

The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

C O N T E N T S

VOL: 20.

No1.

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MY SEASON 1982.

At the start of 1982 I decided that apart from the usual new years resolutions, chicken wish bones and throwing coins into wells, I would lay down firm objectives right from the start.

What I wanted (along with quite a lot of other things) was to catch a really big Eel, something over that magical 5lb would do quite nicely, but just how to get one I hadn't worked out yet.

The Spring General Meeting always ensures considerable enthusiasm, and as Mark Davies, Ernie Orme, Stuart Greene and myself drove down to the "Falconers" the desire to get amongst those Eels just grew and grew.

Stuart amazed me with his tremendous enthusiasm, to travel from Dublin for the Meeting must have been a costly and arduous journey yet the only talk was of Eels the giant Irish kind. He soon had us all planning a trip to try our fortunes on his side of the water.

The Meeting was very enjoyable but it didn't give me any real ideas in order to catch my big one, and on returning home I put in considerable time just thinking about the problem.

My existing waters held large enough Eels to more than satisfy my needs, what I wanted was a new approach, another way to attack the whole problem.

After considerable sole searching I decided to utilize all the recent improvements I had made to my boat fishing. Many of the waters I fished had areas that were inaccessible unless you used a boat as a platform. Some anglers occasionally tried out the boats but none to my knowledge, had purposely fished all night for Eels,

This approach would also fit nicely into my next plan, which was to fish two 30-40 acre lakes in the close season. Although the Eel population in each lake is low there was more than a good chance that one of them may produce.

Apart from a couple of day sorties on a local reservoir I started my season on these waters, which are called Deer Park and Chapel. I chose two pitches on each lake. On Chapel the first was 200 yards from the bank, in a three foot muddy swim and the other, a deeper spot of seven feet in the south west corner.

Deer Park has an island called Beckies (named after the owner not the boxer) this was a superb looking pitch. Surrounded by trees it also had a smart Summer House, Fishing Hut, Barbeque and even a Stage (now rotting) from which to fish.

Opposite this " paradise lost " is our Bream spot and the last of my swims on my bait list, each received a twice weekly dose of 100 lobs, odd dead baits and 1 pint of maggots. I put in the bait for a couple of weeks and then brought out the boat from its winters home and set about making it into my Eel headquarters.

Where possible I sink the oars into the shallow mud and tie the boat to these, but when the water is deeper I had two good anchors made from filling flat bottomed biscuit tins with cement, and a similar device was useful for positioning the broolly should the need arise.

FIG:- 1

Most important of all was the bite alarm set up.

FIG:- 2

The A.J.S. gripper alarms are the best alarms I've used for Eels, and on the boat they worked like a dream. Gardeners Tackle made me up a bar on which to set up the alarm system, later I found this worked equally as well afloat or from the bank.

FIG:- 3

Providing the equipment was set out correctly there was enough room to put up all the usual Eel gear including the bedchair. The umbrella was only used in extreme circumstances normally a 7' by 5' canvas sheet served me well, with this I could cover myself nicely should the rain set in.

A large plastic tub complete with close fitting lid was also handy, all the equipment which needed to be kept dry (eg. portable television, video and the last ten copies of CLIMAX) could be put in it.

In addition to the usual flask I took along my " Globetrotter " gas stove. This is a most invaluable item, it is so compact and yet will make endless brews during the early hours. The stove fits neatly into a small canvas bag which also carries a cup, tea bags, sugar, lighter, spoon on a string and a plastic water container (enough for 4 cups). By taking along an extra flask filled with boiling water it was easy to heat it back to boiling point on the small stove before dropping in the mandatory tea bag. This way saves a lot of time and valuable gas.

I never had reason to doubt my choice of boat fishing, my session reports show a string of blanks but all that ground-baiting and pre-baiting certainly moved the Tench, Bream, Perch and Pike and during the early part of the season I had some fabulous catches.

The Club trip to Bala was eagerly awaited by the whole family, that was until I contracted Mumps. Now Mumps is no fun and although I could put up with the jaunts of friends shouting such things as " Hows your nuts ? " etc, when they stretchered me out of the front door into the waiting Ambulance with suspected Meningitis, I thought my Baling days were through. Fortunately for me I survived OK and after a full weeks rest we finally set off for Bala on Thursday June 3rd.

I knew that everyone else would have been fishing the usual spots near the town. We chose an area near the Llanchewlyn and on a small camping site belonging to Mr Hughes (telephone Bala 520 33X). We drove the car right to the waters edge and set up the trailer tent. Soon the canvas was flapping in the gentle breeze, the alarm leads were routed into the sleeping quarters, the kettle was steaming and all was well with the world. Bala is in perfect weather the greatest place I know.

The rods were all set up with different rigs, suspended live-bait, full dead-bait, half dead-bait and live-baits on the bottom. Some of the dead-baits were treated with Rod Hutchinsons " Seafood " additive and another with " Glycin " amino acid. I now make up the amino with water from the lake I am fishing, tap water with its chlorine content kills the Glycin. By using a large syringe I could get the dose to around 5 ppm.

Near the village the water is shallow, contains some weed and compared with the middle area is fairly well populated with Eels. Soon the kids and the wife were hauling out Trout, Grayling, Roach, Perch and Pike on legered maggots. So successful were we that the wife had to be dragged away from the bankside at midnight and she says she doesn't like fishing.

The three nights we stayed were very hot and still, each morning I stepped out of the tent at 04.00 to watch perfect and spectacular dawns. From far across the water came the shrill of a Osprey as it took off from the river inlet, the mists slowly drifted from the lake, occasionally clearing to reveal a mirror finish on the water which was only ruffled by the odd leaping fish. I sat for hours just looking and drank it all in.

During the dark hours the Eels moved in and they were especially keen on the suspended live-baits although they usually managed to knock them off the hook. I caught fish on most baits but it was Perch section that proved the most successful and I ended up with 7 Eels to 3lb each, nothing really big but then again I enjoyed that

trip more than I could ever express.

My advice to anyone who travels to Bals would be to stay clear of the deep water, look closely at these shallow spots. Next to Mr Hughes site is Mr Jones camp site unsuitable for our trailer tent but what a fishing spot, well worth a visit. It always surprises me that on a club trip every member makes for the same old spots, look around a bit more and then Bals will be our Spring Trip every year by popular choice.

Mark Davies and I put in considerable thought and effort into pre-baiting a large area of Marbury Mere for the opening of the season. We baited a large strip about 50yds long with a variety of bait including Lob's and vast quantities of Maggots.

You can imagine our dismay to find someone actually fishing one of our spots when we arrived on June 15th. He thought it was rather good of us to bait his pitch for him and although he caught no Bels he certainly had a good number of Tench, all specially hand tamed for him.

We moved further round the bank and baited up from the boat for our two night stay. We caught 5 Bels to 3lb 03ozs all taken on the first night with hardly a run coming after the initial rush. The weather was all wrong for Bels with clear skies and cool temperatures. Also the commotion made by four anglers fishing an area which normally never see's a sole must have put the Bels off. A low flying plane crop spraying didn't help much either.

During the second afternoon Mark decided to practice with his small Accordion and soon the whole lake was resounding to his music. As I dozed away to his many and varied interpretations of modern songs I was bluntly awakened by a very disgruntled voice shouting for attention from behind a nearby Hawthorn Bush. I fitted on my Wellies and strolled over to meet the lady responsible. There in all her splendor was Lady Alexander the owner of the lake. Although only small she was indeed a formidable sight, many are the Gardeners or the Scullery maids who must have met the wrath of Lady Alexander.

"Young man" she demanded (who am I to argue) "tell that gentleman friend of yours to turn off his JAZZ BAND immediately", then as if to qualify herself added "He's frightening away our Ducks!". With that she did a smart about turn and trailed off through the long grass, back towards the Manor House. She looked for all the world as if she had just stepped out from an Ernest Hemmingway novel, as she disappeared from view with the white shawl billowing in the wind and the large Gun Dog tripping at her heels. I watched her go, who was I to argue with anyone like that?, Mark and his "JAZZ BAND" would just have to go.

Just one day later the car was heading towards Ellesmere for a weekend trip on Blakemere. This water has produced only a small number of Bels but their average size is extremely good, with several 4lb plus fish. One bank follows the canal towpath and many of the openings are regularly fished but the far bank remains undisturbed due to the terrific undergrowth and trees. There always commotion going on along the towpath which makes the more quieter far bank all the more inviting.

The lake bottom varies considerably along its length with firstly gravel then peaty mud back to gravel and finally sand. The best areas have proved to be the muddy ones and it was this feature I was looking for as I surveyed the whole of the far bank area. After an hour or so I discovered a flat plateau of 4-5' of mud filled with a variety of snags, most of which were tree stumps and large sunken branches - ideal cover. I could tie up the boat and fan my four rods to cover the entire bay.

Having set up the gear I didn't want to ground-bait until dark, otherwise the perch would soon shift the lot so to pass away a couple of hours I fitted one of my Bel rods with a light hook length and size 20 hook to catch some bait. My first bite nearly took the rod and I hooked a Bream of about 7lb which waded the hook at the net, four good Perch followed when I contacted something which took off like

a bomb and hung me up on a snag. This was obviously a tremendous spot for all species I just hoped that the Eels paid it a visit.

Just before dark I caught a small perch which I unhooked and tossed back. The fish thrashed around for a while then turned belly up and died. I have never been one to miss a gift, that perch seemed an obvious bait, and I set up the tail section on a wire trace.

At 2 am I had a run on double Lob, hooked a good Eel which unfortunately found a snag and went solid. I just could not shift it so I cut the line and tied it to a secure car hoping to retrieve it the next morning. At 6 am the lake looked still there was no sign of fish when suddenly the line on the dead perch rod began to sneak out. Now Ernie or Mark will tell you that a run at that time of day can only be one fish - a miserable 3lb type Pike. I stuck but this was no Pike and shortly after a fine Eel of 4lb 6ozs was slithering around the boat. Highly delighted I turned my attention back to the hung up line but alas the hook length had been bitten through.

The following night I moved pitches and at 2 am had another run on half perch this time it was a Pike. The one Eel I had caught had a large head and was the first genuine predator Eel that I have caught from Blekewere, all the others I have taken have had pointed heads.

One trip that I had been looking forward to with great relish was a visit to Ireland to fish several of the smaller Loughs on the Shannon System. We hit the place en-mass with 7 of us in two cars and a massive trailer load of gear which nearly sank the ferry. Most of the lads stayed for 14 days but I managed only a week at Lough Coosan, near Athlone. The fishing was everything I'd hoped it would be, nothing exceptional but I enjoyed the magic of the place coupled with the isolation of being the only anglers on our Lough. We fished from boats again and all my contraptions and devices were firstly laughed at and then copied by my boating companion Roger Hinde.

We set up on all the six nights telling jokes, making tea (why is it always me that makes it?) eating massive Apple Pies and lastly catching superb fish, only trouble we had was with the Eels. Horrible bootlace jobs which would eat anything and everything we threw at them including bread and sweetcorn. Each lace we landed was dropped into the boat and retrieved next morning when we landed near our Chalet. Our arrival at the quay was soon eagerly awaited by a host of German boat people who would delight in taking away our nights Eel catch.

One evening I decided to see if anything bigger could be taken and set up a large portion of 4oz Eel on a wire trace set up. I caught two Eels, one a gruesome beast of 11lb 14ozs which even the more gruesome Germans didn't like, the other one was a 4oz specimen which quite incredibly took an Eel section that was bigger than itself.

No doubt the Shannon System with its incredible Eel population has a great potential but if I was visiting solely for Eels then I would contact Stuart Greene for his advice. There must be some mighty big Eels swimming around the Emerald Isle and Stuart appears to have them all to himself.

Into July my fishing took a dramatic upturn, one of those periods when everything goes according to plan. A weeks holiday spent landing fish of all species with comparative ease. Superb Bream, huge Tench, big bags of Barbel, in fact anything and everything I fished for would bring in the goods and so on the last Saturday a night trip for Eels was arranged. It was so difficult now to relate the whole episode without it sounding like some Christmas Pantomime story complete with a Fairy Godmother but the truth is that my Eel (my very very never to be repeated Eel) was a giant fluke, maybe some sort of prize for all my past sorties. The only comparison I can make of it is a father watching his son making a mess of some sport or other and saying "Now lad stop mucking about I'll show you how its done".

On the Saturday night I set out for a boat fishing trip with Ellesmere Lake in mind

I had an area earmarked which I would fully survey with a borrowed depth finder and then settle into one of the lakes punts for a full nights session. On route the car was about 10 miles from home when I realised my boat rod rests were still in the shed. Cursing, I started to turn back to collect them. I sat in a small gateway drive just waiting for the traffic to ease so that I could pull back out when it happened. It sounds crazy, infact it even reads crazy but something took over. I wasn't going to fish Ellesmere but to drive to Crossmere and try there.

Some off you reading this will nodoubt dismiss the whole issue as a load of Bull-S--- but on several occasions in my life when I have made important decisions some sort of intervention takes place and each and every time its proved right. The rest was like watching one of those car chases on television, you think your in the driving seat tearing through the bends but actually you have no control at all of the events taking place.

I parked in my usual lake side pullin and was directed to the spot I was to fish and from there shown the exact position to cast. Again to hardened anglers it must seem pretty obsurd that this extra sense was so much in action, I don't think I could have fished anywhere else even if I had wanted to. The night itself was ever-
ything an Eel angler could dream of, the sky was overcast the air was thick and heavy with miriads of insects dancing on the tranquil waters. It was so hot that just setting up proved hard work as sweat dropped from my forehead. As I positioned four rods to cover a fairly small area of the bank, quite honestly one rod on its own would have done the trick.

The water temperature was 60^oF and rising, it was muddy and 3-4ft deep only 10ft from the bank. There were heavy rushes fringing the area and a couple of healthy Alder Trees had branches spanning the margins. To be honest I had fished the spot before but apart from a couple of bootlaces the last big Eel I caught there was in 1976.

As darkness fall I ground-baited with 100 Lob's and 1 pint of Maggots around each area and didn't have long to wait before the alarm was sounding out a run. With four rods evenly spread it is difficult to reason why each and every run should be on rod four, fishing exactly where I was told to position it. Bait was double Lob (small) on a size 8 stilleto and leger link, as the night wore on I began to change the other rigs to the same set up. Through the night it remained hot and sticky with just occasional fine rain which added greatly to the humidity. Bites were fairly frequent but always to the same rod, in all four small Eel were landed.

To me this was extremely interesting because it is most unusual to catch small Eels from a margin swim and lastly fishing close in is normally a "one shot" affair. To catch four Eels in one night in such circumstances is without president. As dawn broke my confidence didn't subside, I had an overpowering feeling that at any time I was going to catch the Eel I wanted.

To show how confident I remained when the next run commenced I stopped to look at my watch before proceeding to the rod. Ten past five and something big was hocked and travelling away from the bank. This was it and all I had to do was remain calm and he was mine. I told myself he was about 3lb and played him gently but firmly for many minutes before quietly bringing him to the net on the second attempt. As I lifted him up I realised - hell he was big - must be a six - a six at bloody long last.

The fish lay quistly in the landing net as I took a quick photo, then reached for the scales to weigh him. I lost count of the times I tried desperately to subtract 1lb 1oz of canvas bag from the total 8lb 10oz registered, before finally deciding the Eel was over 7lb. It was my night or rather my week and only minutes after the capture and a few leps around the field, the clouds began to fade away and the sun shone through on a perfect morning. My extra sense was fading fast and left me to enjoy the spoils, as if in some way I was responsible for the capture.

In the car I had a tripod and spare camera, I took a bumper load of shots and then took the Eel to the Wyche Anglers H.Q. for correct weighing. Around midday the fish weighed 7lb 0Ozoz on the accurate Club scales, he may have lost an ounce but I wasn't worried about that. Later the brother-in law arrived and also took a full film of the fish before I put him back into my fish tank.

If the Eel had died I made up my mind to have him set up but the following morning he was as lively as ever and I drove back 30 miles and placed him in the warm water from where he was caught. I watched him swim slowly and gently from my view, I've fished 21 years for an Eel like that and it was but a fleeting second as he sank into the deep water never to be seen again. My Eel - the Zenith of my Fishing Career, which someone or rather something else was responsible for. Whatever or whoever I will be grateful for the rest of my life.

The following week I changed styles again and went back to long range work on a shallow area of Whitensare which had proved so successful the previous year. I pre-baited it twice in the week prior with 250 lob's and 4 pints of maggots then returned on the Friday night for a 48 hour session. Just in case I got bored with things my 8 year old son Martyn came along to. His idea of fun is to stop me sleeping during the afternoon.

The amount of worms I use on these trips does take some getting although I now have it well worked out. Worming is easy on the right night provided that you have a good area to work on. I travel a couple of miles to a Cricket Pitch which on the right night is absolutely covered in Lob's. New Cricket pitches are regularly cut to keep the turf short which means any worms on the surface will be easy to spot but more important the grass is treated to ensure good drainage. Usually the Groundsman puts on lots of Lime which greatly encourages the worms. I keep the torch and tins ready and should it rain then a run around to "cover point" or "long leg" is on the cards. On each trip I can pick up 600 - 800 and just for fun and to stop boredom I time each 100 taken. My fastest pick up now stands at 2 mins 55 secs.

All the worms are put through some rough Moss or damp paper in a five gallon container, this removes the worst rubbish, next morning I sort out the worms into three separate batches.

- 1. Broken and damaged.
- 2. Normals.
- 3. Super or specials.

The rough worms are the first to be used for ground-bait, the normals are put into a flat plastic container filled with Moss which is then placed into one of my two large fridges. The Supers are kept for hookbait and given more space, again in Moss. Kept in a cool 40 - 45° F the worms will be in good shape for up to 5 weeks but always use each batch in rotation. The worst sin of all is to overcrowd them. When required for duty each 200 lots are transferred to canvas buckets which keep them far better than any tin. If this seems a lot of trouble then I can only repeat that you can't hope to catch first class fish on second class bait. If I can't get worms in the sort of quantities or quality that I require then I'll change venues and use fish baits.

Keeping good live-baits can also be time consuming, I followed Arthur Smiths advice and made up a live-bait tank from a former horse trough.

Maggots are easier and I use them simply to add quantity to a ground-baited area. A couple of pints will keep the fish busy looking around for quite some time. I buy mine in gallon lots, clean off the saw-dust and then riddle out the dead skins.

On this particular weekend trip we caught only two Eels of 3lb and 3lb 1Ozoz although several good Perch to 2lb 0Ozoz turned up, usually around dawn. The weather wasn't too kind and I believe this is why we didn't get much success. On a shallow open water I like to have a good wind but this weekend it stayed quite still. As in previous years all the fish caught were taken from a narrow strip some 70 yds from the bank which has a mud bottom and lots of lush weed growth.

Following those few super days at Bala earlier in the year all the family were keen

to return for a full week during the August holidays. On arrival we saw the other side of Bala, the howling winds tearing at the canvas, continual rain and a great feeling of despair set in. After two days we'd had enough, all the soggy gear was stuffed back in the trailer and we headed for home.

An afternoon session at Whitemere produced an Eel to suspended live-bait which was intended for Perch. This gave me considerable confidence in the method which I believe can be improved on. Instead of using a lip hooked live-bait there are possibilities of mounting a dead fish horizontally which must look far more natural to an Eel and would overcome the problem of the bait being knocked off hook.

FIG: 4

Similar set ups were tried when I returned to Crosemere to try and repeat my earlier success (this time I was on my own). Firstly I had one session from the bank and then a full weekend on the punt. The Pike enjoyed my suspended baits but the only Eels caught were bootlaces.

Towards the end of the Season I was delighted to fish Whitemere with Dave Walker, Arthur Sutton, Terry Jefferson (complete with hand maiden) and Ernie Orme. The first night it was painfully obvious that our choice of venue was all wrong and so it turned out to be, only one Eel was caught between the lot of us. Most of my memories of this trip were of the eating habits of Dave and Larry. As I walked past Terry's Bivvy, I overheard Jan asking if he wanted 3 tins of Irish Stew (apparently just a snack). Not to be outdone Dave can also trough, returning from Ellesmere town each day with arms full of goodies which were dished out to all and sundrie. Early one morning I tiptoed past Dave's hideout and seeing no keepnet peered in to ask the usual mundane question. Dave grunted, turned over and without answering lit his stove for his morning "SHOT" of pot noodles.

Dave's bivvy also had a sort of inner glow which I thought might have been some new item which was undergoing field tests, but no, Dave had a large plastic bag of "SPECIAL" Eel bait which consisted of some minced Squid, which glows quite nicely in the dark. Arthur spent quite a lot of time looking up into the trees because on his previous visit to Whitemere a dead branch collapsed on him during an afternoon nap.

Jan made Terry sleep outside thier bivvy and after all that Irish Stew one can understand the reasoning behind that. Ernie was into some unusual Perch which were on the thin side, I reckon its the way he strikes which pulls thier heads off. All in all it was a super social gathering but as a fishing trip it was a pain. I understand that Arthur and Dave eventually moved to Blakemere and at least saw some signs of fish. To anyone visiting Ellesmere waters I would always advise to be prepared to move around between each of the lakes as a change can so often lead to the fish.

Whitemere was my last trip of 82 and now I have a chance to look back at the Season with the highspot more than making up for any shortcomings. One aspect of Eeling that I have always enjoyed more than any other is the long weekend trip with the associated camping etc, but with each Season passing I know that the combination of the right water with good conditions is the key to regularly landing good fish. Years ago used to leave the tackle ready in the shed and should the forecast be good then I went fishing and somehow got through work the following day. A return to this type of fishing with simply one night sorties and the minimum of fuss and gear would I believe bring better results. It's amazing just how often conditions change for the worse just as the weekend comes around.

Next Season I hope to be able to return to all my old favorite waters with perhaps a look at one or two new ones. That's what I enjoy so much about our sport you can go "at 'em" for all your worth or simply lane back and wait for things to happen. Right now its snowing outside and Eeling seems a million miles away but I'm looking forward to 83, may it bring you all you would wish yourselves - Happy Eeling Chaps!

The following diagrams are referred to in the preceding article.

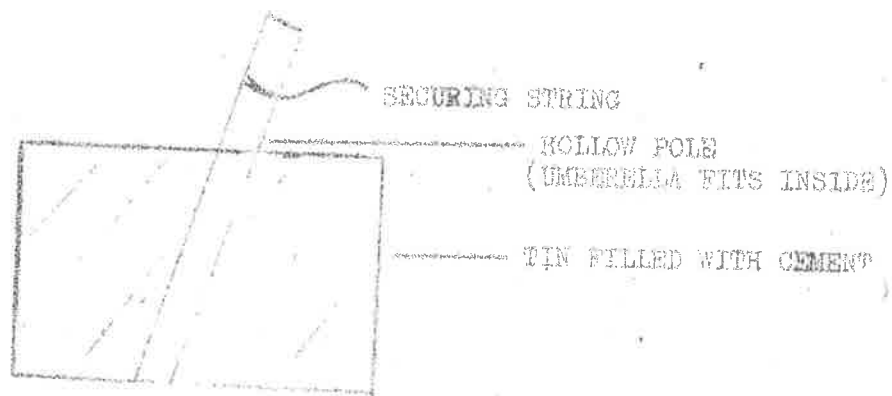
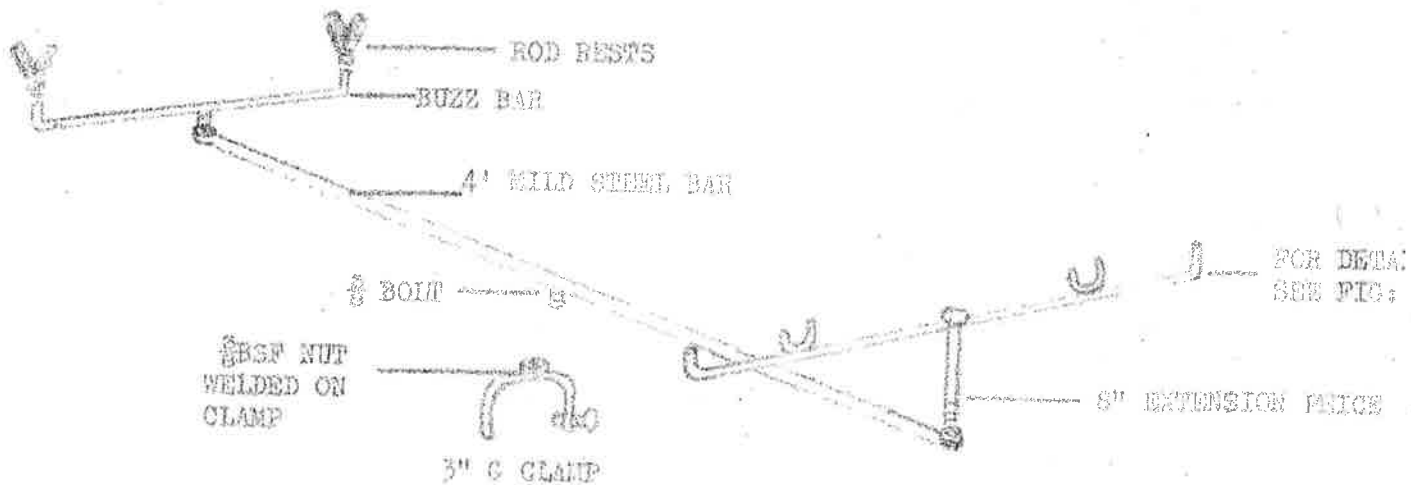


FIG: 1



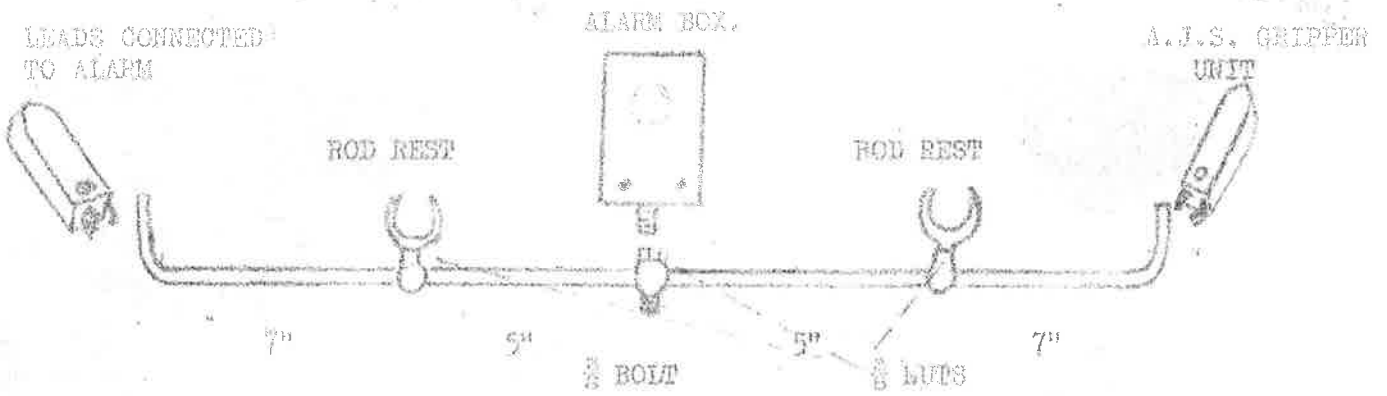


FIG. 3

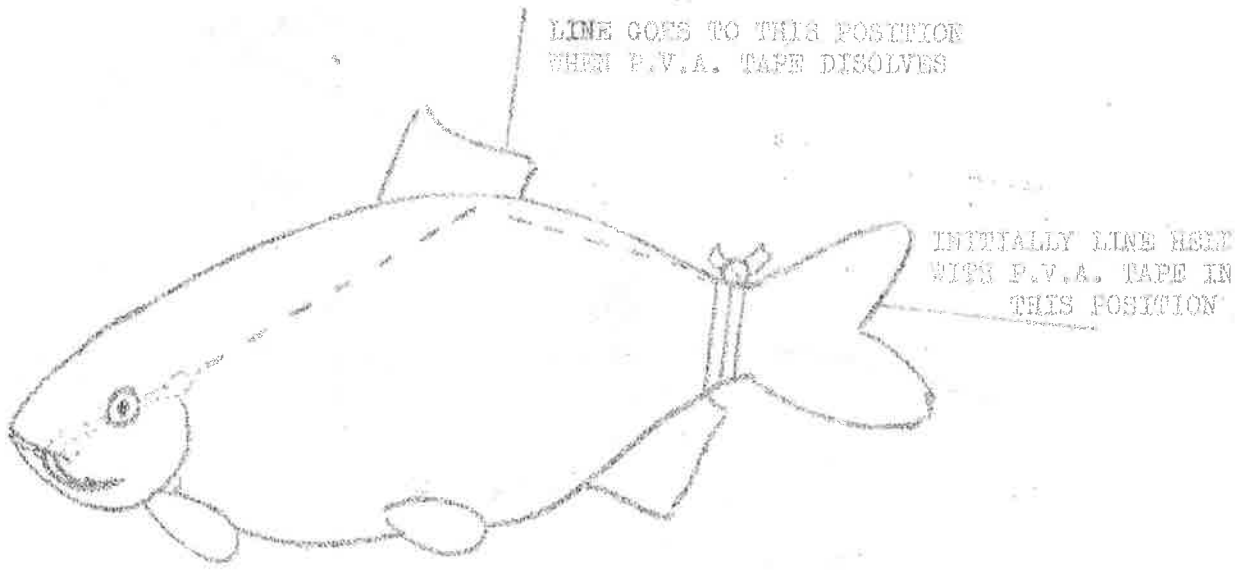
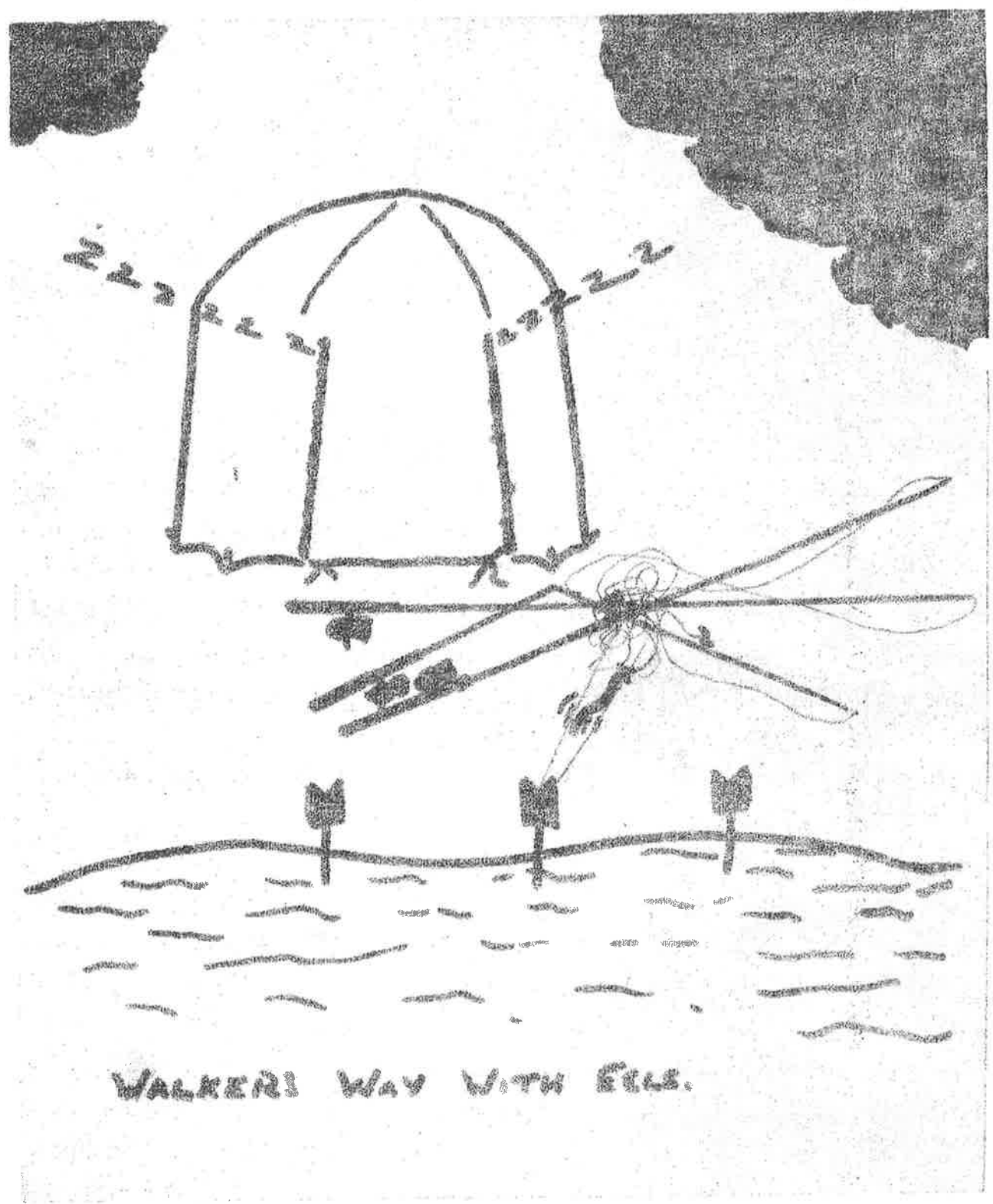


FIG. 4

Dave Holman.

This cartoon has been around my house for a couple of years. Dave Walker wrote a very informative article entitled Walkers way with Bels and this instantly "FLASHED" up this picture for me.



Sorry about that Dave!

Alan Mitchell.

'82 - A year of mixed fortunes.

Well here we are into another year, for me it couldn't have come quick enough. Nobody, and I mean nobody, was more glad to see the back of '82 than me. But, looking back now at the things that happened, whether directly or indirectly concerning me, they seem funny now - but not so at the time. In fact this article is in danger of becoming a comedy sketch rather than a fishing report.

To be fair though, this time last year I had resigned myself to the fact that I wouldn't be able to fish in places I wanted, nor even join other Club members at annual get-togethers - for one reason - I was preparing to get married!

Now all you budding grooms out there (if any) contemplating getting married, one piece of advice - forget it - the expence is ridiculous! And when I tell you that that was the highlight of '82 then you'll no doubt sympathise with me.

Seriously though, it was one of the happiest days of my life and I enjoyed every minute.

Back to fishing then. In the close season I set about looking for waters in my area that maybe had potential for a few Eels - waters that could have been neglected as far as Eels were concerned. Local, obviously to keep costs to a minimum, especially as I would be fishing alone.

Now my job dictates the days when I go fishing, as, being employed on the local morning newspaper I have to work nights regularly, so I am limited to just three nights per week, these being based on a rota system. Still, I manage to get out as often as is possible.

Anyway, one water I found out Mansfield way, looked ideal - not too far from home but with distinct possibilities. Night fishing was allowed - very rare for a Club water these days - so I decided to give it a try.

Talking to a few locals a few things came to light, either nobody had seen any Eels caught, but of the few who had seen any caught said they were big. It's so easy to get carried away whenever big fish are mentioned, but if one thing I've learned over the years, it's never believe anything till it's either on the bank, you've seen a photograph, or the info has come from a pretty reliable source. But anyway, it sounded interesting.

After 3 sessions without even a twitch, and the feedback I was getting from the locals, my enthusiasm was beginning to dampen. I had chatted to most of the anglers who had come onto the lake to glean all the information I could, and a clear picture was fast emerging.

Apparently, some big Eels had been taken a few years earlier by a group of anglers but the fate of the Eels I just couldn't ascertain, so I erred on the black side. Also the inlet to the lake had been polluted for some years, making it impossible for the stock to be replenished. Not even the locals that fished all night for the Tench and Bream, caught any Eels. I had heard so many times the big Eels the lake held but I soon began to realise it was the same re-mixed tale.

Rather perterbed, I scrapped it, I couldn't fish unless I had complete confidence in the water. But experience has shown that you can never write a water off completely so maybe a re-think is called for. Who knows it could contain some yearling Eels.

I then had a session on a water not far from my initial choice. That again proved uneventful apart from a set to I had with a bunch of the local jobs. There I was, fishing away, minding my own business, having to put up with a gang of youths supposedly fishing, making a right racket, shouting, swearing, shining torches, you name it, they were doing it.

At 11.30pm I packed up in disgust, I'd had enough. As I passed this bunch of crack-pots on my way to the car I saw they were encircled round a huge fire in a state of excitement. I soon realised why - they were roasting a live hedgehog! - Now if you've never heard the squeals of pain of an animal being roasted alive, let me tell you the sound is bloody cruel. I ran to the car, loaded my gear and flew back brandishing one of my bank sticks, threatening to part any one of their heads down the middle. There must have been about seven but I got no takers, and after telling them what I thought of them, and Christ was I fuming, I left. Not one of them said a word.

I sometimes wonder what a world we're living in, but then there's nothing wrong with the world, it's the people who inhabit it, that mindless minority that spoil it for everyone else. Anyway I vowed never to fish that lake again - ever!

Fellow Club member Arthur Smith rang, and a natter about this and that, suggested a trip to the Witham could be interesting. Arthur knew one chap who had taken a few good Eels up to 5lb around dusk, after the weekend matches had finished.

Now I know the Witham very well, I have fished it since being a nipper, but surprisingly I had never fished it seriously for Eels at night. So I gave it a try, I had nothing to lose.

I had 3 trips to the Witham ending up with 3 Eels, biggest 2lb, and looking at it objectively, I'm certain there are big Eels there, there has to be, but it's what I'd class as fun fishing - just the place to try new baits, rigs, etc. A place to take somebody who has never had much experience with Eels. It's good fun, and you're always in with a chance of an Eel.

Just talking about baits, one bait I did try with some success was Eel section, small portions from a bootlace proved very productive, especially the head section. Having fished mainly stillwaters for my Eels, and never been plagued by bootlace Eels, it's a bait I have never used. It's now a bait I have confidence in - in fact I had more runs (a hell of a lot dropped I might add) on Eel sections than the normal selections of bait.

Now we are into August and I was definately not setting the angling world alight with my Eel captures. However, news that one of my angling companions had caught an Eel of 4lb plus while after the Bream the lake holds, saw me at the same venue. Extensive baiting up with maggots had attracted the Eels into the swims, bait was going in there almost every other day, so it seemed obvious to carry on with the baiting up, in hope that any Eels would move into my chosen swim.

Every session I fished I put in at least half a gallon of maggots, plus as many Lobworms as I could spare. The idea being to fish Lobworm over a carpet of maggots. Night fishing isn't allowed on the water so I was restricted to day fishing but that was something I found fascinateing - the thought of possibly catching an Eel in daylight.

After 4 sessions I hadn't had a fish but was enjoying every minute of it. I experimented with Dacron traces and found how tolerant fish like Tench, Bream and Perch can be to them and how quickly Tommy Ruffes can devour a bunch of Lobworms.

On the fifth trip I decided to use an additive I had bought a couple of days previous. It claims to be a worm extract with 16 Amino Acids added and goes under the trade name of ACE. Now how good it really is I don't know. I'll probably have more to say about it after a full season using it. But as I say I used it on the fifth session and came up with an Eel of 2lb 14ozs - either the baiting up was working or the additive was. Anyway, I only managed one more trip to the lake after that but still managed another Eel on the bait with the additive. So it seemed that the 2lb 14oz was to be my biggest of the season.

It seems strange though, that during my first year's membership of the N.A.C I failed for once to get a 3lb plus Eel - I had managed to get at least one a year prior to joining. I hope that's not going to be the shape of things to come.

As I packed away some of my Belling gear I looked back on my achievements, or lack of them, with much distain.

However, back to that series of events in '82...

The year started off with me thinking one of my fingers was part of a Turkey, and nearly taking my damn finger end off. This first trip to hospital turned out to be the first of 4 visits I would make during the year. Towards the end I almost expected getting a couple of tickets to the hospital staff dance.

My second visit was when my then future father-in-law broke a bone in his ankle, the result of a fall. Not to be outdone my prospective mother-in-law burst a blood vessel in her leg, another visit to hospital. And then to cap it all, just to keep it in the family, thier daughter decided it was her turn and proceeded to break a bone in her foot. This last episode caused quite a stir because it seemed at the time that the pot she was wearing would still be on when we got married. Some honeymoon I was going to have! But fate smiled on me and the pot came off 4 days before we got spliced.

The year ended as it began - in bloody chaos. Some jerk decided to run into my car on Christmas Eve and then the gales and strong winds we had saw the roof on the dormer damaged, flooding the bathroom in the process. No wonder my hair's going grey!

Anyway, enough of my problems.

Surprisingly, '82 did have a couple of high spots, fishing wise. My first 8lb plus Yorkshire Barbel, taken on October 9 at 9p.m. (those are the days you never forget), and the capture of 3 winter Carp, all doubles, taken in November. Now I'm no Carp fanatic, but I was highly delighted with those fish!

So looking back on '82 it was definately a year of mixed fortunes - '83 can't be worse - can it?

Stuart McGowan.

I know this edition is a little thin but I felt that Dave and Stuart having done the hard work I really had to publish now. That is all the copy I have at present, Arthur has one more article to my knowledge, maybe more. Until I receive enough for a further edition I will just type the originals and wait before copying anything.

How about those end of season articles you were all supposed to write?

Alan Mitchell General Secretary.

