapter 10. A lot of part timers once they have got into a routine, organise their eel fishing in such a way as to make a net run which is of a duration which suits their own particular circumstances ie. one man might want to fish two evenings a week while others prefer to do all the fishing in one day.

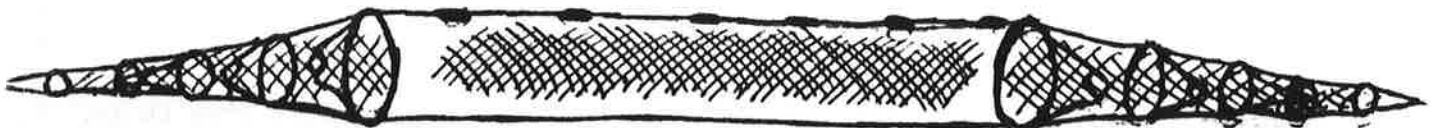
### CHAPTER THREE:

#### METHODS OF CAPTURE

#### FYKE NET



The Fyke net is used by the vast majority of eel fishermen in England. An eel Fyke consists of a tapering tube of netting supported by hoops. Within this tube are 2-3 traps. The last trap is non returnable and it is here in the "cod end" that the eels collect. Most Fyke nets are fished in pairs, between the two Fyke nets is the leader, a wall of netting weighed at the bottom and supported by floats. Fykes are set either by a weight either end or stakes.



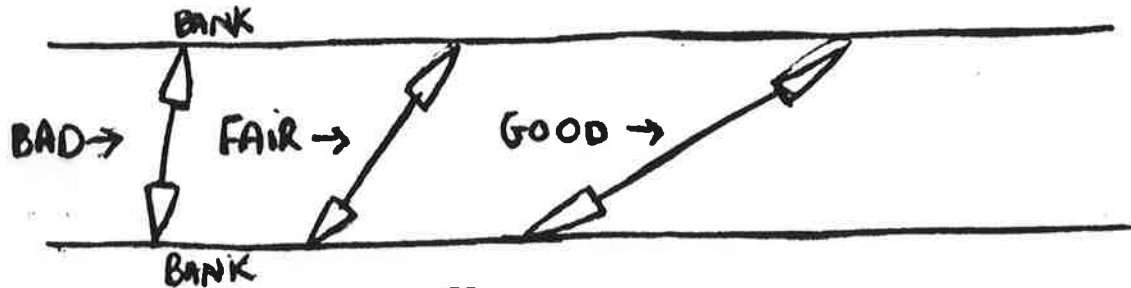
A pair of Fykes

In large rivers and lakes pairs of Fykes are set in strings. Often these strings consist of many pairs of nets connected together by means of lengths of rope which can be varied to suit how one wants to fish.



A string of 3 pair of nets with joining rope

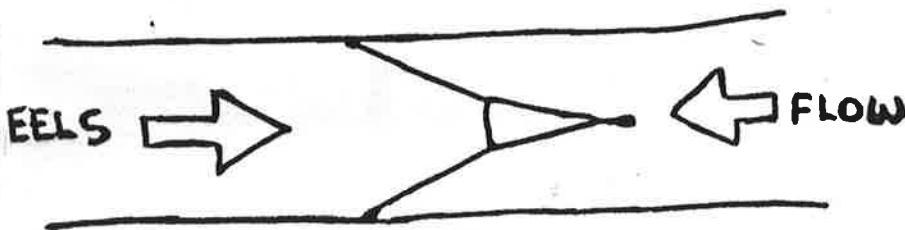
In smaller rivers, drains etc, nets can be angled from bank to bank. Always give a gentle angle to these nets as to abrupt an obstruction tends to make an eel back off, swim over or squirm under the leader. All have the same effect - poor catches.



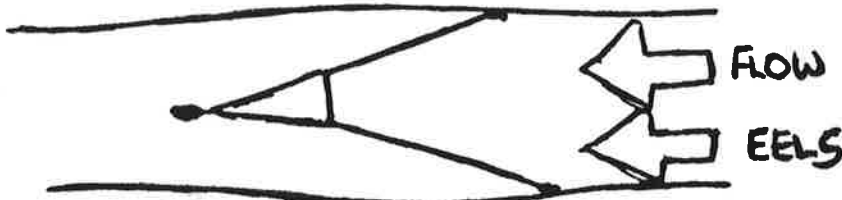
THE WING NET

A WING NET is a FYKE NET with two leaders. These are angled out to block off a river, etc. Wing nets are very effective, especially when the eels are running up river in the spring and down river in the autumn.

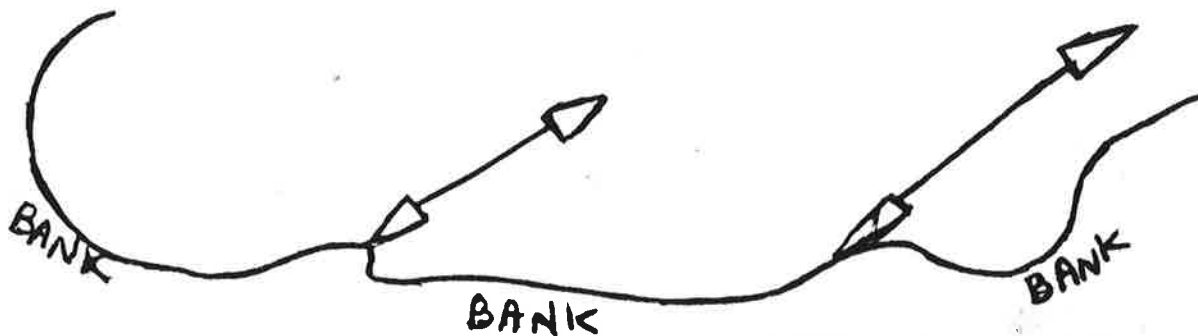
SPRING



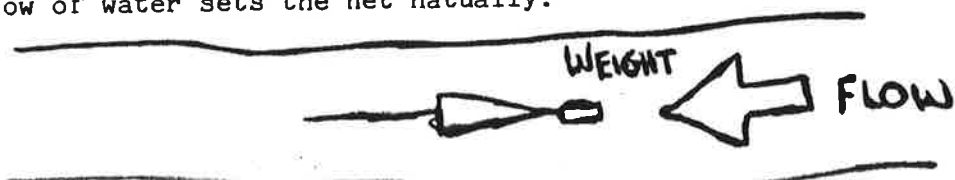
AUTUMN



In large lakes, especially in the spring nets angled out from the bank fish very well, especially for silver eels.

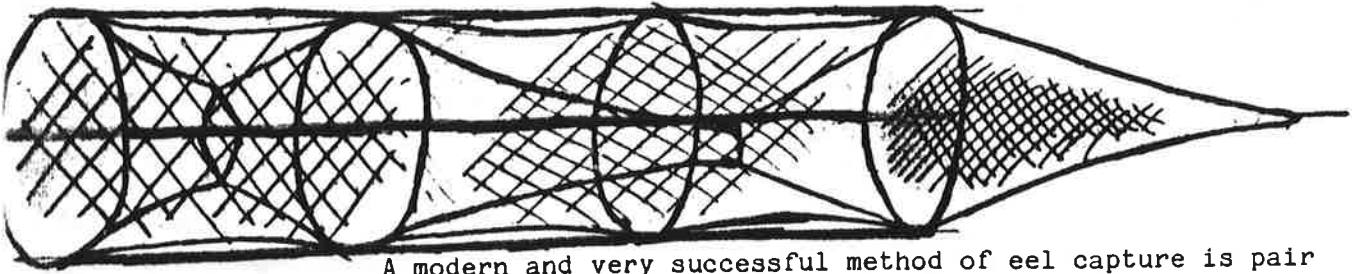


In fast flowing streams one net is used with a single leader. The flow of water sets the net naturally.



### BAITED POTS

Baited pots - made of netting, supported by hoops and stiffened by batens. Useful in very deep and/or fast flowing waters. The best bait for individual waters has to be found by trial and error. Pots work quite well without bait. If baited the pots must be lifted daily to replace the old bait with fresh, as contrary to popular belief eels feed best on fresh offal.



A modern and very successful method of eel capture is pair trawling, at present this is confined to the South East.

Two old country methods of capturing eels are the eel spear and babbing, which consists of threading worms onto worsted wool. You drop the worms into the water which should be coloured and when you feel an eel tugging, the rod is lifted and the eel who catches his teeth in the wool is shaken off into a floating retainer, which is positioned near the eel fisherman.



Old fashioned eel spear.

### CHAPTER FOUR:

#### TRANSPORTATION

Eels need to be kept cool, moist and not too overcrowded, ie. 3 eels deep for periods of over half an hour is a maximum for transportation. If these rules are observed then eels will keep well out of water for several hours. If eels are placed in a pick-up, make sure they are well covered with a sheet, as the wind quickly dries them out. If eels have to be handled during the hottest hours of a summer day, then ice is very useful.

### CHAPTER FIVE:

#### STORAGE

You can hold your eels in keepbags, left in rivers etc, however, the safest method of holding eels is in a storage tank at home. Anything will

do -- a plastic barrel or moulded plastic tank etc. Make sure the eels can not get out but that when it comes to netting them for delivery to the buyer you can get them out ! Running water is the best way of holding eels, a pump will suffice if stocking densities are not too great. Try and place your holding tank in a shady place. If for some reason you have to hold your eels in a lake or river, do not overfill your keepbags, do not place them over thick mud in stillwaters during warm weather as methane gas is given off which kills eels. Try not to leave marks on the bank adjacent to your keepbag. Be as inconspicuous as possible, and move your holding site regularly.

#### CHAPTER SIX:

##### THE MARKET PLACE

The price of eels varies according to how many are being caught and what time of year it is. A fair average is £1.00 per pound. Eels caught in spring and autumn fetch up to £1.30 per pound while when eels are abundant during summer the price can drop to 90p per pound.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN:

##### FISHERY MANAGEMENT

It makes good sense to only take eels at 6 oz. and over even though it is possible to sell eels of 4 oz. and over. Firstly a mix of eels graded 6 oz. and above will fetch a better price than one of 4 oz. and above and you will maintain a reasonable stock of eels in your fishery. In the long term it is very wise to adopt a policy of managing the places you fish rather than simply fishing them out.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT:

##### PROFIT

Eel fishing is very flexible. You can fit your fishing into suit yourself, and in terms of outlay the returns are very good. A competent fisherman should have little difficulty in catching an average of 40-80 lbs of eels a week for the season on a part time basis. How much money, time and effort one puts into eel fishing and what one is looking for in return is up to the individual to decide.

#### CHAPTER NINE:

##### EEL BUYERS

New Billingsgate Market - Isle of Dogs - North London.

Micks Eels -

Bloomfield - Tony Pie - 01-538 3403

Price varies £1.20 lb down to £0.70 lb.

There is a Dutch eel lorry that collects eels once a fortnight down the East Coast, from Caithness to Norfolk. 10% is knocked off for water content. The price is fairly stable at £1.00 per pound.

Telephone - Mick Foster - 0502 730001

## CHAPTER TEN:

### TIPS

1. CHEST WADERS are invaluable to an eel fisherman. You can fish a surprising amount of water just using chest waders.

2. Tie your outboard to your dinghy. If it comes off, all is not lost - nothing is more disheartening than fishing for an overboard outboard! For small ie. 8 ft. dinghy, a short shaft outboard is best. Avoid long shaft models.

3. EEL FISHING is affected by the moon. A new moon and the first and last quarter phases of the moon are the best fishing with a slack period usually occurring around a full moon.

4. You will probably need at least some weights for fishing. Go to your local scrapyard and ask if they have any sash weights which were used ~~in~~ window frames or fishplates of the railways.



Fishplates



Sash weight

5. Beware of deep water - 20 ft. plus in warm weather, especially in stagnant lakes, docks etc. Often the bottom water layer holds little oxygen and any eels caught in traps will be hauled up dead and stinking. A waste of your time and good eels.

6. The knot to use when tying up your cod ends is a very simple one, which allows a string of nets or pots to be left as they are when the knot is undone.

Take drawcord and hold it fully out using the right hand to grip the drawcord place the left hand palm up under the drawcord about 5cms from end of cod end. Bring right hand and drawcord down behind left hand, flip left hand over

You will then find you have created a hole, place your hand in it and take hold of the end of the cod end. Bring this up

through the hole and pull the end of the codend. Tie down, repeat this and you have secured the codend. In practice it takes only a second.

7. To use Fyke nets etc you must obtain a Licence for each net. The price of these Licences varies and it is best to contact your Water Authority, Local Fisheries Manager. There is no closed season for eels. For Fisheries Manager look up Yellow Pages and contact Water Authority.

8. \* See chapter two - Part time eel fishing

A landranger - pink - 1-50:000 Map is absolutely essential for the area you intend to work. It will help you investigate and hopefully exploit every drop of water in your area.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN:

### PROBLEMS

THIEFS - MAKE SURE YOUR NETS ARE NOT VISIBLE UNLESS YOU ARE 110% certain of their safety. Use a notepad to help you remember net positions. Try not to leave the bankside looking like a herd of elephants has just passed by.

VANDALS - sensible precautions like making sure your net can not be reached from the bank usually deters vandals.

FLOODS - in fast rising rivers make sure your nets have ample weights attached to them.

WEED CUTTERS - most Water Authorities start to cut in August and finish in September. Try and find out where and when the weed cutters are working. If in doubt, pull out as weed cutters make a hell of a mess of nets.

WEED - be prepared for some of the places you fish with some success in Spring, to become an almost solid mass of weed during high summer.

## CHAPTER TWELVE:

### TACKLE

THINGS YOU WILL AND MIGHT NEED:-

CHEST WADERS/KEEPBAGS/GRAPEL/DINGHY 8 ft/SMALL OUTBORAD ie 4 hp/LENGTHS OF ROPE/WEIGHTS/STAKES/LANDRANGER MAP/HOLDING TANK/FYKE NETS/POTS/OARS/ROWLOCKS.

GOOD FISHING.

In May 1986 whilst eel fishing a lake in Brum, it happened again, for some unknown reason (to me anyway) the water temperature changed from a very cold feeling to ones hands, to a very warm feeling at dawn.

This has happened to me on many occasions, fishing all types of stillwaters. The time that sticks in my mind particularly was at Earlswood Lakes in the 70's whilst fishing with Steve Medhurst. After meeting Steve on the dam wall we talked about our chances for that night and Steve told me not to feel the water temperature as it would put my confidence down in my wellies, it was stone cold, that water. This was at 6pm. But we fished anyway, and by 11:30pm using four rods I hadn't had a sniff of an eel. I decided to change my worm baits and so I reeled in to rebait and the lobs felt freezing cold in my hand. As the night went on I rebaited several times and each time those worms felt colder and colder.

Then at about 5am I reeled in to start packing up after a fruitless session. As I touched the worms, which were more or less dead by now, I noticed straight away how warm they felt. I felt the water in the margins and it was as warm as toast. Why I did it I don't know, but those dead lobs were replaced with five new ones and cast straight back to where I had been fishing all night. Steve came round after packing up himself and as we sat talking about the blank night I got a run on my fresh worms. The result was Steve netting a super fish of 5lb for me. To cut a long story short the self same thing happened the following night and morning, but this time the eel Steve netted for me was 5lb 8oz!

The same thing happened to me in May in Brum, at 5pm the water was cold but OK, but as the night went on the water got colder and colder. BUT by dawn (4am) it was as warm as toast again! All night I had fished four rods in the swim without so much as a line bite, then between 4 and 5am I took two eels and once again those baits were warmer than I was. I did think at first that the new worms had done the trick, but I have caught many eels on lobs that have been as dead as a door-nail.

As yet I have not worked out why the water temperature should rise so high at dawn, all I know is that it sometimes does, and with that dawn rise comes the eels that haven't fed all night.

On your next trip out try the hand touch, as soon as you arrive, as the night draws on, and at dawn. Do the same with your baits and notice the difference.

Any ideas or views on this subject would be most welcome as a solution or indeed an explanation may help to bring an end to those many blanks that we all suffer, as well helping us to put a few more big eels on the bank.

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