



**NATIONAL
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BULLETIN**

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EDITORS PAGE

Many thanks to all those members who have made the effort and provided me with articles for the Bulletin. Some of the new members have made notable contributions. There are of course members both old and new who simply cannot be bothered. Surely the contents of this Bulletin would at least prompt those members, into, at the very minimum, writing a letter. I look forward to hearing from you !!!

We all lead busy lives where spare time is at premium. This is especially so as far as I'm concerned. It would be of great help to me if your articles could be typed on A4 (i.e. the same size paper as this Bulletin) with at least a one inch margin on the left hand side. I have not got the time to re-type articles that contain spelling and grammatical mistakes and these will be included in the Bulletin as in the form that they are received by me. It may well be a good idea for you to get someone else to read your articles before sending them onto me so at least they make sense.

I hope you enjoy this Bulletin which I consider to be one of the best in recent years.

You will receive with this Bulletin a leaflet describing a new product " The Anglers Perch " this product is endorsed by non other than our President Brian Crawford who assures me that it is the most practicable anglers chair that he has come across in all his long years.

Following on from the successful sponsorship of Bulletin volume 25 No. 2 by my firm you will note that this Bulletin has been sponsored by " The Anglers Den " whose proprietor, as you may well know, is Mr Ernie Orme. Many thanks Ernie. Why not give Ernie a ring about your tackle requirements. His prices are very competitive and delivery is prompt. If any other members would be interested in sponsoring a Bulletin then would they please contact me. The current cost including postage is approximately £16.00.

Could I draw your attention to the small advertisement contained in this Bulletin regarding A J S Alarms. Both myself and many other members of the club, past and present, can endorse the reliability of A J S Alarms and they are well worth considering as against more expensive models.

I have now received back from David Taylor the well known bite alarms (which shall remain nameless) that he has modified for me. They really are effective and a vast improvement on the original. Many thanks Dave for your generosity.

You should be receiving, around about the same time as this Bulletin, details of the Spring Trip on the Grand Union Canal in the Market Harborough area it seems unlikely that I myself will be able to attend although I may make a flying visit. Could I urge everyone to make the effort to get to the Spring Trip. It seems that it will be the first opportunity a number of new members will have to meet the " old timers " I trust everyone enjoys themselves and that the weather is not too severe.

All those members who attended the Spring Meeting will remember that I have agreed to donate a £50 Fishing Tackle voucher (the actual value will be far more than this as it will enable the lucky recipient to obtain

£50.00 of tackle from the Anglers Den at or just above trade price) I will decide who is most worthy of the prize (if anyone) could I emphasize that my terms of reference are very wide and that it is more likely that I will award the prize on the basis of quality of the material provided to the Bulletin rather than quantity.

Keep up the good work.

Mark Davies.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

As I write these notes, I am conscious of my intended house move on April 22nd. I guess I should be used to moving house by now but I still cannot get used to the upheaval and filing everything away in boxes for several weeks until I can sort myself out.

Anyway, Gordon Makay and I attended the NASA National Angling Show, and of course Phil Smith and Kevin Stephenson were also there. I realise I am biased but I felt it was one of the best ever. Loughborough is an excellent venue for our conferences with the large conference hall, the large tackle hall and the bar all next to each other. The accomodation was only about 200 yards away and the food was excellent.

Gordon was really set up on the Friday evening while in the bar having the usual chat to old friends. Richie Macdonald bought him a pint and I was sure Gordon was going to keep it as a memento. If Richie had forseen how his weekend would go I'm sure he may have gone home there and then. Anyway, after the bar shut at 12, we (that is - some of us) retired to a social area away from most rooms where there was a pool table. We had an interesting challenge match but decided to call it a day!! at 4am.

The talks on the Saturday were all excellent and a giant cheque for £15000 raised by the NASA London Region fish-in was presented to a Cancer Research representative. During the morning Allen Edwards of the ACA gave a special talk on the work achieved and that this was their 40th year, NASA members will have read my article on the ACA in Specialist Angler 11. Suffice to say, interest in raising funds for the ACA was generated. In the first instance, Richie Macdonald took on all-comers during the lunch hour at arm-wrestling - £1.00 per go and raised about £100 for the ACA. He also announced that if over £200 could be pledged for the ACA, he would give his talk on Cassien that evening wearing stockings and suspenders. In the event, he raised over £300, making a total of over £400 raised in one day. His talk was excellent and certainly the best for many years.

His talk did not finish until 9.30 pm so there was a bit of a rush at the bar - this had been virtually empty until then as just about everyone was at Richie's talk. When the bar closed at 12, there was the usual rush to the pool area where several thoughtful members had supplied further stocks of beer. This time all pool games were sponsored at £1.00 per game with the proceeds going to the ACA. The previous evening (morning) the stakes were £5.00 per game.

The Sunday's talks were all excellent again with Dave Plummer, Mick Bowles (gave a superb talk on eels with several witty jokes that everyone understood accompanied by many good slides), Peter Springate (who showed a slide of one of the best ever rod pods - although how he got 'her to pose like that I'll never know!!), Chris Turnbull gave a good talk on tench and Nev. Fickling on predators.

All in all an excellent weekend and the icing was to meet past National Anguilla Club members like Arthur Smith and Clive Houghton (an ex-Treasurer).

Both Gordon and myself were thoroughly fired with enthusiasm (and knackered) on the way home and could not wait to wet our lines. It was with great anticipation that we set off on our first eeling trip of the year on Saturday 9th April. It had been fairly mild for the previous few days so I had high hopes. The fact that we had snow early on the Saturday Morning and the forecast was set for -3 degrees for the Saturday night did not dampen our keenness.

We opted to fish a remote mere near Bomere and Shomere, the scene of previous Club trips. I had fished the mere previously but without a run. (nothing unusual in that) However the mere did have a history of big eels and was fished very very little - most anglers in the area being totally unaware of its existence. It is a mere that would bring tears of delight to Dave Holman. The margins are totally overgrown with fallen trees and water lillies and it is only fishable in about 5 or 6 swims out of an area of about 10 - 15 acres. The bad news is that the mere is used by a water ski club, but not very often. The good news is that their clubhouse, launch ramp and jetties are at the shallow end of the mere where the overflow is situated, and from this end, by the car park and using the jetties, a large part of the shallow end can be covered. I opted to fish here with worms and the head section of a small bream. Gordon opted to fish about 150 yards along the bank towards the deeps but with one bait in the margin under the extensive branches of a large oak overhanging the water, placing his bream tail section onto a sandy bottom. His worm bait cast further out in deeper water. Because the mere is fished so little we assumed the eels would feed freely in the margins. However because of the cold nights, we felt the margins may have cooled too much and no eels would show.

I had very tiny twitches on my deadbait until about midnight then nothing and my worms were not touched at all despite recasting to several areas near fallen trees and a dying reedbed at the shallow end of the lake towards which the gentle, but cold wind was blowing. Gordon had a little more action as his deadbait rod had a lift bite of about 12" then nothing. His worms were not touched either.

On reflection, we felt that the lack of success was due to the end of the mild spell when eels may have fed and the couple of days of very cold weather putting them off the feed. We both felt that the mere is well worth further efforts, especially as the water warms up. It is certainly great having a large water to ourselves in total peace. It was great watching the antics of a mink playing hide and seek on the jetties at about 7am.

Anyway, thats session one gone and I'm looking forward to session two. This will have to wait a few weeks as next week, the 15th/16th April I'm attending the NFA Conference at Scarborough and the weekend after, I'm moving house. However, the name of the house "Waters Edge" tells it all.....

Best wishes to you all and do try to send in your contributions to the Bulletin. I was so pleased to see items from our new members.

Brian Crawford - April 1988

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

Whilst I've got the time I thought it best to get a few lines down on paper, and keep Mark happy before he starts to badger me for a Bulletin contribution.

I was very pleased to see such a good turnout at the Spring Meeting; dare I suggest that it almost started to look like old times!

It was particularly pleasing to see some of our newer members present. I hope that they all found the meeting enjoyable and worth making the effort to attend. By attending they might get a better idea of what makes the National Anguilla Club tick. It would appear that the recruitment drive we embarked on a few months back has really done the trick. From what Brian was saying at the meeting it seems that the membership is growing almost weekly at the moment. I wonder where it will all end?

It certainly marks a new era in the history of the club. I will once again take this opportunity to welcome all our new members to the club. I hope you will all enjoy a long and rewarding membership.

Its worth reminding you all at this point, that in the main, you can only realistically hope to get out of the club the equivalent of what you put into it, if your membership is to be rewarding.

With the increased membership I hope that contributions to the Bulletin and Newsletters will show an increase in number, proportionate with the larger number of members. I suspect that all that may be missing is a spark of inspiration to set the ball rolling.

Hopefully, the arrival of warmer Spring like weather will get you out fishing, or at least thinking about it, and the articles will start to flow. How about it?

Terry Jefferson

Well I got there, I got to the last A.C.M. a little late I know but for the short time I was there I really enjoyed myself, the members I talked to were great a lot of them love doing i.e. eeling was talked about and a bit of piking was showed in the good measure. Did I dream the 1lb 10oz roach talk by one of our fellow members, god that's the hell of a livebait, take heed my friend start chucking them baits out and you will soon become public enemy number one, mind you it will take a lot of the pressure off me if you get soon using such baits, joking apart use such baits with a lot of care, do not forget you will be representing 1,000s of pike anglers on the bank, it only needs one to be seen doing something wrong sadly then we all get tarnished with the same brush, my own personal view is good luck to you using over sized lives for your piking, believe me they do work, but I feel I must add that I myself would draw the line in using a roach of over one pound in weight, you must agree that's a cracking roach in anyones book, take care my friend.

For once I really enjoyed the Bulletin V25 No2 in fact I had to sit down and read it a couple of times, like Brian I would like to welcome the new members to the club, I hope you enjoy the club and its members, like all clubs there are some odd balls (Sounds male that) in all gatherings, speaking for myself Im a complete nut case, yet I do enjoy kidding our Ernie at the clubs A.C.M.s one of the main reasons I go, cant wait to be with Ernie at one of the clubs fish-ins, Ernie your quite welcome to fish by me, you can even share by B/Geary if you wish we can talk about short, fat and long things that feel wet and slimy at night, no Ernie not my Mrs eels you fool, dont forget the offer to Brum Ernie with Geary and myself when you sport yourself out, a trip Im looking forward to.

What great books by Phill and Tony that are B/C showed round the floor, I only wish I had got the bread I would of had both, B/C has really done both Authors proud, they are first class books and should be part of any anglers libairy, like B/C the chapter on big eels by Phil in his book is great, those pictures of Belvide Dam brought back a few memories Phil, that night

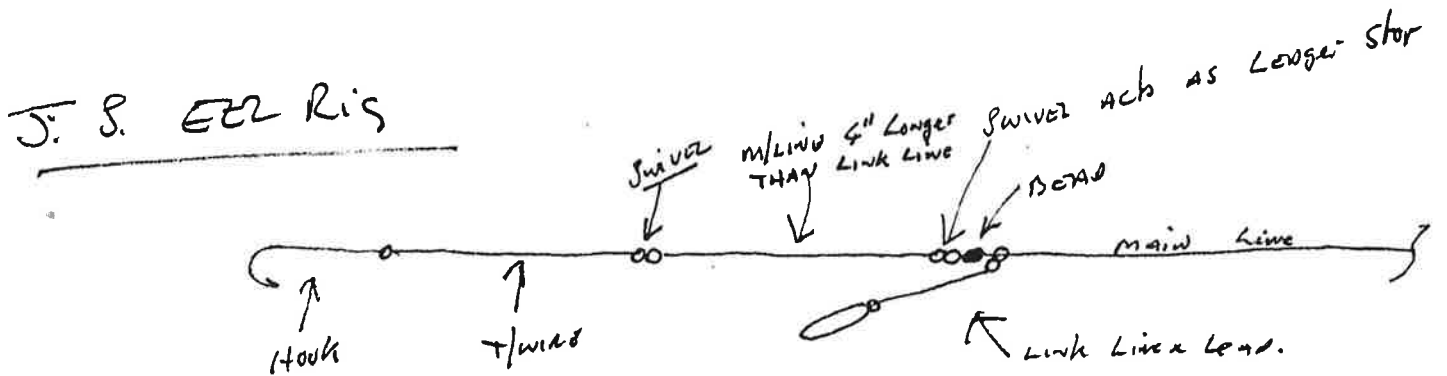
I looked down your rope ladder with landing net tied to a piece of string hanging over the wall all ready for the big snake hooked, like I said to you then Phil it will have to be one big snake for me to have climbed down that rope ladder, well done Phil you preserved every ounce of those snakes from Belvide and congratulations on writing a first class book I only hope there will be a second edition with even bigger specimens to your pile you deserve em, (Can I have my free copy now Phil?).

On a more important note who was the good looking bird at the A.C.M. her that's what I call a specimen, I hear talk that she has had some good eels, soaked to over 3lb in her rods, she can set up my drop off balls anytime and play with my worm, I'm sorry, but if she can get rid of those two large locking blokes who was sitting with her Im sure I could find a swim for her at me Brum Lake, with out question I would give her the Hot-Spot? if the two thugs sitting with her wont let you come on your own, then bring on along wont take long to sort them a swim out, say half a mile away the lakes big enough just over 2 miles of bank, drop me a letter my dear, (No not you Ernie). How about are Brian not putting Geary and my raffle tickets in the bag

I know were good Brian but we aint that good, I still say we should have had a colwaw, you better check your hook baits when you fish with Gerry and me next season, you could be fishing on bare hooks are kid?, I was some what taken back to see a clean shaven Terry Jefferson at the Committee table, I knew we had some young new blood in the club, but at first glance I thought this young chap must be really good, he his on the Committee already, very smart T/J.

Reading through the Bulletin I enjoyed the peace by Steve Markwell on Baits & Presentation I wont go into all of what Steve wrote for a lot of you know my feelings on rigs and baits other than lobs and fish baits and being fished hard on the bottom, what I will say and do agree with are Editor Mark is that I to have found that the finding of food by an eel by sight is very poor indeed, like Mark I watched the eel I kept at home Rover for many years in his tank like Mark said 99 times out of a 100 Rover only found his food when his body touched the offering, it was not until I started to give Rover food that was broken in half that he could find the food, in fact presented that way he zoomed in on these baits like bait out of hell, no Steve I think you are wrong there I'll stick to eels finding their food 98% by smell, livebaits I am sure are found more by vibration than sight, on the question baits being fished off bottom to give out more smell I feel makes no odds, although I do not e fishing my baits on bottom weed, any eels feeding in my area will have no problem in finding your offering, this was proved many times to me while fishing with Mick Boon, bottom weed no matter how thick never put are Mick off from fishing his baits smack bang in the middle of it using the stint Mick suffered no lesser runs than myself fishing in open clear water, your ly problem lies with eels rejecting the bait before a strike could be made has they felt resistance from your main line running through the weed, this situation can be cured then by fishing your bait off bottom.

ave Holman,s peace on Fishing the margins was excellent away of eeling I used to do at Earlswood lakes many years ago, if the Editors will let me I would like to write a peace on that subject myself at a latter date, the J.S. RIG Mark its the name now given to the rig use for all of my eeling while ledgering the above name coming from the R.F.A.C. members me at last ah Mark? Well must sign off got to do me housework and sort out that hot-spot for that good looking bird at the A.G.M. (Hope Gerry dont get his knickers in a twist over y new found love)



THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB - STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 1/11/87 - 13/3/88

INCOME

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Opening account | £000.00 |
| Subscriptions NAC | |
| 29 @ £5.00 + 1 @ £6.00 | £151.00 |
| Raffle income AGM 1987 | £ 9.00 |
| Meals income AGM 1987 | £ 28.75 |
| NASA Subscription E.B. | £ 9.50 |
| Transfer from D.W. | £128.11 |
| | <u>£326.36</u> |

EXPENDITURE

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Purchase of tankard J.S.1986 | £ 8.99 |
| Purchase of tankard J.S.1987 | £ 8.99 |
| Meals AGM 1987 | £ 40.00 |
| Expenses B.C. | £ 17.77 |
| Expenses M.D. | £ 11.04 |
| NASA affiliation fee | £ 15.00 |
| NASA subs E.B. | £ 8.50 |
| Repayment subs K.D. | £ 5.00 |
| | <u>£115.29</u> |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <u>BALANCE OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</u> | £326.36 |
| | £115 29 |
| | <u>£211.07</u> |

Calculated accounts available for the period 12/11/85 - 1/11/88 - while Dave Walker was Treasurer indicate a balance due of £194.77.
 Actual balance transferred was £128.11
 Net loss to the National Anguilla Club is £ 66.66

Also present in Treasurer's bumph handed over to me were several cheques not paid into the NAC account as follows:-

| | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------------|-------------|
| K.Stephenson | 3/3/86 | £ 5.00 | |
| P.Stickland | 19/1/86 | £24.00 | |
| A.Lister | 23/3/86 | £13.00 | write off . |
| | | <u>£42.00</u> | |

Therefore apparently NAC accounts are short £108.66

BRIAN CRAWFORD TREASURER

SIGNED

TERRY JEFFERSON CHAIRMAN

SIGNED

COMMERCIAL EEL FISHING IN THE RIVER TRENT

- 1 This note has been prepared at the request of the Trent District Anglers' Consultative Association.
- 2 There are approximately five commercial eel licences issued each year in the Trent Catchment.
- 3 The law regarding the right to fish in the tidal section of the River Trent, ie, below Cromwell Weir to Trent Falls, is clear. There is a public right to fish. Anyone can fish this tidal water provided they have access rights or access permission to the water or enter the water upstream from the sea.
- 4 The right to fish in non-tidal water, ie, above Cromwell Weir, is private and fishermen must gain permission of the owner or occupier of the fishing rights to fish.
- 5 An incident occurred in August 1987 between a licensed eel fisherman and the Nottingham Piscatorial Angling Society. The Society removed from their waters at Newark (in non-tidal waters) a string of 54 fyke nets. The nets contained 230 fish made up of 153 eels, 1 barbel (dead), 31 chub (5 dead) 15 roach (4 dead), 7 perch (3 dead) 12 gudgeon, 3 pike (2 very badly damaged), 2 tench and 6 bream. Many dead fry were gilled in the mesh of the nets. The Society had not given permission to set nets in their water. The Fisheries and Amenity Officer established that the nets were licensed and the Society could, if it wished, take a prosecution under the Theft Act. (It is believed that the Society returned the nets to the fisherman for an undertaking not to set them in their waters again).
- 6 During 1987 at least three other reports were investigated by the Nottingham Fisheries Office concerning commercial eel fishermen in tidal waters. Anglers had seen these fishermen take coarse fish as part of their catch.
- 7 It is the STW policy to develop eel fisheries. The upper reaches of the Trent and the River Tame have been stocked with juvenile eels each year for the last four years.
- 8 Clearly, however, the use of these nets should not be allowed to get out of hand. The Authority is not responsible for illegal actions by their licencees, but it seems appropriate that they should be reminded of the limited rights which a licence confers. In particular, it is intended in the next few weeks to interview the licencees and discuss with them the complaints received, and advise them to beware of:-
 - 1 Contravention of the Theft Act, if they fish non-tidal waters without the owner's permission.

- 2 Contravention of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act, if they kill freshwater fish in inland waters during the annual close season for freshwater fish ("inland water" includes the tidal river).
- 9 In the case of (1) the Authority has no specific jurisdiction as the offence is against the fishery owner and the law provides him with a remedy. Enforcement of (2) is the responsibility of the Authority.
- 10 In the longer term, the Committee at their last meeting resolved to consider regulating inter alia this type of fishing at their next five-yearly review of byelaws.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

I was delighted to see my article (albeit a bland one!) in the Bulletin Volume 25 number 2. Like Keith Bradbury I was very nervous, putting pen to paper, knowing that some of the top eel anglers in the country were going to read it. However after reading the opening statements of Mark, Terry and Brian all thoughts of apprehension were immediately dismissed. How refreshing it was to read that members of the NAC were not in the numbers game and in fact their basic views on eeling were the same as mine. I read with interest Brian's comments of ex-members catching 160 eels per term but two thirds of these fish were under 11lb! I had heard such rumours a long time ago and wondered what the hell was I doing wrong. I now know that I was doing the right thing ie:-I wasn't bootlace bashing! I hope that my first article raised a few questions as I think communication and constructive criticism is a healthy attitude that should take eeling in the right direction. I also found Dave Holman's article from 1978 very informative and interesting as I have found all his writing to be. His sound advice has been a great help to me in many ways, although I was alarmed that he was fishing snags with his rods 70 yards apart! (so were a lot of people at the time-Editor). I think this sort of practice should be made illegal (putting on my Solicitors hat for one minute-it is illegal-Editor) After seeing my name and article in the magazine of a Club as respected as the NAC I was brought from ecstasy to a feeling of utter despondency after turning the page and reading John Sidley's views on the three eel groups. Like Dave Holman, I treat John's ideas with the highest esteem. To me John is and always will be the number one natural angler. The amount of enjoyment his teachings have given to a lot of anglers is immense. I know this for a fact because I am one of them. John's track record is second to none. I feel that without the eel groups and the media John's success would have gone unnoticed by thousands of anglers a fate which thankfully didn't happen. Without the NAC, BEAC and John Sidley I would still be using thick plastic covered traces baited with huge swan mussels! AS YOU CAN GUESS AFTER STICKING WITH THESE TACTICS FOR A FEW SEASONS MY INTEREST IN EEL FISHING WOULD HAVE DIED. (Please ignore the block capitals my electronic typewriter malfunctioned!!-Editor) As yet I haven't caught a five and to catch a six is my ultimate ambition. Eeling is still my number one interest and if I caught a six I'd die a happy man. With the help of the groups my already difficult task has been made a hell of a lot easier. I felt so strongly about John's views that I wrote a personal letter to him. I hope John read it in the spirit that it was intended. I find it very hard to put my thoughts on paper but I hope that, John you accepted what I wrote as it was meant to be, constructive criticism. Regarding John's mention of Kevin Richmond, I read Kevin's ideas with much interest, although I thought his article in one of the weeklies (weaklies!!) advocating the use of 4lb main line and power-gum shock absorbers for eel fishing to be highly irresponsible. A lot of young or inexperienced anglers would use them resulting in carnage on the eel population. That's just constructive criticism, not a personal attack on Mr Richmond. I see and hear too much aggro in angling. Carp and Tench anglers top the league in this respect. That's why I left the Carp/Tench scene in the late 70's when one upmanship was at its highest. Eeling must never go the same way. As I said to John in my letter "if certain people want to alienate others from the real world then let them" It's their loss not ours. Through the groups, in my case the BEAC and the NAC friendships are made, knowledge is gained and a true sense of comradeship is cemented which can only take us in a forward direction. Surely this is what we should be striving for and this is more worthwhile than an individual's childish whims. If there is any hassle between the Eel Study Group and the NAC (which incidentally is unknown to me) then isn't it time to bury the hatchet (some of the older members of the Club will enlighten you when you meet them Steve-Editor) To be dragged into the gutter as other one species groups have been is not for the serious eel angler. Our branch of the sport is too precious and to me almost mystical, indeed I find eeling the only obsession that is enjoyed and not endured. I hope I haven't stirred up a hornets nest here but I hope that I have stirred up (you guessed) constructive criticism. I've mentioned the Carp and Tench scene and we all know what a cut throat, back stabbing and bitchy occupation it has become

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for some of its followers. I think that to some of these "anglers" gossip and devious behaviour has become a way of life that surpasses the thrill of a self hooked fish that is stupid enough to suck in a boilie. Eels and eel fishing simply cannot fall into the same situation because the behaviour of big eels won't tolerate easy or repeat captures. I think that John Sidley once wrote "In eel fishing there is no room for instant experts" How true these words are and this surely must be one of the attractions to the eel angler. Ours is a unique branch of angling that is highly individualistic, which appeals in its very nature. To know that other people feel the same brings me joy not to mention comfort when the blanks start mounting up! Refering back to my original article (the bland one) Mark disagreed with my theory of eels eyesight, He quite rightly pointed out that his aquarium based eels had to practically bump into the food item to find it (which I thought was constructive criticism! Were these experiments carried out in darkness Mark? (both light and dark-Editor) How does an eel know where a livebait is (tethered or natural/individual shoal fish)? Determined from thousands of natural vibrations? (I favour this explanation-Editor) How does an eel detect sub-surface baits? Are they swimming at the exact depth of my bait and hence detect the scent? Why did I have a very successful season with off the bottom baits one year on a large gravel pit when the water was gin clear? The following season on the same pit the water looked liked coffee (due to gravel ex traction) and then hardly any runs were encountered using the same method? Bottom baits were 90% more effective, a complete turnaround from the previous season. This water is 200 acres has a high density of eels (mostly bootlaces with a personal best to me of 3.12lbs) and limited bank fishing, so the notion of the fish "wising up" is ridiculous, no, I really believe that the eels the previous year were patrolling on or just off the bottom and detected my baits (6-8 ft up in 12 ft of water) visually. As well as recording my captures I also log methods/baits and runs but like John I leave water/air temperature/pressure etc to the scientists! John once wrote that he caught an eel of three pounds at Earlswood with a spoon (Correct me if I'm wrong John) surely that eels eyesight contributed to its capture. How does an eel succesfully gain sanctuary in a safe hiding place such as submerged tree roots? Do they bash their own heads in? Are they constantly colliding with solid obstructions and the banks? Does a bootlace pick up vibrations and scent and charge to devour a twenty pound pike thats got dodgy pectorals and has just had a crap? I could go on with even sillier ideas, I won't but I do hope that I have made a point. I don't pretend to know any of these answers but keeping an open mind and sometimes going against the "norm" could prove beneficial, making a rig/bait visual as well as highly aromatic!! This could give results. On the other hand it might have adetrimental effect. However if it was used on one rod for say half a dozen sessions on an easy water we should know either way. The loss of rod hours would be minimal but the possibilities of success could be highly advantageous. I for one plan to give such methods a fair trial this season and will be pleased to let members know how I get on, successful or not! All the very best to all the members. Yours (with a beta light at the wrong end)

Steve Markwell.

Stop Press

I have just received a prompt and very kind reply from John regarding my letter to him. It seems I was over reacting concerning John's thoughts on the three eel groups. In retrospect I think that Kevin Richmond's 'requests' to John were highly unfair and were frankly none of his business. My thoughts on any hassle between the groups is what I have picked up on the grapevine. John is in no way implicated although I feel that he has been indirectly implicated by Kevin, who should know better! John thinks I am barking up the wrong tree with regard to the visual abilities of eels. In retrospect I think that you are both right, but I'm still determined to give my ideas a go (only cause this bloody article took me so long to write) I hope the Anglian Water Authority is not reading this but all my fishing is done with three rods (I'll let members know how much I eventually get

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fined)Two rods are fished with the conventional rigs/baits and the third rod is always experimental,easily distinguished because its covered in cobwebs!This approach surely must bring me results?John mentions in his letter to me his concern of what modern day eel anglers are using as bait.If John thinks this we should all sit up and listen and try to do something about it.John thank you for your kind and sincere letter.

PS NAC members not knowing what a JS rig is!!!!Deep shame on you!

PPS I must stress most strongly that Kevin Richmond's name has not been mentioned in any correspondence from John.I alone have mentioned Mr Richmond.(Our Chairman in his page in this Bulletin suggested things are looking like old times.How right he is!I'm sure Brian and other 'old stagers' agree with me Editor)

THE ANGLERS' DEN

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The well known Arthur Sutton a long standing former member of the National Anguilla Club has kindly offered to supply the alarms that he manufactures under the trade name A.J.S. to members of the Club at a special price. Many members of the Club have for many years used this alarms and I can personally vouch for their reliability. I should emphasize that the prices indicated below are for Club members and no one else.

- Mk 4 Console and three antenna sensors £35.00
- Mk 4 Console/TD Console with latching LED's and three antenna heads £43.00
- Extension Leads 3 metres £1.50
- Two Way Adaptor Leads £1.50

Everything guaranteed with a first class after sales service.

Orders or further details from

A. J. S. Alarms,
28, Kennedy Avenue,
Hoddesdon,
HERTS EN11 8NW.

Letter Recently Received From Welsh Member Kevin Huish

Dear Mark,

Many thanks for my latest Bulletin No 2 Volume 25. I thought it contained a couple of interesting comments notably by John Sidley and Steve Markwell. First my views on John Sidleys article:-

Angling politics always seem to raise their ugly head and cause in-fighting between angling groups. If only the groups concerned would channel their energy against the anti-angling lobby and the eel killers. John is right in saying that he only fishes for the biggest eel swimming. I like to think that that is every anglers dream. But more important (at least to me) is that I fish to enjoy myself and as long as you keep it in perspective no harm will be done.

Steve Markwells comment about using beta lights as bite attractors I thought was interesting. I have been using the method for chub on the River Wye and I found no improvement in my catches, however it is a useful aid for reeling in and finding where the leger weight is or when you are lucky enough to play a fish. I bought mine from Trevor Moss's tackle shop. They are called fish finders priced at £1.

While on the subject of chub fishing I extend an open invitation to you Ernie, Bob and Terry, next time you are in Wales to give me a ring. I know some superb Chub swims on the river Wye. I'll sign off now and go and prepare my tackle for the first eel session of the Easter Break and then do some serious swotting for my exams in June.

Tight Lines,

Kevin.

CONFUSION REIGNS

(An Introductory Note From A New Member)

Jerry Parkins

Thursday, 24th, March, 7.45am.

The Postman is greeted by the customary snarling and grinding of teeth....no not me, my two pet Rotweillers. After retrieving the large brown envelope (slightly wet) from the dogs I study the postmark; 'Mark Davies & Co, Solicitors' The words leap out at me and my heart skips a beat or two. My first reaction is 'What the f***** does she want now' (She being my ex)

The envelope is resigned to the sideboard still unopened (apart from a few teeth marks) I go and make a cup of coffee, add a generous measure of Scotch, light a fag and finish watching "The Fonz" Curiosity overtakes my initial panic and I undo the envelope along the fresh (tooth shaped) perforations. A white pamphlet slides out, typical me I've opened it back to front. I turn it over, cautiously wondering how many demands and how much money is hidden in the depths of the pamphlet. Joy and relief. It's a Bulletin from the NAC!!

Several hours later I've read and re-read the contents and in response to the Editors plea for articles I thought I'd put pen to paper and introduce myself. The thought of a £50 tackle voucher didn't even enter my head. As I didn't get the opportunity to introduce myself at the Spring Meeting (as I didn't attend) I'll do it now.

I'm 29 years old and at present shop hunting in order to realise my dream of owning a tackle shop and giving up driving Post Office vans (Hold everything! Don't do anything before talking to Ernie Orme about the tackle business. He'll well and truly open your eyes! -Editor)

I am and have been a member of the main "big fish" clubs ie; the Carp Society, CAA and ex PAC. I find that my results and way of approach cannot be channelled into one specific area and I find that adapting a rig etc read about in a magazine can have spectacular if not confusing results! I suppose that I am an unorthodox Specialist Angler. Specialising in confusing results. I've learnt that channelling my efforts in one direction can 'blind' your angling 'inner eye' I have lost count of the number of times I have set out to catch one species only to catch something totally unexpected. For example my first 2lb eel was caught whilst carp fishing:-

I'd baited up a swim at one of my favourite lakes (Boreham Mere - owned by Chelmsford AA) with about 10 splods full of small soaked trout pellets which rapidly disintegrate into a carpet of ground bait. I'd put 20 TP boilies around both hook baits, which were a neutral buoyancy TP boily and a TP floater both of which were moulded into a ball of TP paste (I'm not clever enough to understand all this! -Editor) The idea being that the fish are attracted by the large carpet and help to disperse the smell over a wider area whilst leaving the pastes and boilies for the rod benders. As evening drew in I started getting the usual twitches etc which I put down to small fry, then an absolute screamer which I missed but I felt some resistance. By midnight I'd had about four or five of these runs and I had a right 'hump', so I decided to experiment. I reduced the hair from 2" to 3/4", cut the boily into 1/4's put this on and moulded a small piece of paste round it. The idea being a scaled down version of the original having a hard piece of paste around a hard core so even if the paste was whittled away there was still something left. My final run that night came at 1.30am exactly the same as before, twitches followed by a screaming take. Fifteen minutes later I'd unhooked and sacked a 2lb plus eel. Who knows if it was the one all night or what.

The following day with my new found insight I spotted a bow wave and swirls near some lily pads. Several pouch loads of floaters around the pads were left alone.

In the past I'd thought, wait till tonight and the carp will go down on the bottom baits, but me with my new found inspiration thought "Pike" feeding on fry. Air temperature 80 plus clear sky, slight ripple on the water. I brought in both rods and went for a walk around the lake to get some livebait off the pleasure anglers. I came back with two roach one of 3" and one of 5". A quick tackle change and out went the 5" freelined with a size 8 barbless treble in its lip. Ten minutes later the line was pulled from my hand and at first I thought it was a jack, but no another eel this time 2lb 8ozs.

My head was reeling at the thought of these missed opportunities, so I reeled in the rods again and went to pub for a ploughmans and a pint and some carry outs. On my arrival back at my swim I formulated a plan of action. That night I would fish for eels. I fished with the scaled down TP rig, the other with the remains of the mangled 5" roach. Then I remembered I had the 3" swimming in my cooler box. I can't seem to control small free lined fish so I cut off a section of candle that I use for floater control and adapted this into a float and out went the 3". At first I thought I'd cut it too small as it disappeared as soon as it hit the water. I half heartedly closed the bail arm and started to reel in. I felt a tug and slackened off expecting an eel or a pike to have taken it. But I was wrong again. This time it was a 2lb perch.

I was confused at this stage. I felt like packing up, but decided on another can of beer and bait up at 7.00pm. I fell asleep and some weird dreams entered my head of fish changing species whilst being playedie; pike taking floaters, carp taking livebaits, sharks taking mackerel feathers and then my leg. A shark had taken my leg. I woke up screaming only to find a kindly but confused pleasure angler who had decided to fish the next swim and realising my lines were hanging over the back buzzer bar wondered if I was ill or absent minded. When I told him what I had through that past 24 hours he sat down, gave me a fag and a swig from his hip flask. He also said he was going to fish the next day he'd leave his keepnet and the roach he'd caught in my swim for me to use that night. Seven pm came and I baited up again. I was using a fresh half roach section instead of the mangled one and this was the first to go at 10pm and needless to say I missed it. At 1pm the TP rod screamed off and after what seemed like an eternity, I was weighing an eel of between 4.1 and 4.5. As my hands were shaking so much I settled for 4.2. At 3am the roach rod started twitching this going on for about an hour, so I reeled in, cut the next roach into a strip 1" wide and 2" long. Still twitches, so I shut the bail arm, put the anti reverse on and had a 1" drop on the bobbin and sat with my hand on the but. the rod was nearly pulled in and as dawn broke over the lake I was netting a seven pound carp. This made me believe in "Expect the unexpected"

So on future trips watch out for me lumbering along with a mixture of carp pike and eel gear and never ask what I'm fishing for as I don't know myself.

Tight Lines

Jerry

PS The reason I joined the NAC is to help me catch a record fish.... for all I know it may not be an eel.

Scott Thomson,
15 Quantock Green,
Barrow in Furness,
Cumbria,
LA14 5BP.

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your letters, I think I should explain that I am a newcomer to eel fishing. I joined the National Anguilla Club to gain more information. After receiving a letter from Brian Crawford explaining the club I wrote back asking to withdraw, as I felt I was not a good enough angler to join. Brian wrote back asking me to reconsider, explaining that it is your attitude to eels rather than success, but that if you work at it the success will come eventually. He also sent me a copy of his book "Fishing for big eels", since reading this I have started to prepare for next season.

I am a member of Furness Fishing Association who control the fishing rights to 12 waters, all within 5 miles of my home. So 95% of my fishing takes place on these waters, they are considered to be probably the best waters around the Lake District, carp to 27lb, bream to 8lb, roach and rudd over 2lb etc. The club eel record is 3lb 8oz caught by a pike angler, though I did witness a 3lb 15oz eel taken on luncheon meat by a carp angler who did not claim the record.

All of my near future eel fishing will take place on these waters, except for the closed season as the FFA does not allow it, but I have been lucky to get permission to fish 3 small (2-2½ acres) ponds for eels in the closed season. So while waiting for water temperatures to rise I am busy making maps, depths, weed beds, ledges, holes etc.

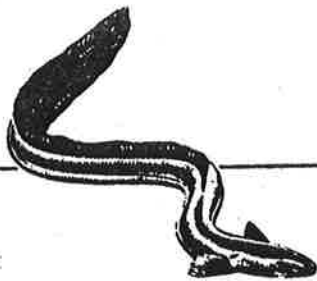
I am sorry if I might be a little slow with material for the bulletin, but I will have to do a lot more sessions before I will have anything of interest. Perhaps after reading a bulletin I will get a better idea of what you require.

Yes I would like to help you organise the Lake District trip if you can tell me what to do I will be happy to oblige.

Yours sincerely



Scott Thomson.



The National Anguilla Club

EEL ANGLING SPECIALISTS
established 1962

Mark Davies
Higher Hardings Farm
Red Lane
Sutton
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 0NA

Brian Crawford
29 Canonbie Lea
Madeley
Telford
Shropshire
TF7 5RL

17th April 1988

Dear Mark,

Letter to the Editor

Enclosed are leaflets to send out to members with the next Bulletin. I feel this chair is a valuable addition to any angler's equipment, especially for those occasions where a long walk is required. I used one for a full day's session on the River Severn, on a very difficult sloping and soft slippery bank. The extra feet provided are excellent in making the chair solid and easy to position. I found it easy to assemble and fold away. From a technological point of view, it's design should not let you down as it's structure is far more stable than the average garden chair or bed chair. It's adjustability makes it suitable for fishing in a well supported upright position or reclining to enable you to doze off during longer all-day or all-night sessions. For its price, I feel it is one of the best angling accessories on the market and at it's special offer, is one not to be missed.

Brian Crawford
President
National Anguilla Club

A LETTER FROM NEW MEMBER-NICK ROSE

Dear Mark,

I must apologise for not writing sooner but it has taken me this long to think of something to write about! I suppose most of the members are old hands at writing articles (Ernie Orme is an old hand, but not at writing articles!!-Editor) but I'm afraid I'm a total amateur.

I am taking your advice and writing about my fishing past and eel fishing in particular. I started eel fishing at the age of 13 at my local water Lifford Reservoir. This water was producing big eels regularly to the anglers fishing it. I was soon enthralled by eels myths and legends.

I fished with a lot of very good anglers in those days, some of whom have gone on to become celebrities in the angling world. Some of us started a Specimen Group called the South Birmingham S.G. This split up after a year or so with a few of the members starting up other groups.

It was at this time I achieved my biggest claim to fame. The South Staffordshire S.G. were having a fish in at Earlswood Lakes for the purpose of catching a few eels for the cameras of Angling Times, who were writing an article on the Group's eel fishing exploits and their encounter with the TV cameras for the Angling Today programme with Terry Thomas.

Anyway back to Earlswood. I arrived at the lake and it promptly poured down with rain. The night was a good one for me with capture of two eels of 2lbs and 3.8ozs, the only fish caught that night. The next morning Clive Nicholls and Chris Dawn turned up and lots of photographs were taken with all the members involved. These included Lawrence Breakspear, Mick Brown, Bob Jackson, Kelvin Hardman and Bob Croxall (all ex members of the NAC I believe-Editor) After the photos we all left and I forgot all about it.

The programme was made in the winter on the Worcester Canal at Hanbury. I did not go to this but was told it was a bit of a farce with some poor old eel dug out of someones garden pond for the sake of the cameras (Shades of the NAC trip to Bala featured in Angling Times-Editor)

I forgot all this for months until May 15th the following year, when a little worst for drink someone said hello superstar. The next morning when I picked up the last remaining 10 Angling Times's there was my big ugly mug 6" by 6" on the front page holding the 3.8 ozs eel. In the centre page spread there was the other photos, but mine was on the front page, which I reminded the other lads of frequently. Since then I haven't made any of the papers.

I have caught many eels with the best going 5.6 ozs from a Birmingham parks pool and my best last year 4.2 oza which I caught twice in two weeks, but thats another story.

Nick Rose

I had a letter the other day from N.A.C. Member Steve Markwell he was upset over my comments in the Bulletin V25 number 2 my comments were that I felt that the three eel clubs were going no-where and was it worth the effort in staying in them apart from gaining the friendship one gets when in such clubs or groups, I wrote back to Steve trying to put into writing what I really ment, in this peace again I will try and write what I am trying to say with out I hope being called a big head or upsetting any fellow members.

First I do feel that the eel clubs or groups are standing still, of the articles I have read over the years I have been a members, have in fact all been wrote befor way-back in the 50s and 60s, nothing as come out of those articles new, off bottom rigs, surface rigs, midwater rigs special baits were all used many years ago, the only diffrence being we never had the fancy names as they have today. As long as I can rember to the present day 25/3/88 nothing has come out of eeling to help better are cacthes, the amount of eels that can be caught in a stint may have rissen but the weight of the eels taken has not risen, we has eel anglers have yet to find the method of putting those very large snakes onto the bank, in my view the answer to this question lies in the baits we are useing, as I have said befor no matter what rig is being fished even the succesefful J.S. Rig if the right bait aint out there that rig will not prouduce those monster eels full stop.

Big head you may call me and I will except your views but I can not see why members keep on about all this weather condtions, I have said it many times befor I am ax dedicatced eel angler I live and breath eels so I just go out eel fishing I do not give a dam what the weather is doing my love is eels and my ambition is to land a double figure eel I am not after the eel record those thoughts were long forgot, yet if I ever did the record then that will be my bonus, I fish the waters were I know I have the chance of cacthing a eel over ten pound in weight in my article I said I can not think of another angler in this country who has devoted so much of his fishing time into eels, even Dave Holman asked my good friend Gord Burton at a Northahpton talk, "How dose J.S. Keep his enthausium going in the serch of big eels" simple Dave I love em I keep at it in the hope that my next run will be from that ten pounder. When you see Gerry ask him about the weather we have both sat out in in serch of a big snake, like I said if you took notice of the articles written about weather conditions and water temps you might just as well stay ay home, Gerry and I have proved those articles wrong many times, just because the weather dose not suit you it dose not mean that it dose not suit the snakes, I will say again the perfect condtions are when you have got an eel in ~~ix~~ the landing net regardless of what the almighty is sending down from the skies.

In my second edition of my eel book I have wrote on the off/bottom and Surface rigs plus other methods I fished the above methods on a few of my eel waters, I did so so I could write on the subject the above rigs will each eels but as yet once again those rigs are not prouducing any bigger eels to are rods, all i can see them doing is saving a blank, the only place were I have found the above off/bottom rigs to come into there own ~~ix~~ is when fishing a lake were heavy bottom weed is present, there use in the capture or down-fall of those big eels ends there. I have been asked many times by fellow eel anglers about huge eels being taken what wil

be there downfall, again i say baits, I for one can not see why a big old eel should waste energy swimming in the upper layers of the water in search of grub when the bed of the lake is full of it, I have this mental picture of a big eel sucking in mouthfull after mouthfull of silt or wed, blowing out through her gills what she dose not want to eat or can not eat and just swallowing mouthfull of those rich goodies in the form of blood worms, snails, water fleas, baits I feel that we could never present on a hook or line strong enough to hold such a monster eel, dont cry out the Hair-Rig once again its been tried, there I feel lies the answer in using are catch rate for those really big eels, every season reading the catch reports of the three clubs proves to me even more that 1,2,3 and even four pound eels are not thin on the ground once again it is when we reach the five pound weight mark that the catches drop like a brick, to me it is the records of these eels of five pounds we need to look at, I once asked the N.A.C. if we could have published a full list of all the eels they had got on record weighing five pound or more, maybe looking at those past and present records we could just drop on the bait that was most successful, we could all then put those baits to the test by fishing them, but we must all at the same time be fishing waters that do hold large eels, some eel anglers I know just fish waters were there is no chance of them ever catching a big eel, they are just eel anglers and I am not knocking them, I have said before an eel dose not have to be big to be beautiful, but my aim is to catch big eels therefore I have to fish waters were I know I can beat my Personal Best, again this approach in my eeling puts me above other eel anglers, like you all know I do not fish for any other species during the summer months other than eels, maybe I have lost out on those big carp, tench, bream, roach, chub, ect , ect that I see Phil Smith and others holding with pride, I do not knock those anglers I respect what they are doing, all I ask is for the same respect and understanding, I can not help the way I am, I do what I feel is right, I have gut feeling about my fishing and act upon those feelings, I make no apologies about being an eel fanatic or eel Manic as in the chapter on eels in "The Big Fish Scene". I hope you can understand what I am trying to say in this article reading it through again I am getting lost myself, ask me in person about my eeling and I can explain fully what I am trying to say, all I really know is I love eels, they turn me on, I live and breath snakes therefore I fish for them when ever I can regardless of what the bloody weather is doing, which in turn takes us back to the beginning I hope are Mark can understand my spelling its not my best point, my best point is in catching big eels consitanley each season that to me is a real eel angler an angler who can break the five pound barrier each season, if you do believe me you aint half put some effort and thought into your eeling, dont try just play acting at your eeling it takes well over that 100% to be successful believe me, like the title of the article in Bulltin V25 number 2 I will end by saying

"IM JUST AN EEL ANGLER"

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO

I suppose that's when it all started for me. Having already been introduced into other species of fish, such as Bleak and Dace, from the local Thames, and Bream, Roach, Perch, Tench and Crucian Carp from a local lake.

I had already done a fair amount of fishing by the time I was fourteen, and I found myself on holiday with my family in Cornwall and looking for somewhere to fish. We were staying in a guest house and after dinner one night, we made enquiries about the local fishing, of course, the owner explained it was mostly Sea fishing, but he did know of a small lake, barely a mile away that held coarse fish. The next evening my father, brother and I found ourselves down at the lakeside setting up.

Tactics were Crude Float Rigs, very basic, including incorrect shotting, with large amounts of even larger floats showing. Hook sizes, I believe were size 6, and baits were bread and raw bacon rind, kindly donated by the guest house owner. Baits were fished just off bottom. The lake was thick with reeds on one side, while on the other, there was well cut grass with a few park like bench:seats from which people could sit and feed the duck, swans, etc.

After about 20 minutes of being at the bank, my float began to move further out into the lake, and then disappeared. Something had evidently taken a liking to the bacon fat i was using. I had struck and a good fish was online. During play, thought to myself "What's going on here ?" I had not had a fight like this, from ANY of the fish I had caught before. The rod seemed to be rattling in my hand, and the line seemed to be zig-zagging all over the place, although not really running off anywhere. After a couple of minutes, the pressure applied by the young angler, ON the very much older Split Cane Rod seemed to be telling on the fish. Nearer and nearer to the surface it came and then "God, look at that" It was an eel, and to me, it looked massive. Anyway, it was duly landed and the hook was firmly in the Top of the mouth.

After some difficulty it was removed and we weighed it in at 11lb 12oz. To say I was delighted, was a grave understatement. Photographs were taken, as it was layed on an old sack, because I don't mind admitting, I had some trouble holding it. When our mission was complete, and the photos were taken, I returned it to the lake, whereby it swam off rapidly. Now at that time I had seen many anglers kill nearly all the Pike they had caught, and certainly all of the eels, but it had never occurred to me to kill that fish. In my mind it was beautiful, and to put it back into it's home, was to me, the most natural thing in the world to do.

On that same evening, I went on to catch another eel, one that was larger than the previous ^{218 102}, using the same bait and the same tactics, so I was truly over the moon. My brother hooked another fish, which seemed to fight twice as hard and as long as the one that I had caught, but sadly the line snapped, so we never saw it.

A couple of years later, myself and a friend found ourselves back in the same swim, and I was feeling confident, We had pre-baited it the night before with Mackeral, Pout, and some small whiting. which we had literally ripped to pieces with our bare hands. (By the way, they were already dead, in case anyone should think I am some sort of LUNATIC). The tackle was of a more advanced nature this time round.

Light Leger Rigs were employed, and bait was Sandeels, some whole and some sectioned, if large. Runs commenced almost immediately, and a total of 56 eels were caught between 5.00pm and 9.00am. We were using only one rod each, and under the circumstances this was quite adequate. However, these eels were smaller than before, the largest only weighing 11lb 7oz with an average of between 12oz and 11lb. So had the larger eels moved away on their long journey, or was it because I didn't use my trusty float and bacon rind method.

Whatever it was, I was more than pleased to catch my favourite fish. All our fish were returned to the water and we walked back to our campsite happy, and ready to get some sleep.

Only last season, I returned again, and it looked just the same after all these years, but sadly it wasn't. This time even with the various bait that I used, from Lobs, to cockles. lugworm to meal baits, I was not to even get a single twitch. So, had the lake "died" or had the eels all gone ? I can't explain it, but over the years a lot of things could have happened. Incidentally, the only eel I did see last season , was very dead, and had been washed up at one end of the lake, so, perhaps pollution of sorts had occurred.

A sad end then perhaps, to a water, that started my interest, and I hope, on a long campaign of eel fishing and conservation.

GOOD LUCK TO ALL MEMBERS AND I HOPE YOU ALL GET WHAT YOU ARE SEARCHING
FOR IN THE 1988/89 SEASON.

NEIL BERRY

Just how big is a really big eel?



THERE'S MORE INTEREST in eel-fishing, these days, than — probably — at any time in the past. And a good thing, too, for the eel offers as much scope for sheer enjoyment and as much of a challenge as any other branch of the game.

Much of the challenge lies in the problem which really big eels present. The eel record has stood unequalled by any authenticated fish for 44 years — longer than any other coarse species. One might suppose from this that 8½ lb. is pretty near the top limit of the eel's growth in this country, and that, therefore, the prospects of beating it are slender, and the chances of beating it by a wide margin are almost non-existent.

Yet there are serious and knowledgeable eel-specialists who entertain shrewdly reasoned hopes that, in the foreseeable future, we may learn how to catch double-figure eels — if not frequently, at least with reasonable consistency. They believe — and, for that matter, so do I — that eel-fishing today may well be comparable to carp-fishing in the days before the C. C. C.

There was a time when Buckley's 26 lb. Mapperley carp seemed likely to hold the record for a long time, when the chances of beating it by more than a slender margin seemed remote, when a man who said he was off to catch a double-figure carp would have been thought a crack-pot! Now, the carp record has been upped by 70 per cent, and carp fishers can set out at the beginning of a season, if they wish, with good chances of a 20-pounder or two, and we wouldn't think them crack-pots for hoping for a 30-pounder.

Of course, the eel is a very different matter. But would it be any more revolutionary if the eel record were raised to around 14 lb. or 15 lb., if the capture of eels in the 8 lb. bracket were to become a good but not startling result?

The first step with carp was to convince anglers that it was possible, that there were in fact enough 20 lb. and 30 lb. carp around for it to be worthwhile trying to tackle the problem. For

Is it 10 lb., 20 lb., 30 lb.? TERENCE COULSON

examines the evidence and suggests we'll be due

for a surprise when that record's finally broken

similar reasons, the same step is important with eels: is there any real evidence for the existence of eels so much bigger than the present, long-standing record?

Well, I know a number of experienced anglers — some of them fellow-members of the National Anguilla Club — in whose veracity and judgment I have every confidence, who tell me they have been within a hair's-breadth of landing eels which would have been way above the 8 lb. level. It's no good dismissing them as fairy stories. I'm all for healthy scepticism, but if one can accept an angler's judgment that an eel he has lost measured, say, about 3 ft., there's no logic in assuming that he has taken leave of his sense of perspective when he says he has lost one which measured about 5 ft. Either he is a plain liar, or he has lost a thundering great eel! This is to say nothing of the unseen 'monsters' which have left many an angler holding broken tackle, trembling and impotent.

☆ ☆ ☆

Of all the coarse species, the eel has probably received more attention from zoologists than any other. Perhaps we can review the zoological evidence at some future date, but for the moment, suffice it to say that many ordinary waters can and do grow a small proportion of their eels to 7 lb. and above during the course of their normal stay in freshwater of up to about 18 years.

We have regrettably little direct information about the actual growth rates of really big eels. However, according to a letter in the old *Fishing Gazette* for September 16, 1922, Tate Regan, of the British Museum, estimated from the scales of the record eel that it had been 12 years in freshwater. Even allowing for the uncertainty inherent in readings of eels' scales, it implies an average growth rate of about 11 oz. per year. Obviously, if an eel maintained such a growth rate for its "full term" of 18 years, it would reach a weight of around 12-13 lb.

Apart from the growth possible during the normal period of 18 years or so, it is widely recognised that eels can — and occasionally do — stay in freshwater for much longer periods. They may be 'abnormal' individuals which do not experience the call to migrate; or they may be individuals which have somehow become imprisoned in a water from which they cannot escape; I do not know. But the French zoologist, Professor Desmaret, kept an eel in captivity for 37 years, by which time it had grown to the length of 4 ft. 7 in. I don't think Desmaret recorded its weight, but an eel of this length in even moderate condition ought to weigh, say, 13 lb. Again, eels seem to have survived for 50 years after their introduction into Lake Cauma — a totally enclosed water high in the Alps — and although it is futile to speculate what weight eels might reach in these long periods, it needs no stretch of the imagination to see that 8½ lb. is



A SEVERN two-pounder — and it's only three years old according to the writer's suggested eel-growth rates. Give it another seven years and it would break the record.

really nowhere near the limit.

We have on record a fair number of accounts of much bigger eels. Frank Buckland, author of *Familiar History of British Fishes*, mentioned a nine-pounder from the River Arun. A number of writers — Richard Walker among them — have found the dead bodies of eels in the 9 lb. region. Victor Salmon has given a detailed account of the capture of a 9 lb. 2 oz. eel some 50 years ago, and one of 9 lb. 3 oz. was reported in the angling press in December, 1966. James Wentworth Day has written about eels of 9 lb. and 11 lb., which were taken in Norfolk in 1948.

Jonathan Couch, F.L.S., mentions a 10 lb. eel in *A History of Fishes of the British Isles*, and Tate Regan wrote of the 10-pounder from the River Mole, of which Buckland had a cast. Another 10 lb. eel was found in a River Avon eel trap a few years ago. In November, 1966, a London policeman found an eel of 10 lb. 2 oz. left stranded by the tide at North Woolwich on the Thames.

Cliff Glenton has recounted how he recovered the dead bodies of two eels measuring 4 ft. and 4 ft. 4 ins. from a pool after the vicious winter of '63. I don't think he weighed either of them, but the larger one would have gone about 11 lb. if in fair condition, as it appears to be from a photograph. Raymond Perrett has put on record the finding of the dead bodies of eels weighing 11 lb. and 12 lb. at a lake in Somerset.

Thomas Boosey wrote in 1835 of a 15-pounder from the River Kennet at Newbury. Richard

Walker has told us about the eel which he saw fall from a mass of weed, dredged from the Avon, which he estimated to weigh about 16 lb. On July 16, 1926, the *Manchester Guardian* reported the capture of an eel of 16½ lb. in a salmon fisher's net from the Whiteadder Water at Cantys, near Berwick.

I suppose a sceptic might take leave to doubt the precise details of some of these, but many appear to be perfectly well-authenticated and none, it seems to me, need stretch our credulity at all.

We have to go back a few years to find reports of still bigger eels. Walton wrote of an eel a yard-and-three-quarters long taken from the 'Peterborough River' in 1667; an eel of this length might weigh about 20 lb. "If you do not believe me," wrote Walton, "then go and see for yourself at one of the coffee-houses in King Street in Westminster" — a challenge he is not likely to have made if the eel were not there to be seen!

Witness of the capture of another 20-pounder — near Norwich in 1839 — is given by the Rev. Richard Lubbock in his book *Fauna of Norfolk*, an authentication which, as Tate Regan remarked, "can scarcely be questioned". In *A History of British Fishes* (1836) William Yarrell wrote of two eels weighing 23 lb. and 27 lb. which were taken when a dyke at Wisbech was drained. J. W. Martin, the 'Trent Otter' — an excellent angler and a down-to-earth fellow — mentioned a 25-pounder shot in the Welland, and a 30-pounder taken from a Norfolk drain. Jonathan Couch records an eel of 27 lb. caught in the 'Hackney River'.

☆ ☆ ☆

During the 1920s, 'Broadlander' (the pen-name, I think, of A. H. Patterson) wrote that he saw and handled eels of 24 lb. and 28 lb. taken at Yarmouth on September 30, 1911, and February 6, 1912, respectively. He said he had photographed one of them, the picture being reproduced in the *Daily Mirror* and a copy deposited with the British Museum. The Museum authorities tell me they no longer have a record of this photograph, but it would be interesting to search for it in the *Daily Mirror* around that time.

'Broadlander' went on to say that an eel of 32½ lb. had been taken at Lowestoft in February, 1911; and he also mentioned a report of a 42 lb. 'silver belly' taken in Yarmouth Harbour in March 1808, adding "it may have been a conger." No doubt most of us would agree with that reservation — but at least it shows that 'Broadlander' did not think the other great eels were congeners.

Apart from another 40-pounder mentioned by Couch, but which he evidently had some reservations about, there are three other eels of 30-odd pounds to complete the tally. One of 30¼ lb. was shown at the International Fisheries Exhibition at South Kensington Museum in 1883. One of 34 lb. was said by Couch to have been taken from the Medway near Rochester. One of 36 lb. was caught by A. E. Austin, of Cambridge University, near Denver Sluice on October 22, 1867, and exhibited in the shop of the local fishmonger, Mr. Culling.

I don't know how your credulity stands up to all this! Of course, it is popular nowadays to discount these older accounts simply because they are 'old', or on the grounds that "they were probably congeners, anyway!" Personally, I find it hard to see how a conger shown at an international technical exhibition or on a fishmonger's slab could really have been passed off for a freshwater eel. And we all accept any number of historical stories on evidence no greater, and a great deal older than these accounts of eels. Moreover, if I'd told my old Grandad that he didn't know an eel when he saw one, or couldn't use a pair of scales and a yardstick properly, he'd have given a demonstration of Victorian materialism fit to singe hair!

I should be glad to hear from any reader, particularly about accounts of big eels which I may have overlooked. For my money, the evidence adds up to this: that there's no real doubt at all about the existence of eels in the 'teens of pounds, that occasional eels in the low twenties are probable, and in the upper twenties and thirties are — well, possible.

Catching the brutes — ah! That's another thing, again! But I do believe the sceptics may be in for a surprise or two during the next few years.

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MARGINAL MATTER
Keith Bradbury

After reading the latest bulletin to drop threw my letter box, after reading it a few times i was amazed to the wealth of eel anglers this club has in its ranks.

To anser are Terrys question as to what made me join th33 NAC, its like this ,when i first became into eels , and eel fishingt the only club to be in was the nac as it was the only eel club going at the time, but try as i could i just could not get in the nac(didnt know who to bribe) anyway some years latter a letter was in the a/mail telling you were to write to a mr David walker i think, and i wrote and wrote, and gave up in the end, as i got no reply to eny of my letters ,so i thought fuck it and gave up trying.

When i saw the last letter in the a/mail and a/times i thought Keith my son try again, and low and be hold i got in and iam damed sure iam not leaving now, that was one of the reasons why i resigend from the ESG, as they said you could not be in both,

ANYWAY going of a bit now, arent i, after reading Daveholmans peice on margin fishing it got me ~~thingx~~ thinking about the time last year when i was fishing a pit in B/pool which i call lightbulb due to the shape of it,being that of a lightbulb...

Any how it goes like this,i had fished this pit on a number of times and had a good steady cath rate of eelx s to my rods , no monsters eels just under the 2lb mark,ihad the normal three rods out which on this small water,coverd it,the baits ranched from lobs and roach heads to slugs, on this night i was on the pit on my tod as my mate had pulled out of fishing it that night as he was going out on the piss, ihad cast out my rods to the normal hot spots ie one under what looked like a car which had been dumpae in there some years ago, any way as the night drew in and no runs as yet, just befor darkness fell my first run, no chance of missing it a real screamer, a quick strike and the tell tale thumping on the other end and a eel of i?-I4 not big but a good start,to the night,by now it was darker than Frank Brounos arm pit, all the normal night life had now woken up and made their way around to my brolley to wind me up , anyway not to be put off as i new i hadnt blanked amazing what the first eel on a trip does to the confidence, as you can see from the drawing the pit is like lightbulb i had chosen to fish the neck this time mainly to get out of the rain ,and i also fancied a change as on these small pit ive found that they soon blow and are not much good after a few trips weather its due to the low amount of eels preasnt in the water, are like John Sidley says the eels wize up, and stay clear of the area , as the pit is small the eels would soon wize up,thats why in B/pool,we are allways looking at new waters for when they blow,

Any how this night i had got myself into a real tangle , as for reasons only know by my reeal it decided to seize upon me,as on the hook was a slug which i had been fighting with not a hour earlyer as it had tried to have it away with myxxxm fags,and it hadent counted on me been trained in kung fu so i soon over powerd this monster of a slug , and for the crimes against my pack of no 6 king size, had sentenced it death on my zIQ hook i had decided to bring my line in so as i wouldnt get a eel on and lose it so i wound my line round by hand, untill it was nearly under my rod tip just by some weed beds(seedrawing) after a bit of mesing about i got my reel working i thought leave it were it was and have a fag calm down and re cast after, the rod was placed back in the rod rest and back on theop optonic, then after a while to my shock the optonic screamed into life i jumped up to check, ~~mt~~ my rods and then noticed the on in the margin that the line was pissing out veary fast, as it was so close in i just picked therod pu but the bail arm over and pulled back as the line whent tigh

as the rod powered over to say i was shocked would be a understament, the times that i had fished it waiting for my rod to buckle under a eel, and at last it was iwas thinking that the ~~xx~~ waster only had small eels init after what seemed hours was only a few minets , and the eel surfaced it was soon in the net, on closer looking it wasnt as big as i had hoped after weigh ing it she whent 2~~2~~ - 7 , not big but the biggest to come from this small pit for some years so the farmer said, after talking the pics in the morning i sliped her back, back to her home none the worse for her stay in my net. writting this has brought back found memeries of this small water, i know i should go back one day to fish for old time sake ,but a few mates have fish ed it since and have only blanked not even a run, i might have been lookey to have had the last nights eels -?? to have come from the lightbulb water i think i let it R.I.P. and think only of the good times i had on the water and my 2-7 margin eel, but if i get fed up of the blanks piling up-? i might just go back in time to my lightbulb pit to see if it will shine once more fo me like it did that same night, last year.

ill close for now by saying good eels to your rods this year and personal best eels to you all.

keith b

