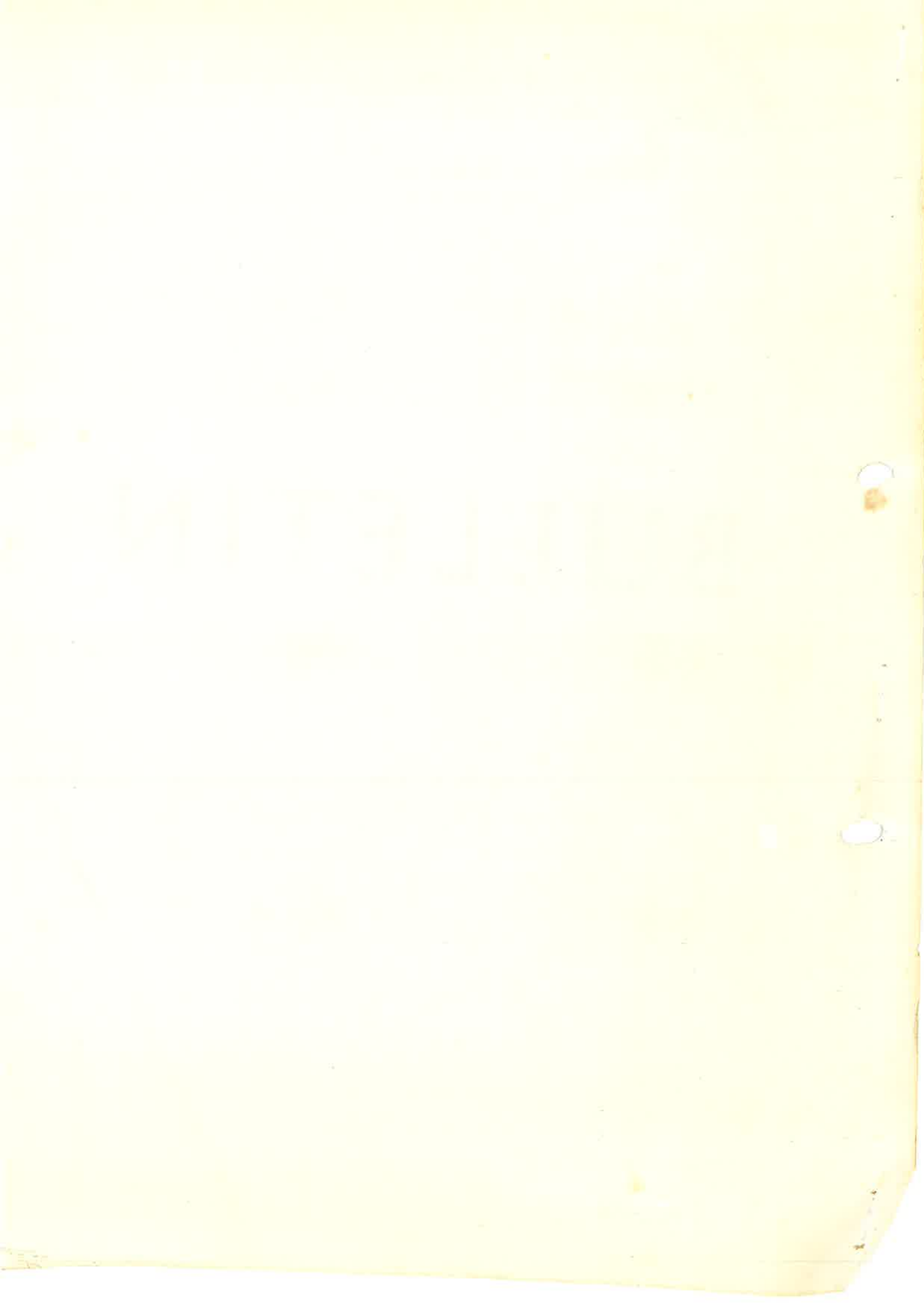


The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN



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CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

I was pleased to see a good turn out of members at the Annual General Meeting at Daventry on the 20th November, I hope that all those who did attend has a safe journey home and as a result of the meeting, they will get to work on producing much needed articles for the Bulletin and ideas concerning club trips and the future of the club as a whole. It is simply not sufficient to discuss the club's lack of activity and then go away and do nothing until you attend the next meeting. 1983/84 will be very much a make or brake situation for the club, we all know now after our discussion at the A.G.M. what is wrong and many members made constructive suggestions as to how the situation can be improved and the club put on an upward trend again.

It was very pleasing to see ex-member Arthur Smith at the A.G.M. and to me and I am sure to many other members the club doesn't seem the same without him, let's hope that his attendance at the meeting is a prelude to him at least considering applying for associate membership of the club, if not full membership. As we discussed at the A.G.M. the club is developing away from its previous position whereby emphasis was placed upon the number of sessions fished and the collecting of data. I cannot see anything particularly wrong with this as we the members should decide what we want from the club and not be dictated to by what has gone on in the past. We must cater for what our members want and it is clear to me that effort cannot simply be equated with the number of sessions fished and eels caught. A number of members of the club over the years who have not been able to put in a great deal of time in fishing have contributed to the well-being of the club.

Someone mentioned at the A.G.M. that if one concentrates on fishing for eels say from May right through to October one tends to become rather stale and uninterested in your fishing. This in previous years has certainly been the case with myself and I now seek to get more enjoyment out of my fishing by going after other species during the summer months. This not only keeps up my spirits but also makes me look forward more to the times when I fish for eels. This is the case with quite a number of members and I can see no reason why there shouldn't be contributions to the Bulletin concerning angling for other species.

I was very pleased be able to make the presentation to Arthur Sutton at our A.G.M. I hope he gets alot of use from the cardinal reel and that he can keep it out of young Michael's mitts. Whatever A.J.S. may say to the contrary, he has got a good many years eel fishing in front of him yet and although it may not seem so sometimes, his efforts on behalf of the club are appreciated by all members. If it wasn't for Arthur there wouldn't be a club.

I was disappointed that Tony Hollebach resigned from his position as membership secretary, basically over a misunderstanding which perhaps could have been avoided if communications were a little better. However, I am sure that the "Angling Parrot" will try his hardest to fill the gap. Dave Walker has a lot of contacts throughout the angling world which will be useful to him in doing the job.

Finally, could I exert all members to consider joining the British Field Sports Society. Where as up until fairly recently one could say that the B.F.S.S. did not represent the interests of angling being principally concerned with hunting and shooting, it is now quite clear to me that angling is coming under increasing pressure from people opposed to all forms of field sports. The National Anglers' Council itself is a member of the B.F.S.S. and it is essential that we should have the foresight to ensure the future of our sport. The B.F.S.S. very much appreciate the part that anglers play in conserving the country side and to my mind they are the only body who are sufficiently organised and financed to represent the interest of anglers against the anti-field sports lobby. If you are interested in joining,

please write to the British Field Sports Society, 59 Kennington Road, London, SE1 7PZ. Telephone 01 928 4742.

Mark Davies.

MY SEASON '82'

From my notes I see that the season opened with my being away on holiday with the family and without the rods. So for the first time ever, I had to miss the start of the season and what that implies. I recall that I did once miss the glorious sixteenth due to hospitalisation, but on that occasion I had a beautiful Turkish nurse to console me. Apart from being Turkish all her other attributes were O.K. Of course being blonde, she got dirty quicker. Back to fishing, Sutton, you frustrated fool.

So, my early fishing sessions were somewhat of a mixture of Tench and Eel trips. Two Eel trips, earlier, to the G.U. canal yeilded not a single run, and were unworthy of anything other than the briefest mention. But gradually I swung into action and threw all sorts of enticing tit-bits at those Eels. Without result. I cannot pretend that I remained unruffled and by the time my summer holiday came round, a state of near panic set in. Only the pptomistic ravings of David Walker kept me sane. He was certain that we would get fed-up with heaving out the Eels at Johnsons Lakes. I now think it had something to do with his wanting me to buy (from him) two new large keepnets. I learned from David that he had a secret weapon, which he would unleash on the angling world during the Clubs summer trip to Johnsons Lakes. No amount of chatting or beer would draw him on this subject, except an occasional fient muttering of "No Eel is safe anywhere". I chuckled at first but knew he was deadly serious, when he bought a river board license!

The great day came, with myself not yet taking a single Eel - in fact I had not, as yet, had a run. We met Golly and Bob, then set about finding a spot to fish. Being spoilt for choice, with hardly an angler around, doesn't make the choosing of a swim any easier. Eventually I settled down to fish an extremely comfortable spot on Larkfield Lake, with David fishing almost opposite in a rather shallow area. A quick nip round to Golly and Bob for bait and a cup of tea. This was neccesitated by the fact that he of theastute mind and careful planning, had renewed his large gas cylinder and left the attachment for connecting the stove at home. Well, I find the gas lasts longer that way.

By the time I returned to my swim it was dark but I had been practising my casting and was confident I could put the baits in the right place. All was still and warm. Exactly one hour into the summer trip I heard a peculiar, slightly familiar sound. Yes, it was the alarm. I reasoned that I had a run on the right hand rod, due to its bucking about on the rests with line pouring from the reel. Hardly wanting to connect in case I lose the Eel, I did so and felt a hefty resistance. The slow movement and the throb of the line told me I had sorted out a good one. The Eel surfaced some forty yards out and thrashed the surface. The ripple reached my feet as I stood in the water with the net sunk in front of me. The Eel was very slow in movement, indicative of a really big fish but it was not coming to the net if it could help it. When I tried to hurry things the Eel surfaced again and once more sent water flying. Eventually I had him on the surface and slowly being drawn towards me, with the occasional kick like that of a Mule. "Ah now its coming quietly-thats better my beauty-christ what a fish". Over the net-easy does it, when suddenly all hell broke loose. In a flash the Eel was heading for deep water. No slow movement now as the rod groaned and line tore from a spool which could be tightened no more. I dont know how long that lasted but suddenly all went slack and I felt sick. I put down the rod without even reeling in the line and sat with head in hands. Eventually I went through the motion of casting out another bait and was very surprised when the alarm signalled another run. All went well and I played a lively Eel to the net. I hardly realised that I had a good one until lifting the folds of the net to get it to dry land. In the first hour

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of daylight David and I weighed my Eel. It scaled a healthy 4lb 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ and remained the best Eel of the trip. It was my only Eel of the week and was some consolation for having lost the other one.

During that full week we had many a laugh. It was pleasant fun in pleasant company. There was plenty to eat and drink and the weather was good. Too soon it was time to return home-to more blanks, I assumed.

Ah well, might as well do it the hard way and have a session or two on a really difficult water. At least I would have an excuse. However, as often happens, the following weekend I had one run and took an Eel of nearly four pounds. A few weekends and another four pounder, this time from my favourite, St Margarets on the Lea Navigation. I would have fished that venue a lot more but the water level was unpredictable as work progressed on laying some gas pipes across the bed of the canal.

Three Eels now, and my annual week on the Meres still to come. The summer sped by as always and here we were, travelling to Shropshire, David Walker and I. I had told him so much about the Meres and of how the water had to have a good flow on it for the fishing to be good. We arrived to find a good flow but even as we stood talking to Dave Holman the wind eased and the water went calm. That is how it stayed all week, with not a run between us. Dave had earlier had an Eel while the wind was on the water Terry and Jan arrived to stay until the Thursday but the Eels did not appreciate the company. I managed to catch a Bat which hit the line and went for a swim, but that was all the action we had on Whitemere. Many a banquet we had that week, and Jan did us proud. All good things must end and after saying farewell to Terry and Jan, we both deserve a good kick for we both lost Eels that first night on Blakemere. In daytime we whacked out some good Dace on the canal which runs within a few yards from the Mere in places. But, came the time to pack up, and we had both blanked. I took it quite well, as I've blanked before on the Meres. But I have many pleasant memories of the area and it has yielded a few of its Eels to me. To David it seems a dreadful place, Eelwise. I hope he comes to know it as I do. Suffice to say that this year will see me there again. This time there will be two Suttons for the Eels to contend with.

After our return I had some odd time owing to me and I had another good Eel from St Margarets. I fished until late in the year, but with no more Eels.

I ought to be able to tell you something of my methods and of my tackle. But there is little to tell in that respect.

My methods were very much of a return to basics. With quite normal tackle and dare I say it, a nylon trace. True, I lost the big Eel at Larkfield and true it was the trace which let me down. I will not say it was 'bitten through!'. It was abraided to the point point where it parted under pressure. I still think it is reasonable to expect that, once in a while, of the piece of tackle which takes most punishment.

I did little sub-surface fishing during '82. Somehow conditions rarely seemed right for it and I did so want a few Eels before I started using 'way out' methods.

Lessons learned? I don't think I learned anything of note except that all the tricks in the world will not produce an Eel when they are not feeding.

As to David Walkers secret weapon, which I have left until last, it turned out to be chickens innards. Not just ordinary run of the mill chickens innards, but months old ones. They had been frozen and defrosted countless times AND THEY WERE EVIL. They are guaranteed to keep all living beasts away-and in that they worked only too well.

Arthur Sutton.

EEL FISHING FROM BOATS (without tears).

About four years ago I hired a Punt from the Ellesmere Anglers and parked up some 35yds from a most fishy area of crosemere. It was a glorious evening and in the large Punt I was able to set up all my usual Eel fishing equipment without too much problem even the bedchair was in use and with four rods poking out at different angles the whole unit must have resembled a machine gun post awaiting attack.

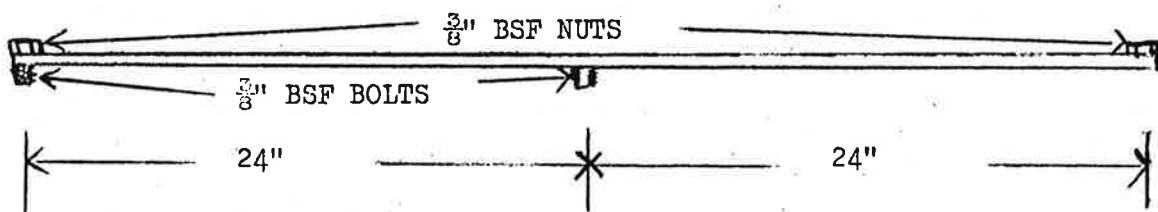
All was well until after dark when the wind picked up and began to blow across my pitch sending the Punt first one direction and then the other. With each movement came well orchestrated bleeps and buzzes from my bite alarms.

Came morning and I vowed that boat fishing was not for me, the bank was far more friendly and a hell of a lot quieter. Since then I have fished with anglers far more experienced in the art of boat fishing and slowly i've come to grips with it and even started to enjoy the odd trip.

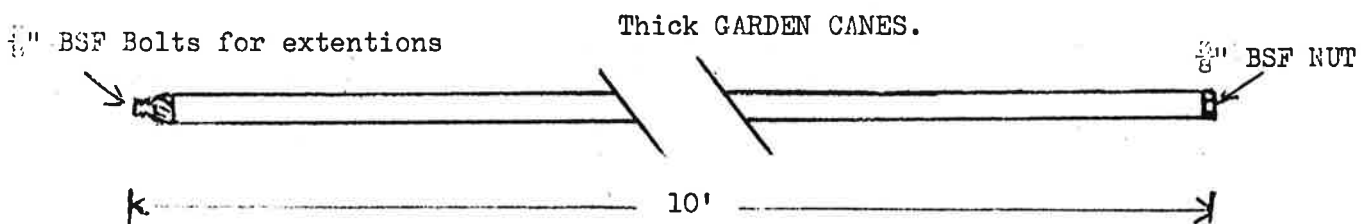
First of all it is important that you get your rods and bite alarm set up detached from the boat, solve this one and you are half way there. Then no matter how much the boat is pitching about, properly set your alarms will not be playing you up.

For this I would recommend you make a gadget like so:-

The main cross bar should be of MILD STEEL.

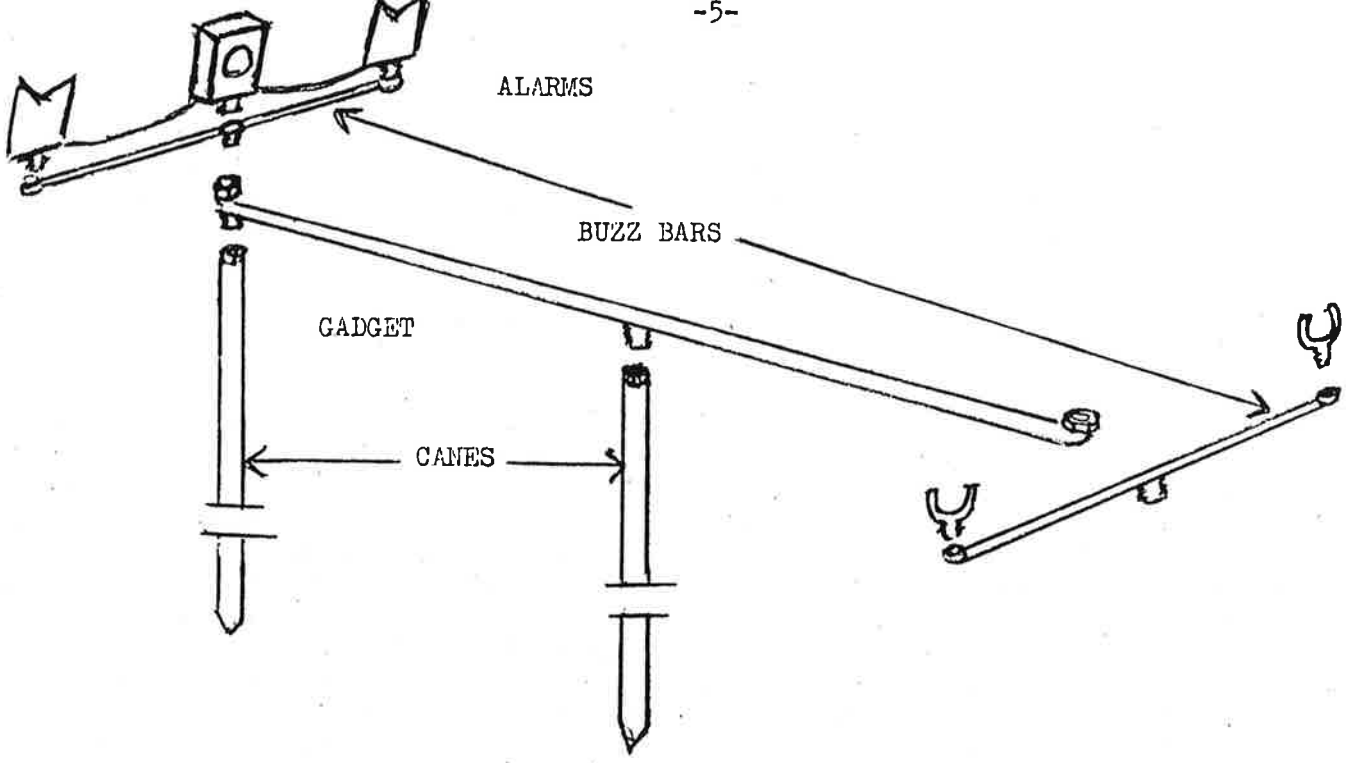


Also a few long bank sticks:-

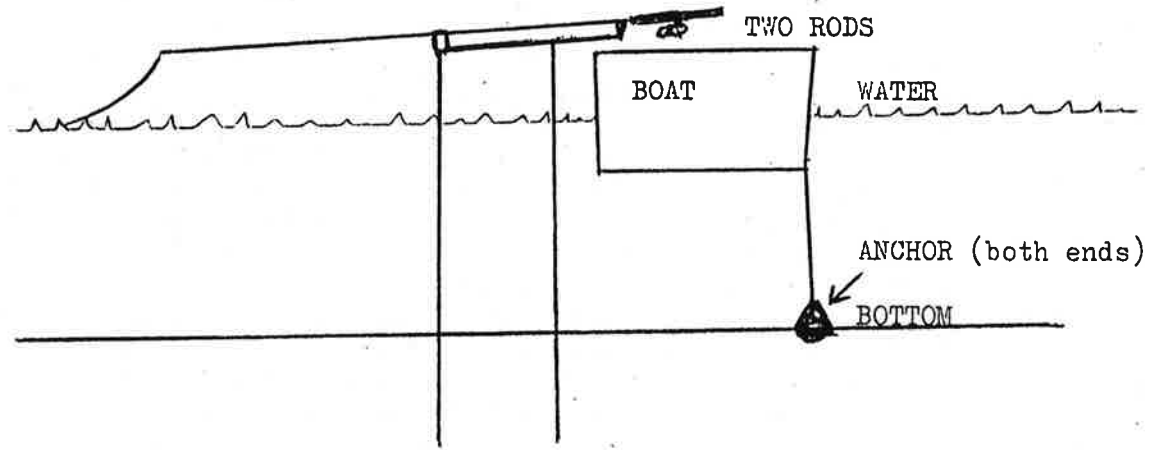


Then you can set up your rig, needing only a set of buzz-bars to complete it.

Incidentally, there is no need to buy a nice but costly units, supplied by Bait 78 (sorry Dave, even more so since I won your donated set in a recent club raffle).



And use like so :-



From the diagrams I hope it is obvious that the rod butt is well over the boat without any part of the rods or unit touching it. Also, if needed a glow bobbin can be used between the reel and butt ring and inside the boat.

The alarms to use must be either the A.J.S. or optonic type, it is no use if you have to lean out over the boat to place the line behind the antenna.

Having solved the bite alarm problem, we have to consider the weather and here the only advice I can offer is to dress as if you were going for a days piking in coldest January, then simply add a few more sweaters. By hell it gets cool in the middle of a lake even in summer.

Happy Boating chaps.

Dave Holman.

A LOT OF NOTHING(a seasons report).

The year started, evidently as it meant to go on. Castle Waters was the venue I decided to start on. We arrived ready for a two day stint. Steve Hollobone and Pete Hyland being my companions. Although I did have a couple of other non-fishing companions. My two daughters. Foolhardy you might feel but where I go they go even if it kill THEM! In fact they enjoyed the weekend more than we did. I had one Eel of about 12ozs. Steve had one dropped run. Pete didn't Eel fish but tried for the Tench. He had as much success as we with the Eels. What a start!

For the next few weeks I had no chance to go Eel fishing at all. It was then time for our summer trip to Hampshire. 'All those lovely Barbel' I couldn't wait to get at 'em. During our five days at this fishing paradise it turned into the Hottest week I've ever had while on holiday. In fact it rivelled the middle east, 'by christ it was hot!'. We fished from as early as possible until about 11 o'clock in the Morning we then retired to the pub. I didn't think the day would dawn where I would leave the river bank to go to the pub. I am a social drinker, if I drink five pints of Lager a year my system thinks I've gone mad. Pete and Steve both rolled up at their tea-total, stck in the mud companion as he virtually dragged them in the pub for a couple at every opportunity. We would then go back to the guest house, put our now replenished bait stock in the fridge, which was provided for this purpose. This guest house had everything the angler could hope for. Then a shower, an early evening meal and back to the river by 6 o'clock. This was becoming hard work, the heat certainly wasn't helping. In four days all we caught were a few smallish Chub. Oh, Steve did manage one small Barbel of 8lb 2oz on the fourth morning, the swine!

In gratitude for my doing all the driving for the week, Pete and Steve decided to treat me to a days fishing on the 'Royalty'. They felt sure I would get the Barbel I dearly wanted. After a day of great fishing really, the tally ended at Steve, two Barbel, Pete, four Barbel and yuors truly, NONE!!!! Our group has a size limit on recorded fish. I managed two Chub which were bookable, several that were smaller, some massive Dace and I had a large Pike on for several minutes, this having taken a Dace as I pulled it in. The Dace looked like it had been to an away football match. Pete, always the diplomat, tried to console me with a few little quips like, "If you fished in a bucket down here you'd catch a Chub". A very disgruntled and tired me decided to give it best at around 7 o'clock. Then we started the 120 mile drive home. Now, you might think that the weeks fishing trip would be well and truly over. Not so, all who have fished with us know that Steve has at least two or three disasters a trip, he still had one to come. Feeling very hungry we decided to stop for a fish supper at West End Southampton. Now, Steve's taste in women is strange to say the least, There behind the counter was the ultimate in bad taste. This may seem a little cruel but you weren't looking at her. A strange glow appeared in Steve's eyes. As we stood outside enjoying our supper, Steve, who's mind was definately not on fish and chips, looked up at the stars and said "I think I'm in love". Poor old Pete was put right off his food, I just went into hysterics.

It was at this time I lost my child minder for the rest of the summer. My parents usually look after the girls while I'm night fishing but due to my father having a bad fall and then getting a severe chest infection as a result put paid to that. My sister came to the rescue, she had them for one night a week. So every Tuesday saw me on my way to fish a complex of gravel pits out near Lydd. In six sessions I caught two Pike and had one run which I feel was an Eel. That was that! Another resounding failure.

My next effort for Eels was at Nelsons Pit where Steve caught three Eels in five minutes as he wrote in the last Bulletin. My grand total of Eels caught in 1983 had reached three. It never increased, the season was now over as far as Eel fishing was concerned.

Well thats it, as the title of this piece dipicts a Lot of Nothing! Alan Mitchell.

A GOLDEN OLDIE.

I will be featuring a selection of articles. Some by present members others from past members. To start this series I am publishing the most asked after piece.

WHITEMERE REVISITED.

There are two well known reasons for attending any sort of group outing. One of these is "the grass is greener on the other side" syndrome, which states that fish grow bigger the further one travels from home, for Eels the equation balances at about one pound per fifty miles. Take me and the Thames, for example. Most summer weekends will find me hunched over the wheel of a battered Morris Minor doing my best to get as far away as possible from this river. After all, it is right on my doorstep and I could fish it every night. Therefore, I don't fish it at all. But as I cram the old car along I surely pass better anglers than I going in the other direction, bent on fishing the Thames. Some of them fish for Eels and they generally seem to catch them too, some quite large.

I suppose it is an exaggeration to say I have never fished the Thames. I have had a few half hearted efforts there, mainly blanks apart from the odd pleasure boat straining the tackle. And once I did catch two small Eels. But it is the distant lake, with its half remembered tales of monster Eels that grips the imagination, not the humdrum local pit where enthusiasm wanes before the onslaught of bootlaces and blanks. So we leap into our chariots, with a few choice phrases from our wives resounding in our ears and career off into the blue yonder. This time a six pounder will be ours.

The second and most logical reason is the social aspect of the outing. To me, this always makes a trip worth while, regardless of results. There is no better mid-season tonic than a group of mates to steal coffee from, to laugh at and be ridiculed in return, to show new gadgets to and to swap ideas with. I invariably return from group trips with renewed enthusiasm and suspect that many others do too.

But there is a third reason. Historically, it is the most important, though sadly neglected of late. It is this, a Club outing should bring a team of experts to a difficult water to amass a solid core of fact and an equally useful body of opinion in as short a time as possible. After the trip is over the local member should then be able to enjoy greatly improved sport because of this rapid gain in understanding. It all sounds a bit ideallistic but it has worked before - the Grand Union Canal is one shining example of how successive group efforts have sorted out the techniques for specimen Eels from a difficult water. And now I believe it has happened again, not, as yet, for the local member but for one of the blue yonder merchants - myself!

Those brave souls who were there will need little reminder of last years outing to the Shropshire Meres. As an exercise in futility it seemed (at the time) to be the ultimate, it could have been used as a training camp for the Grand Order of Stoice. Not the normal sort of blank, where the odd twitch or abortive run keeps the angler hopeful but complete and devastating blanks where the line moves not a millimeter from the time it is cast out until it is sadly reeled in again. Added to this was the problem of the local populace of Shropshire, to whom the National Anguilla Club was an event to be compared with the local fair, or the time when farmer 'Giles' bull ran amok and broke all the windows in the high street. (They still talk about it you know. This year at Whitemere I was politely told that the Anguilla Club had spent a whole week here last summer. They hadn't caught much, so what chance did I stand!). Anyway, last year it became a matter of some embarrassment. Every morning, a weatherbeaten face with kindly eyes would appear round the broolly entrance and politely enquire about the sport. After the reply that was no sport, or words to that effect, the eyes generally assumed that look of sorrowing pity shown by the relatives of harmless lunatics. To boost our confidence, the face would then speak of the good old days, when Eels were taken to Shrewsbury market by the sackful "right from the spot you are fishing now, sir". The grand finale to all this was the local gamekeeper, who

spoke of a certain poacher who came every night in the summer to lay deadlines all along the banks of Crossmere where we had struggled in vain for three nights. "Every night he comes sir. Must have thirty lines. Hundreds of Eels he's had, hundreds. But he's crafty, young George is, he'll not be about while you're here."

I thought I had seen a furtive shape sneaking towards me at dusk and then creeping away again. Now I knew and derived little comfort from the knowing.

It was largely the pressure from the locals that drove us to explore every dark corner of the meres; partly to try and catch something to restore a tarnished reputation and partly to escape observation if we did not. And this was a thoroughly good thing. . . Partly by instinct, partly by observation, we began to draw some conclusions about these waters. It seemed that our slow sport might be explained by our being there at the height of the summer, when the water was so full of life that the anglers bait stood little chance of being noticed. Some of the meres were like vegetable soup. The margins were black with fry and the air black with insects. There and then I decided to return at the back end of a future season, when food may be a little less plentiful.

Further, John Harris and myself became convinced that the water choice was Whitemere. Now last summer, there was the most colossal bloom of algae in full swing during our week. The water was just like grey paint. Also, the algae shaded out the bottom weed which promptly floated to the surface in pursuit of the sun; great mats of the stuff drifted round the lake, either sailing before the wind or tacking sideways in response to an eddy current. Fishing in such conditions was not much fun. No matter how we tried the weed sailed in at sunset, and laid siege to us all night. On my first night, one rod was completely buried by the stuff, and at dawn I thought it had been stolen. It lost me the only run of the week; for the rod tip was submerged beneath a ton of the stuff when I struck, and did not move even though the butt came up to the vertical. Amazing really that the rod didn't break. But John being John, had several runs on giant deadbait every night, he did not actually catch anything, but in comparison with the other meres, sport at Whitemere was fast.

There was also a personal score to settle with Whitemere. I fished it on the last night the night of the STORM. More need not be said for those who were there. I had resolved on one final grand effort and so carted all my tackle round to the furthest corner of the lake, here the bank was steep and wooded and the deep water inshore made the pitch quite distinct from any other swims on the Mere. To the left, the only lily bed on the lake added to the illusion of the perfect Eel swim. This is a night I shall never forget. For a start, the sweltering heat and mile walk, laden like a pack horse, had left me quite incapable of anything but swearing at the flies around my head, at least for the first hour. (Dave Smith had most selfishly purloined his tackle trolley for his own use that night). So it was quite dark when my tackle was finally assembled.

By this time there was an almost continual growl of thunder from over the horizon and every now and again, a bright flash of lightning would show up the surrounding branches in grotesque and frightening shapes. Between flashes, the darkness seemed intensified and the great trees came pressing in upon this unwelcome stranger. So I steeled myself for an interesting night, blew up the air-bed and settled down with the flask of coffee. Then I heard the thing in the bushes. Something was sneaking about behind me, in a series of short dashes with irregular pauses between. Gradually, the rustlings and snapping of twigs got closer and closer. It was quite clear to my unsettled mind that something fancied me for dinner, something rather large, that was doing its best not to be observed but which was too heavy not to make a noise every time it moved. After pondering this interesting conclusion for a while and studying the slender defences of a polythene sheet around the broolly, it seemed that action was called for. So I unshipped the landing net from the pole and telescoped the three sections down to one. Rather too heavy to be much use as a landing net handle, this pole of mine, but what a club! Many are the swans that know about my landing net handle! Armed with this club I crept from my shelter and took refuge behind a large tree-trunk prepared to do

battle if need be. Nothing happened for quite a while and I was just beginning to put the whole thing down to an over active imagination when the bushes in front of me began part as something heaved its way through. You know the old saying about ones hair standing on end. It's true believe me. I raised the pole aloft and let out a vast shout mainly out of sheer terror. Whether it was the sight of me and the pole, or my yell, or the combination of both with a lurid flash of lightning, I don't know, but the Thing panicked and fled. I could just see the bushes thrown into violent motion as it departed and could hear it's progress through the wood as it went. It sounded like a bull rhino but I doubt if it was. Indeed, I have no idea at all what it was but the evidence of its departure was quite obvious next morning in trampled under growth and broken branches.

So I retired trembling to the broolly and chain smoked for a while. Eventually, I calmed down and settled upon the air-bed. Then the rats came. Giant rats that rushed down the bank to trip over the oscillator leads and scabble at the polythene sheeting. Once again I had to sally forth with the landing net handle, this time to a quarry more my own size. But I am not affraid of rats and gradually learned to live with them. After all, there would be no rats if the Thing returned. Indeed, I eventually dosed off, whereupon the thunderstorm sneaked up on me and then let rip right over my head. The first clap saw me several feet in the air-horizontally-off the air-bed, believing the end of the world was, at last, at hand. It was easily the most impressive storm I have ever seen and I believe I did not have even the worst of it. It seemed to centre on Blakemere a few miles away and the two members there there had an experience not to be forgotten. However, the rain was definately centred on Whitemere. The trouble with air-beds is that they tend to float, especially when there is about an inch and a half of water pouring down a 45 degree bank. I was treated to the erie sensation of constantly drifting out of the front of my broolly and having to paddle back in again. This lasted until about 2am, when the rain settled down to nice gentle torrent. Exhausted, I went to sleep and did not wake up again until about 8am.

The storm had gone, the sun was shining and the wood seemed peaceful and friendly again. No point in staying in such boring surroundings, so I packed up. In came the first rod. One completely untouched deadbait. Likewise the second. But when I reeled in the third rod, which originally held a worm, there on the end was a bootlace of 4oz. Not nearly big enough to move the line, indeed, if the sun had not been out, I would have thought my worm was still on the end.

What an insult! A night straight out of a novel by Edgar Allen Poe, followed by the smallest Eel of the season. As though the lake said; "Take that, you silly bastard, and don't come here again". So I put the Eel in a polythene bag, put the bag in my trouser pocket and left.

I returned to Whitemere on Saturday august 26th, 1972. The change in the water was quite astonishing; gone were the great mats of weed and instead of looking like paint, the water was almost clear. Although the previous week had been hot and sunny, it was now heavily overcast and very humid. Fish were rising and splashing about all over the lake and it seemed, even to my pessimistic soul, that prospects might be quite reasonable.

My wife was with me and so was an enormous mass of tackle and camping gear. It was fairly obvious that long walks to distant swims were out of the question and in any case, I had no evidence to suggest that the spot 10yds from the car was better than anywhere else. So 10yds from the car it was- all week in fact, apart from one night off at Colemere.

At 5 o'clock, Ernie Orme appeared, complete with a bucket full of bait, a two gallon tank of water and daily papers to keep us in touch with the outside world. Throughout the week, Ernie was about the most thoughtful and generous companion a fisherman could wish to have, despite having to work nearly every day, he made the 50 mile journey on

on several nights, even though he often had to pack up at midnight. Towards the end of the week, in fact, I did not want to catch any more Eels. I wanted Ernie to get amongst them. There is no question but that those Meres owe him a fish of over six pounds, and I most sincerely hope it will not be too long before it happens.

The first night we had Bleak, Rudd, Roach and Lob Worms in our armoury and we cast a variety of riches out into the mere. Darkness slowly crept over us and we sat down to a long chat and a succession of warming brews. To be honest, it would not be true that either of us were particularly optimistic. Ernie was convelescening from nine successive blanks at Blakemere, while I had only logic to say there would be sport and a lot of experience to say there would not. So it was a bit of a surprise to hear my oscillator sounding off at 22.00hrs. I was at the rod in a flash to find something twitching and jerking at three large lob worms.

After a prolonged dithering session, both by the fish and myself, I struck into an Eel of about a pound. It came in fast, as Eels of this size are liable to do and was deposited in the bin with the minimum of fuss. After all, I had caught rather a lot of Eels about this size, and admit to a certain lack of enthusiasm for them. I was astonished, therefore, to see Ernie showing symptoms of great delight. It seemed, however, that this was the first Eel he had witnessed from the meres this year and one does not quibble about size when one sees something thought to be extinct!

After this event, things went awfully quiet for a long time. The initial period of expectantion had long passed and we were both beginning to feel the need to kip. As a last move before sleep, I wandered down to Ernie's pog, to exchange a final cigarette (his are bigger than mine) and a few last words. As we stood talking, I became aware of a steady hissing sound in the background. I knew it wasn't raining and became so puzzled that I eventually asked Ernie if I might flash a torch round his swim to try to find the source of the noise. Permission granted, I began to look round. Nothing horrible under the brolly, first rod OK, second rod bouncing up and down in the rests as the line poured off into the mere! We both charged into the water to get at it. Something was hell-bent on reaching the far bank with Ernie's Bleak. It must have taken at least forty yards of line before it stopped dead. We settled down to that awful period of tension trying to decide whether the fish had dropped the bait or was swallowing it. Ernie was quite incoherent by this time muttering things like, "Never seen a run like it. Must be five pounds. Probably six."

My comments were a shade more to the point. "Eat it you bugger", said I.

Then it started off again, at the same breakneck pace. Ernie leaned forward to get the bale arm on before striking and I looked round for the bin. Ernie struck, there was a mighty jerk on the rod tip and then all went slack. The line, apparently a perfectly sound 15lb monofil, had parted some thirty yards from the hook. Possibly it had passed through a sharp mussel shell, or around a rock. I don't think I have ever been more disappointed at losing a fish and poor Ernie was heartbroken, indeed, if I had waited for nine sessions before getting a run, and then lost it, I suspect I might have flung all my tackle in the mere and stompt of home. As it was, we slunk back into our brollies in utter dejection and waited for dawn.

The cloud persisted all the next day and the second night promised to be even better. I trickled off to the local farm pond and extracted a dozen Rudd and prepared my tackle with some expectation. The Bleak I had brought with me were no longer in a usable state but the Rudd seemed a perfectly good bait. From the runs the previous night, I had worked out that the fish were probably feeding about forty to sixty yards out in about 12 ft of water, the other side of a dence bed of soft weed. So two Rudd went there and the third was placed inshore. I then assembled a worm tackle, using a lightweight rod about the strength of a MK IV and an ancient Intrepid Supreme reel which had seen much better days. The line was only 10lb, anything stronger would surely have broken the reel into a thousand tiny pieces.

The first run came just before dark and produced another 1lb effort on worm. Shortly after midnight, the worm was off again and with strange grinding noises from the reel I eventually beached an Eel of just over two pounds. All the time the Rudd sat there untouched. Then at dawn the oscillator sounded off again. I was hard on, and my wife prodded me into action to switch the b..... thing off. The worm was off again. As usual, a hesitant, twitching run that seemed unable to make up it's mind. I left it for about a minute, pulled off a couple of yards of line and struck hard as the line eventually tightened. The reel made a sound of antique machinery in torment and the rod tip whipped smartly round towards the water. A long, hard battle followed. Knowing my tackle, I did not credit the Eel with anything over about 3lb, indeed, I had no time to think of this as I tried to persuade the winch into some sort of activity. Eventually the fish came to the edge. Unlike the others, it did not come out of the water on the first heave, there was still quite a lot of Eel in the water with two feet on the bank. Then it was that I recognised a four pounder, a fact that was rammed home as by the struggle to confine it to my dustbin. It eventually turned the scales at 4.3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

The day was heavy and overcast as before. I had a certain impatience to display the catch to Ernie when he turned up for the next night. In the meantime, three roach fishermen turned up and started hammering out fish one after the other, they eventually took about 20lb away in buckets and sacks to stock a local pond they owned. So to pass the time, I tried to join in on the act. Single maggot tactics at thirty yards range is not my strong point but I did manage to catch about five fish before it became dark. The Roach were somehow much softer and succulent than the stunted Rudd out of the farm ponds around, and I decided to use them as bait during the coming night, despite the fact that they were rather larger than I normally use, about 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -8 inches.

Ernie arrived, settled down in the same spot as before and the kettle went on. This time, however there was a sense of expectation in the air. Not long after dark there was another run on worm and another modest fish of a pound. As on the previous night, all went quiet. The night brooded on and the tension mounted, something had to happen before it was over. Then at 22.40 the oscillator sounded again. A quick inspection led me to the rod holding the biggest dead-bait, fully sixty yards out into the mere. The line was peeling off in a steady purposeful manner. Ernie and I hovered above it, chain smoking, and trying to make sure that not the slightest obstruction occurred. It went on and on, never slackening pace nor speeding up, just deliberate and purposeful. Then it stopped dead. Ernie hesitated, wandering up and down a few times and then sat on the bin.

"I'm in that weed bed too" said Ernie. "Swallowing the bait with the Eel".

"This one's going to be big," said I. "The way it took that roach, seemed as though nothing could stop it".

Ernie said nothing, but lit another cigarette from the stub of the old one. The second dragged by and turned into minutes. I walked away and came back, I fiddled with the inert line and smoked. Eventually I was convinced the fish had dropped the bait after all, so I reached into my pocket for a piece of silver paper, folded it into a loop and hung it on the line. No sooner was it on than it leapt into the air. The line was flying off the spool as fast as I have ever seen it go. Somehow the rod was in my hand a few feet of line was pulled free, the bale arm slammed home and I leant forward to strike. As I swung into action, the line tightened hard and all I could do was raise the rod tip about a foot. For an appreciable time, the fish was taking as much line as I was gaining, then by a stint of heavy pumping I started to win. Suddenly the line went completely slack. That sickening feeling of losing a great fish swept over me as I reeled in frantically hoping to find the Eel again. About twenty yards came in before the rod tip swung over again, and stayed down. Obviously, the fish had given up its attempt for the opposite bank and run towards me as far as the weed-bed, where it had stuck. Eventually, I worked it clear and steadily brought it ashore.

Ernie fell upon it like a man possessed and started to cram it into my bin. There was a brief and nasty battle and then the lid slammed home and Ernie sat down on it hard. I had not participated in the encounter between man and beast, for fear of severe personal injury and so had not seen what I had caught, eventually, when Ernie had recovered sufficiently to rise shakily to his feet we opened the lid and peered in. Great fat coils of Eel glistened inside and I knew it was a personal best. Indeed it was, at five pounds six ounces.

After that we had no more runs and dawn came in peace and tranquility. That day the cloud broke and the sun came through. The mere went dead and all sence of atmosphere disappeared. We left too and spent a dismal cold night at Colemere, under the glitter of a thousand stars. Not a touch of course. So we returned to Whitemere again. The Roach were almost uncatchable by now and I took only one, for the rest I had one Perch and a few Rudd. Inspection of the worm tin revealed the remains of a few moribund worms.

The night was cold, clear and blank but if one shone a light on the water, it rose in a glittering shower of small Roach leaping out of the water right in the margin. Alas, the Eels did not follow them in, only the Pike-and my thoughts on Pike at night are not to be printed.

So I took off my boots and went to bed. Just at dawn the oscillator sounded and I rushed forth, quite forgetting about boots until a nasty cold feeling crept about my feet. So I charged back in and forced them on-on to the wrong feet as it happened-which made my progress down the bank erratic, to say the least. It transpired that the containing the Roach dead-bait was in action. Just about the spot where I had cast a great gaggle of water-fowl was charging about. I have been had like this before and carefully watched the surface for the Grebe when it surfaced. But the line stopped and moved off again with no sign of the bird, so I struck and landed an Eel of something over three pounds.

And that, apart from a few abortive runs on worm was the last sign of action for the week. The weather was perfect for my wife, which means lousy for fishing. After I returned, Ernie maintained the sseige but has so far not got amongst the fish again. I am sure that had the weather lasted, an Eel of over six pounds would have come out but I am equally sure that without exactly the right conditions this mere is a very difficult water indeed. It is possible that conditions will only be right on two or three weekends during the whole season. I shall do my best to be there on those nights next year and I hope, Ernie, that you will be there too.

PS Ernie informs me that his continued seige resulted in the capture of just one more Eel. Another beast of a pound that came on September 24th at 01.15 to double lob.

Alan Hawkins.

Note from the Editor:-

This is I feel a really great article. Perhaps a few of the older members can remember others of equal quality. If so let me know the titles and I will attempt to track down copies. And publish them as soon as possible.

Alan Mitchell.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

Dear Editor,

May I, through your good self, thank all the members of The National Anguilla Club for the very great honour they have bestowed on me in making me an Honorary Life Member. And for the very nice presentation of a fixed spool reel. I have already decided that the reel will be used only for very light Eel fishing (alongside my other Loch Ness Monster outfits).

I feel very proud of the great honour you have bestowed on me. For my part, I undertake to continue to serve the Club and its members as best I can. The presentation has led to a New Year resolution from me to do even more Eel fishing than ever before, ignoring loud groans of dismay and utter disbelief from my wife.

I cannot, in so few words, express my thanks to you all sufficiently. I wish you all a very enjoyable and successful year ahead.

A.J.Sutton. (President)

MAINLY FOR NEWCOMERS (and others)

A little about myself (what, again?), of the events leading to my being a dedicated Eel man and some new findings relative to Eel fishing.

Several cars and motorcycles, one woman, too few Eels and countless pints of beer ago, I became passionately interested in the capture of large Eels. At that time I was a youthful seventeen. I was a budding tournament caster and even won a few events, mainly when the opposition was terribly weak or had failed to turn up for the event. Had I continued along that trail I have no doubt that today I would be Minister for Sport. Perhaps, even Sir Arthur!

I go back to a fine day early one August and a trip to the river Lea after the huge Perch which I knew to inhabit that stretch of the river. I was using small live Bleak fished hard on the bottom and had taken several nice fish when the sky blackened and within minutes there was a torrential downpour. Leaving my gear where it was, I took refuge at the foot of a huge Beech Tree, sheltering beneath my yellow cycle cape. After some time, during which my tree was twice struck by lightning, the storm abated and I returned to my tackle. My rod and reel were the ultimate in specimen hunting gear—a whole cane rod with a greenheart top and large porcelain rings suitably balanced (and it needed to be) with a wooden star back reel of the type that Walton used so well. Laugh you may, but that rod had served me well—as a Pike rod, a Perch rod and a clothes line prop. It had one nasty habit. During a fishing session the top would sag and sag and sag to a point where the tip drooped into the water. I believe today that someone saw my rod—and invented the swing tip. However, it came as no great surprise when I saw the top was bent down touching the surface of the water.

On trying to retrieve, I thought at first that I had hooked the sunken barge a few yards away and downstream of where I was fishing. But, whereas the barge was downstream the object I had hooked was upstream of me, and it started to move. Very slowly at first, so slowly that I hardly realised the strain on my tackle but when it gathered speed there was little I could do except follow it along the river bank. I followed that fish for perhaps sixty yards until a bankside tree settled the argument in favour of the fish. On reaching the tree there was little I could do except hang on grimly and pray. Now, I am rather better at hanging on grimly, than I am at praying and in

any case HE wasn't listening. My brute force tactics resulted in the fish coming to the surface and for the first time I could see that I was connected to a huge Eel. Not the largest I've ever seen but at that time it was to me a truly enormous fish. The inevitable happened when, with a loud crack, my gut substitute cast parted and I watched MY Eel slowly descend. I packed up and cycled home, suffering two punctures and a brush with a trolley bus as I got back to 'the smoke'. Those events were soon forgotten for in my mind was but one thing, an indellible picture of that Eel, which remains with me today.

There was no more fishing for me that summer, for some joker stole my bike. My sister bought me another in time for the next season and I was to discover other Eel holding stretches of the River Lea-until that cycle, too, was stolen. But I got to the river whenever I could and in the process made another important discovery. I found that if I told the ticket collector that I had hurriedly boarded the train at the previous station, I could do the return trip for sixpence. Which, considering it covered a round trip of some fourty odd miles, was very good value for money. Its not that I'm mean. Just a little careful and in any case I had to reach those fish, by fair means or foul. I soon notched up a string of four pound Eels, nearly all of which came from the same stretch of river and by now I had taken to night fishing exclusively-all highly illegal. But I was on good terms with the lock keeper and used to look after his cycle while he raided a local orchard! However, I soon fancied that I must travel further afield and with that in mind I purchased my first motorised transport.

It was a clapped out 1938 Francis Barnet motor cycle and they don't come any more clapped out than that machine. She, for I believe, it, to be of that gender and called it a cow on many occasions, had one nasty habit. After standing for more than five minutes it would stubbornly refuse to start, until I discovered its little secret. It involved turning the machine upside down and shaking vigourously. It had, I believe, something to do with seperating the sludge from the petrol. Tied together with all sorts of string, I used to while away the hours hoping that someone would invent Cellotape. Viva la MOT!

The following years brought me spells of success punctuated with long blank periods and I came to realise that this Eel fishing was no mugs game. There was no recipe for instant success but maybe several heads would be better than one. So during a spell in hospital, when I had little else to do except eye up the local talent, I sent a letter to the Angling Times. This resulted, some time later, in the formation of the National Anguilla Club.

Before coming a little nearer to the present time, I must pay tribute to the long succession of dedicated chaps who have been members of our Club. All of them contibuted in one way or another to the well being of the Club before giving up the search for large Eels in order to pursue other species. They have all given a great deal of effort in our search for more knowledge of the Eel and the improvement of tactics employed in its capture. Progress has been slow and such changes as have come about are, on the whole, subtle ones. Some of our methods, I admit, were looked on as crude and have given rise to much merriment. But I do assure Dr Alan Hawkins that we no longer use hedge hogs as bait-not whole ones anyway, for they attack the Eels. When progress is slow, it is hard to see but when one looks back on twenty years of Anguilla Club magazines and annual reports it is clear that progress has been made. In any case the exercises has been, and still is, a most enjoyable one. And surely that is what angling is all about.

Anguilla Club records, made up from countless hundreds of reports from members show that although decent Eels are taken more frequently at night than during the day, moonlit nights are disasterously slow when compared with other nights. Many reasons were put forward as to why this should be, the favourite one being that because the sky was cloudless the temperature of the water fell rapidly, causing the Eels to refrain from feeding. Another theory was that the Eels, being adverse to light,

would remain hidden and inactive. One or other of these were usually given when one blanked on a moon lit night and for years we have been satisfied that they were valid reasons for catching nothing. Again we see the similarity between ourselves and other anglers, for we are always searching for an excuse.

But from information gleaned from many sources it dawned on me that we might be doing something wrong. I started something like a campaign within the Club and the theme was 'Moonlight fishing for Eels'. Members will tell you that I was almost hysterical in my appeal for participation, so convinced was I that new methods would be successful. The idea was that on brightly moonlit nights the Eels would rise to near the surface to feed, and that we should present our baits at a suitable depth. The campaign got off to a very slow start at first because most members were sceptical and secondly because those who were silly enough to embark on such a scheme, reported precious little in the way of success. It began to look like yet another hair-brained scheme doomed to failure, until a telephone call from a couple of our members confirmed that the idea did work-BUT NOT ON MOONLIT NIGHTS. Only on cloudy ones. Further trials brought me instant success and the title of my campaign was hurriedly changed from 'Moonlight Angling for Eels' to 'Near Surface Fishing for Eels'. I could have added large Eels too, for it appears that only the larger Eels are taken near the surface.

After three or four years the campaign is still in its infancy and many problems remain to be solved. But we are, it seems, moving in the right direction and several factors have come to light (if not moonlight-sorry). It now appears that best use can be made of moonlit nights on waters which are cloudy or coloured. On waters which are very clear, Eels can be taken near to the surface but only on the cloudy nights. Even then, the bait requires to be presented at a greater depth than on cloudy waters. On these 'cloudy waters', Eels can be taken on baits presented on the surface itself. Another problem, still without adequate resolution, is that of hooking the Eels. It is true to say that a much higher percentage of runs which are missed or where no connection is made, occurs with baits, which are presented right at the surface. It seems to me, although I cannot substantiate it, that the deeper one presents the bait, the less of a problem hooking becomes.

If I may digress for a moment, an idea was suggested which, I suppose, could be called Margin Fishing for Eels. The method is this-attach a dead-bait to a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb bottom in only inches of water and within easy reach of the bank. Tether the line to the bank, put on a telltale or indicator and sit well back and wait, with a brick in each hand. As soon as the indicator moves, reach out over the bait lowering the bricks at the same time. Then bring the two bricks smartly together. It is alledged that this method can cause some pain-but not if you keep your thumbs on the outsides of the bricks! To return to sanity, or something like it.

Another factor which relates to the feeding of Eels or to where they will feed is that of temperature. I have again brought the thermometer into use but this time with a difference. Let me illustrate. Here is my Air/water thermometer, a fine instrument of its kind but I now suggest, of little use in angling. With it, I used to record something like this. 20.00 hrs Air temp 68F, Water temp 62F. 04.00 hrs Air temp 50F, Water temp 62F. No detectable change in water temperature, yet change there had to be, however small.

With the newer Digital instrument I am currently using the readings begin to make more sense-but remember that we are looking for rather minute changes. This is what I would record now.

20.00 hrs Air temp 68F Water temp 62F. 04.00 hrs Air temp 50F Water temp 61.68F.
A detectable change in water temperature of .32F.

I am certain that using the digital thermometer we will record changes in temperature at the surface which will enable us to define why the Eels often feed there. We do

already know that in certain conditions the surface water actually rises in temperature during the night or in the late evening. We also know that often in the Autumn the warmest place in the lake and on record there are many instances of a Pike angler taking a good Eel on a mid-water bait long after we had assumed the Eels had ceased feeding for that year.

Late in the summer of 1983, we experimented with baits presented at or near the surface which were injected with additives. Pilchard oil was soon dismissed as being useless. But our trials with fresh bullocks blood brought instant success. The blood permeates far and wide, sinking slowly as it does so. The better rate of catch was almost unbelievable but it couldn't be denied- we had made something of a discovery and I look forward to the summer of 1984 as being the time when we make great strides in the art of near surface fishing for big Eels.

There is much more we could do but we must present a united front and eagerly let other members know what we are doing and the results of having done it. Our newsletter is always there in case you want to get a message to others somewhat urgently and I do not think our secretary will object. In fact I know that he is simply bursting to help in any way he can. During 1984 I will be fishing at a venue which was lost to me several years ago. I now have exclusive right to fish it and hope to enlarge on that so that Anguilla Club members can enjoy the water. I have to tread somewhat warily, as the water is a commercial trout farm with direct connection to the River Thames. In the past it has yielded quite a number of large Eels to myself and other members. The venue will be an absolute 'Mecca' where margin and near surface Eel fishing is concerned.

Even after over thirty years of Eel fishing I cannot pretend to know all the answers. I do hope however that if a few members read and digest this article it will start them on the road to where they will begin to tell me the answers.

Tight lines to you ALL.

Arthur Sutton.

