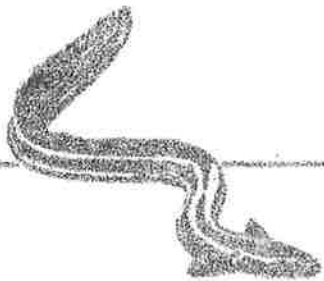


VOL

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The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

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THE BEST OF '81

Steve Hollobone and myself arrived at Powder Mill Reservoir at around 7.30 pm. A North Westerly wind was blowing softly into the dam wall. An incessant drizzle was doing its best to soak us while we tackled up.

The first job was to set up our bivvys and sort out everything so as to try to keep as comfortable as possible. Steve set up next to a dense bed of rushes. This rush bed was about 50' thick to the bank running at 90 degrees to our position on the dam wall. My pitch was 70 yards further along the dam. To Steve's right and out in front of me was relatively clear water. The water was quite high due to the water not being drawn off up until this time.

Steve set up three rods - all baited with small rudd. I used my usual four rods using the same bait. Between us we had the area well covered, having baits at various ranges.

The kettle was put on and we were soon relishing a welcome coffee. More so in Steve's case as he had forgotten the sugar. He insists I'm too fat anyway. It was getting very dark now due to the heavy cloud and rainy conditions.

Steve's alarm sounded. He was soon calling for the net. It was very difficult to net your own fish as the concrete dam wall is steep and when wet quite dangerous. We were in fact fishing some 10' above the water. The fish was weighed and netted. Hopefully for a few photos in the morning. Our first Powder Mill eel weighing 3lb 4oz.

While Steve rebaited and cast out we were chatting about nothing in particular when my alarm started to scream. I hurried to the rod, the run had stopped I thought to myself "Go on start again", on picking up the rod the line really streaked out. I struck but the rod never went fully up, it shuddered to a halt at about 10 o'clock and was violently wrenched over. It was then I realised just how far this fish had run. It was now some 80 yards to my left and well into the rushes the other side of Steve. As I had cast straight out the eel had run parallel to the bank and entered the rushes about 20 yards out from Steve's position. Heaving for all I was worth seemed to be working as the eel was slowly coming towards me. I said "This is the one Steve" thinking it was enormous.

However, after it was clear of the rushes we saw although it was still pulling well it wasn't anywhere near what we thought at first. At 3lb 6oz it was still a nice eel.

Half an hour later Steve called out that he had two runs at once. I went along and watched as he was trying to figure out what to do. He suggested I took the right-hand rod and he would have the other. I struck and was soon netting an eel of 2lb 11oz. Steve's run didn't really get going and he missed it. The verbal abuse that I received was quite mild considering. We decided that neither of us would claim this fish.

Nearly an hour went by. When Steve was making me leave shelter again. By the time I arrived the eel was ready for netting - 2lb 8oz. Time

THE BEST OF '81 - cont'd

for another brew. As always happens, I'm just taking my first sip when my alarm starts up again. This fish didn't really give a good account of itself. Thump, thump and about one minute later it was in the net. That may sound sort of matter of fact but that's just how it was. Nothing very exciting, until I unfolded the net. It looked as if it would probably go 3lb, it in fact weighed exactly 3lb.

Just as I returned from putting the eel in the net - which was about 100 yards away due to the concrete wall. The net having to be put in on the nearest mud bank. The alarm started again. This run was fast and seemed to go on and on. I struck while the line was pouring out and missed completely.

It was now getting light and the morning was as miserable as the night had been. We had three eels over 3lb, two over 2lb 5oz in the net.

Due to the bad light Steve took a lot of photographs with his new 35 mm camera. Mine being a cheap nasty thing I didn't bother. Nothing would have come out using mine in the light we had - with the eels photographed and returned we left at about 7.30 am.

The thing which marred a really great night's fishing was two weeks later, the photos didn't come out. Bloody flashy cameras. Still never mind, that's life, and the night's fishing was superb.

Footnote:- Our total eel catch for Powder Mill was 10 eels.

The breakdown is as follows:-

A Mitchell	3lb 6oz, 3lb 2oz, 3lb
B Hellebone	3lb 4oz, 2lb 13oz, 2lb 8oz, 1lb 11oz
F Ryland	3lb 7oz, 2lb 12½oz
One eel shared	2lb 11oz.

Alan Mitchell

RASSELINGS

This article is being written some three weeks after the last NACG Conference, during which time I had taken a lot of stick from Bob and Dan for not having written an article for the Bulletin.

As most of you will remember, I mentioned at the Spring General Meeting how hard it was for a member to write his first-ever article. Greatly encouraged by what various members told me I have finally put pen to paper for my first (long overdue) contribution.

I noticed at the Conference that a great many people seemed to be discussing the political side of angling as opposed to actual angling itself. I think this is very significant because angling has been getting a lot of bad press lately regarding swans and lead shot, use of livebaits, litter etc. If something is not done soon I think that we could see angling banned or at least having severe restrictions laid down in the next few years. This is mainly due to a vociferous minority who seem to regard any form of blood sport as barbaric.

This brings me to something which I believe the NASG should do in order to protect our sport. I think that the NASG should become involved with WAGBI and the BFSS. These initials stand for "Wildfowling Association of Great Britain and Ireland" and the "British Field Sports Society". Both these organisations have a great deal of political pull, having as senior members some very influential and important people. This includes members of the Royal Family who not only go shooting and hunting but fishing as well. Being involved with these organisations can, surely, only be good for angling.

It is time for petty bickering and backbiting to stop and for all anglers to pull together and fight for what we all have as our common interest - that is, clean waters and good fishing for all.

I realise that all this may seem out of context with what is normally printed in this Bulletin but I think that this matter concerns us all and should not be ignored.

Getting onto other matters, it is great to see the amount of optimism and enthusiasm which we all seem to be giving each other this year. If this can be turned into eels on the bank then I think we will see some very big eels caught this coming season.

The above is, I think, why many of us join the NAC. It is not just the taking of information that matters but also the giving of information. Surely if we can all work together then someday our ultimate goal can be reached. I do not think I am alone when I say that this goal is an eel to beat the present record.

In this article I know I have not written about eel angling specifically. I have raised a couple of points which I think are important in general. If any member has any point to make, good or bad, I shall be glad to hear from them (via the Bulletin letter page of course) because surely this is what the Bulletin is for.

Geoff Kent

BALA '82 - THE WHIP TRIP

I don't know why it should be, but, it seems in recent years, whenever I go to Bala, something unusual or unexpected happens, and I don't mean catching an eel!! No, as far as Bala eels are concerned, I have done reasonably well so can have no cause for complaint.

The odd or unusual things I refer to are more often than not nothing to do with the fishing. Hopefully, you will see what I mean as you read on.

This was the first opportunity I have had to attend a club trip for four years. Previous to that, I had not missed one for about five years so I was really looking forward to a bankside get together again.

As is my favourite practice these days, I made the long drive North-West overnight, leaving home at 11.20 pm and arriving at the infamous "Phone Box" swim at 3.50 am. No stops on the way, but torrential rain on the southern end of the motorway. Dawn was slowly breaking as I drank some coffee and ate several rounds of "sarnies" and a couple of impressive lumps of pork pie. Sat in the car, I systematically demolished the pile of food which Jan had prepared for me. I felt sorry that she couldn't get the time off work to accompany me, because she really does enjoy her fishing now, and I never get hungry when she's there, just ask Dave Walker what Jan's breakfasts are like!

My thoughts turned to the job at hand, and I decided to take a slow drive round the lake to find Chris Lee and company, who I knew should be about somewhere. It was getting rapidly lighter now, and I hadn't a mile of the road on the North-West bank behind me when up behind came a man on a motorbike with a funny round white hat on, not unlike a goldfish bowl, and wearing a blue leather one-piece suit. He wasted no time passing me, and then I saw the flashing light, which when illuminated said"Police Stop".

Having learnt to read at a remarkably early age - was it 12 or 13? I can't remember now, I promptly pulled the car over and switched the engine off, so that I could hear what he had to say, rather than have him shout above the noise of a rather perforated exhaust.

The PC alighted from his remarkable box of tricks and walked towards the car, so I got out to greet him and explain that I was not on any nefarious mission.

His first words "Allo, Allo, Allo, Boyo!" peering inside the car and seeing it loaded to the roof with my usual mountain of paraphernalia, he then said, "Going fishing eh??".

The temptation to say, "No, metal detecting", was almost too great, but I simply said "Yes" and awaited the next question. Then followed a routine inspection of the car to see that all was in order.

Proof of identity was satisfied with my driving licence, but I never carry my Certificate of Insurance or "MOT" cert so he promptly completed a form for me to take to my local police station on returning home together with all the aforementioned documents. He then got back on his bike and disappeared into the wild blue yonder. I waited for him to get well out of earshot before restarting the car and continuing my tour of the lake which so far had found no-one.

I had gone over half-way round the lake when I got to the Bala town side of Llangower Point when I spotted three "Bivs" through the trees.

Marking the car, I walked over the railway, through the gate and down to the bivs. Nothing stirred, so I took a gamble, picked out the largest of the three and shook the roof a bit hoping for a response which was not long in coming and Chris' ill-arranged features peered through the zip opening with an expression which would not have disgraced the world "Garming" championships.

"Uh, what, eh" came the breezy reply and before he knew it, Chris was nearly awake, drinking tea, and trying to catch a few baits. He did miss one bite as I recall.

Further discussion revealed that no-one else was yet present, just Chris, his girlfriend and his brother, and "Trotter", whose first immortal words on seeing the place were something along the lines of "Big innit". Bootlaces aplenty were there for the taking as usual but nothing special had yet graced them with its presence, except for me of course!

Having outlined my plans to Chris, I scrounged some maggots off him and returned to the "phone box" to unload the car and get myself organised.

My first job was to get the bait catching organised, and then I could worry about the rest of my gear. As it turned out, the perch proved extremely unco-operative until late afternoon following a "light" shower or two, so I had time to get the "Hovel" set up together with my accoutrements, such as bed chair, cooking stand and miniature television, which a bloke at work offered to lend me, very handy for the news and weather forecasts, and the Cup Final replay, and the England-Scotland match on the Saturday afternoon.

My small barometer had been rising steadily all day, but with baits, or reasonably small baits, a bit scarce, I fished with three rods for the first night, the Thursday, and managed to catch up on a bit of lost sleep because absolutely nothing happened that night.

That's not quite true. I did get extremely cold, frozen bloody stiff in fact. I'd forgotten to pack my three fishing jumpers, which I'd carefully folded and laid ready on my bedside chair. Somehow I'd also contrived to leave a fresh sliced loaf at home so I couldn't even have a sausage "sarnie". So, shivering uncontrollably while I tried to organise a fry-up, I resolved to get to the shops as soon as possible and acquire what I was lacking.

The Friday passed in a usual quiet fashion, catching perch, roach and the occasional trout. A roving livebait failed to produce any sign of a pike.

From Friday morning on, the weather got better and better and bore no resemblance at all to the sort of deluge or hurricane we have come to expect in that part of the world.

At about mid-day, I was roused from my idle thoughts by a public address system mounted on a passing car on the road above blaring out the information that the "Milk Race" would be passing in about 30 minutes. Now to most, that may seem a remarkable coincidence. But not yours truly, particularly as I have seen the "Milk Race" at Bala before, four or five years ago in fact, only they were going in the other direction. Needless to say, my first thought was to admire the stamina of the riders, five years is a long time in the saddle, even for John Wayne. Then I realised that they must have got hopelessly lost on one of those heavily misted Welsh mountains.

My attempts to capture the event on film were totally frustrated when after one shot, the camera wouldn't wind on. It suddenly dawned on me, that the film was only 12 exposures, and I never use less than a 20 exposure film, or not often anyway! Never mind, it took my mind off my welling pangs of hunger.

The afternoon passed, much as the morning had done, with the supply of baits building up, the weather getting warmer and brighter all the while, and the barometer continuing its steady rise.

Chris and "Trotter" turned up in the middle of the afternoon to try and catch more baits as they weren't faring too well for baits where they were fishing. Their arrival gave me the opportunity to pop into town to get a decent pullover and a loaf of bread. The baits proved very scarce for Chris, and shortly after my return and another cup of tea, the pair of them disappeared to try and get some small trout from one of the feeder rivers.

I wasn't left on my own for long, as Ernie turned up at about 7.00 pm, with his family who were to stay on a lakeside camping site. No sooner had Ernie and I exchanged greetings when out of the blue strode Keith Stephenson. A pleasant surprise as I had no idea that Keith was coming. A quick unloading of the usual mountains of gear and a shift back to the lakeside saw Keith getting himself organised whilst Ernie took the family off to the campsite to get them settled.

Something I almost forgot. Prior to Ernie and Keith's arrival, a couple of blokes turned up just along the bank from me with all the right gear to set me wondering. I had a stroll along to see who they were, and the badges sewn on their coats immediately identified them as members of the British Eel Anglers Club.

Needless to say, my mind started to fill with all sorts of unpleasant thoughts. One or two subtle questions and the picture became clearer.

They had no idea that we were on the water until they popped into the local tackle shop to buy permits and the shop owner told them that we were in the neighbourhood. Apparently, Nev Evans and Andy Barlow, their names, had intended to fish one of the meres around Ellesmere, but on arrival had discovered that no close season selling was allowed, so had made the snap decision that they would fish Bala rather than lose a night's fishing.

The area they were looking to fish has proved snaggy in the past, so I directed them to an area the other side of where I was fishing where there were less snags. I also advised them not to bother fishing worms if they could avoid it.

Anyway, back to business..... Having amassed a good supply of baits, together with 20 or so cracking roach that Ernie had brought along, I decided to fish 5 rods. With 3 already set up from the first night, for long-range fishing, I set up another pair of rods which I, on the spur of the moment, decided to use at much shorter range with subfeeders packed with fish guts. I had taken along a handful of frozen 4"-5" rainbow trout just in case the bait situation had proved a bit sticky. However, with the perch being reasonably co-operative, I forgot about the trout and left them to thaw at their own pace for the best part of two days, by which time they were a bit spongy and well capable of keeping the most determined tea scrounger at bay. I decided that I would fish a couple of sections of trout on the feeder and pack the feeders with trout guts.

So, with the water temperature at 56°F and the barometer still climbing nice and steady, and a good supply of baits to hand I made a fairly early start at 2.00 pm. The first two rods out were the feeder rods, with the baits lobbed out about 25 yards. Half an hour later and about to put the other baits out, having got everything prepared, I thought someone was taking the rise, because one of the alarms sounded.

Checking the rod quickly, it was a run, not fast but very deliberate and in broad daylight, so I baited it. I connected with the eel

BALA '82 - THE WHIT TRIP - Cont'd

rightly enough, but as the rod swept up on the strike, the other alarm sounded and line streamed off the reel. I thought I'd put the baits on the two feeder rods a reasonable distance apart but obviously not far enough apart, as the eel had successfully found the second line and performed a real "Cats cradle" job on both lines.

Keith lent a hand to extricate the eel from the mayhem, its weight was "guesstimated" at about 1:02, and with a massive mouth which had easily engulfed a 2½" tail section of Hanningfield rainbow. With the eel swiftly returned, I put the two feeder rods to one side to sort them out after I'd cast the other three prepared rods. The first rod carried a 4" perch deadbait out about 70 yards, the other two, one with a perch head, the other a perch tail section, were both belted out about 85-90 yards. That job done, I re-rigged the feeder rods as before and mounted similar baits and lobbed both baits out about 25 yards again, but just a little further apart this time.

The hours of darkness passed very quietly, two quietly in fact, as I dozed off again. At 03.50, the alarm roused me from my slumbers, and in the rapidly growing light of dawn, I got to rod remarkably quickly to find line trickling steadily away, the fish having taken the long range perch tail section.

I picked up the rod, closed the bale arm, watched the line tighten through the water and then belted it.

The rod, thought powerful, took on quite a respectable curve, but I didn't feel that all was well. I could feel a very respectable eel doing the business at the other end, but I got the distinct feeling that somewhere between the two of us, the line had either run round a snag or under a boulder, and whilst pumping the eel in, I felt certain that everything would jam up solid at any moment.

The eel kept coming, very grudgingly, and I expected the worst at any time, but suddenly, the eel was thrashing about on top about 15 yards out and no trace of a snag. That sudden attack of caution which strike when you realise that it is a good fish, arrived, and I went very gently from then on, positioning the net, whilst keeping the eel on a tight line, and then, relief. The eel went into my rather large landing net first time and in a very short time, was languishing in a large keep-net, before being weighed and measured.

My first glimpse of the eel in the folds of the landing net had me thinking that it could be a biggish four. Not overlong at 35½" but a very healthy girth of 8 1/4".

Feeling rather pleased with myself, I took a stroll along to see how the two BEAC lads had got on. I could see one of them stood over his rods whilst the other slumbered peacefully. It transpired that they had fished lobs, and I don't think their alarms had been silent all night, and they had hardly had time to sit down having to deal with a never-ending procession of bootlaces.

I casually mentioned that I'd just had a decent fish and was about to weigh it and their ears really pricked up. Reaching for a camera, they followed me back along the bank. They looked and sounded truly impressed when I pulled the keep net from the water and laid the eel out.

Checking the scales and zeroing them with the weighing net on, the eel was hoisted up and the indicator settled spot on 4:00. I was well chuffed, and their camera got red hot.

BALA '82 - THE WHIT TRIP - Cont'd

Seeing the eel properly, I could see where the tail tapered off rather quickly behind the vent. A bit more flesh aft and it could easily have been a biggish four. Still, as I said, I was well pleased, who wouldn't be?, and the eel was returned to the keep net for the other lads to see later and for more photographs.

Ernie hadn't fished that night, by the time he'd got the family settled on the campsite it was dark, so he walked back to see us, Keith and I for a couple of hours before returning to the campsite. I recall Keith telling me that his alarm had sounded shortly before mine had but it had come to nothing and I've got no idea how Chris and Co fared that night.

We had half expected the arrival of Brian Crawford with David Taylor, and Golly with Dan on the Friday evening. Evidently Brian and Dave were fishing the alternative venue in the Midlands to their liking, and from what Dan reports in the May results, it does sound an interesting prospect.

Back at Bala, the Saturday morning passed in the customary relaxed fashion. Mark Davies turned up about luncheon time to see how we were getting on. So with March clutching the camera and Ernie clutching his camera, the eel was measured and a load of photos taken and the eel then safely returned to the water.

Mark departed after a couple of hours, having spent some time with the rest of us trying to catch a few baits.

Saturday evening, and Arthur Smith arrived with his wife who was to spend the weekend on the campsite with Ernie's family.

So with the inevitable high spirits, and good humoured banter that accompany the more senior members whenever they get together, we settled down for the Saturday night, which was to be my last night of the trip.

I don't think it had got properly dark, when Ernie's alarm sounded. He was using a plastic tube indicator on the line and as they are prone to do, it twisted on the line, and promptly jammed in the butt ring and the eel dropped the bait.

Shortly afterwards, he had another run, but this one stopped for no apparent reason. Very disappointing for Ernie. As it transpired, they were the only runs Ernie had that weekend.

The rest of our little group, Keith, Arthur and myself never had a stir all night.

The Sunday dawned bright and sunny, much like the Friday and Saturday had been. In fact the daytime weather had been very good.

My efforts to catch up on some much needed sleep were interrupted by the arrival of Golly and Dan together with a thousand loobworms. Golly and Dan later departed to get themselves organised and I tried once again to sleep before the long drive home. I woke with a start at about 11.00 am absolutely soaked in sweat. The sun was blazing down out of a clear blue sky and the temperature inside my biv must have been well over a hundred. So, with sleep brought to an abrupt end, I packed all my gear at a very leisurely pace collecting a

BALA '82 - THE WHIT TRIP - Cont'd

healthy suntan all the while. Keith once again lent a hand to get all the gear back up to the car, and having bid him farewell, I called in on the campsite to say goodbye to Ernie and Arthur and families.

A cup of tea, and a bite to eat were most welcome, and after a change of clothes, I was on my way home, another immensely enjoyable and productive trip behind me.

Dan has provided a brief run down of the results stemming from the rest of the trip in his May report. So my account ends here. I hope everyone else attending enjoyed themselves as much as I.

Terry Jefferson

 UMBRELLA TENTS

Before joining the NAC I had never used an umbrella tent and I faced all the elements huddled under an umbrella. However, it soon became obvious that most members (with the exception of "Iron Man Hollerbach" Beast of Bedford) used some form of cover for very sensible reasons.

Conventional umbrella tents are to my mind expensive and not necessarily the best protection against the weather. They also vary in design and quality. I remember Dick Bazyk came telling me that the model he purchased was practically transparent and that he often gave an amusing shade show to the rats at Bra Lake. Ernie Orme introduced me to the delights of PVC car covers (Ernie you see is not a "rubberman" but has a fetish for PVC) and I have been sold on them ever since. My own umbrella tent/car cover was made for a V W Beetle and cost me £8. It has a huge spread and provides very secure wind-proof and completely waterproof protection. It was initially adapted so that there were fifteen large plastic eyelets placed around the perimeter. With the use of these eyelets plus tent pegs and clothes pegs any shape can be formed to suit the location where you are fishing.

If I am fishing on a narrow canal bank the umbrella pole is set at an angle with the ribs resting on the ground. The PVC car cover is laid so that the side face down from the ribs and two bamboo poles form a doorway. This provides a compact shelter against all the elements.

I can remember an occasion in the 1980 season when I was fishing on the Shropshire Union Canal at Soudley. A very calm evening became a howling gale in the early hours of the morning with huge waves blowing up the canal and such was the force of the wind that the rods were blown off their rests. I soon realised that fishing was out of the question, so I shut the door of my bivvy and slept until morning in perfect comfort, the car cover providing very secure accommodation.

Occasionally it is not possible to use an umbrella and on a number of occasions I have made a shelter by draping the cover over various trees and bushes and securing it to the ground with the tent pegs through the plastic eyelets.

UMBRELLA TENTS - Cont'd

An additional benefit of the car cover over the conventional umbrella tent is that a far larger area can be covered so that one can cook and sleep in complete comfort and keep all your tackle etc dry.

The standard PVC car cover folds up into a very small bundle, smaller than the average sleeping bag and is also fairly light. Any tears or holes can easily be repaired with PVC masking tape although in practice I have found PVC to be a very durable material a lot more so than proofed nylon.

So before you decide to fork out £50 or £60 on a Dave Barnes Two Door Deluxe Umbrella Tent consider the simple PVC car cover which with a bit of imagination is as versatile as your brain will allow it to be.

I would dearly like to be a hardy tape who could sleep out in the open nestled in a fertilizer bag, but I have not found one big enough for me to fit into and making a brew in a fertilizer bag can be a little precarious.

Come back Ray Webb all is forgiven.

M Davies

"I THINK I'VE ARRIVED"

The session started ordinarily enough, with me arriving at "Whittles" by mid-afternoon. Conditions seemed much better than the previous week. The scum which had covered almost the entire surface of the pit had been completely dispersed by the heavy thundery showers earlier in the week. It was also encouraging to see that the tench were "blowing" quite well all over the place even in mid-afternoon.

Reaching "The Hump", my swim, I proceeded to get the gear organised, having first loose fed some maggots and corn close in, with a view to a bit of tenching with the float during the early evening.

Two rods were rigged with link-legers for fishing at medium-range (40-50 yards) near the small channels and openings into the widely overgrown backwaters. The other two rods, slightly lighter, were to be rigged up in similar fashion, but with lighter leads, to fish at shorter range, (20-25 yards) one alongside the islands on my left, and the second straight out into open water.

As I started to thread the line through the rod rings of No.4, I suddenly decided to try the rig I described in a recent Bulletin article - "Watching and Waiting". The tackle was arranged so that the bait would be suspended about 15" below the surface.

Having organised the cast gear, I set up the tench rod with float gear, and, sprinkling some more loose feed, close in, I settled down to extract a couple of the hardest fighting tench I've ever come across. About a minute, three casts and three or four oz roach later, it was obvious that the tench had been beaten to the feed, and the roach take a lot of shifting.

"I THINK I'VE ARRIVED" - Cont'd

Wondering whether to persevere with the roach, or have a look round the pit before having a brew, my mind was made up as to my course of action, when one of the large carp heaved itself out of the water and returned from whence it came with an almighty crash, right on the edge of the backwaters.

Five minutes later, two carp baits arched out to the area where the carp showed, and I settled back to await developments.

About four hours later, having missed one good run, and suffering the constant attentions of the ambitious tench on the baits, I gave the carp a rest and decided to get all set for the night ahead and hopefully, an eel.

A check on the conditions revealed the following details:

Air Temp: 64°F	Cloud: 100%	Wind: Light Southerly
Water Temp: 66°F	Rain: Light drizzle	Bar.P: High, steady

At 21.30 hours, the session proper started with four lobworm baits despatched to the aforementioned parts of the water. After a few minutes, the inevitable twitches and lifts started from the hordes of scavenging roach and occasional small perch as well as the more sedate lifts of the tench.

Past experience has shown that despite many of these repeated and frequent molestations, the worm baits suffer little if any damage. However, occasional checks on the condition of baits, particularly after any really violent takes, help to keep the mind at ease. Interestingly enough, the suspended bait remained reasonably undisturbed.

After an hour, the very light drizzle ceased, the Southerly breeze dropped, leaving the night heavily overcast and deathly still, save for the occasional murmurings of a little owl in the trees on the large island to my right. I sat there with that feeling of anticipation that has you itching for action, because you know that it's going to happen at any moment.

At 23.10 hours it finally did happen, the alarm on the second rod, the suspended bait, sounded. The indicator moved forward a couple of inches and paused, moving almost imperceptibly up and down a fraction of an inch as something mouthed the bait. I watched intently, hovering over the rod, and after a few seconds, the alarm again sounded as the indicator moved up to the butt ring. I gently picked up the rod from the rests, silencing the alarm, and waited as the indicator, slid up to the butt. I closed the bale arm and a split second later, the rod was arched hard over to the right, and the realisation came that a good eel was trying to go in the other direction. Most of the larger eels I've caught in the past from medium to long range have at some point tended to throw in the towel, and come in easily until just prior to netting. Not so with this one, it pulled hard and long all the way to the net and it didn't finish there. Many of you have seen the size of my fishing net, so will have some idea of the problems I had when two attempts to net the eel both resulted in the eel doing a rapid about turn and disappearing back over the drawstring. Needless to say, I was beginning to get a bit frantic, knowing the eel to be a very good four plus, and the chances of losing it coming ever close. I collected my thoughts quickly, once again got the eel coming steadily towards me, and pushed the net

"I THINK I'VE ARRIVED" - Cont'd

a bit further forward. With the eel's head drawn right up to the net spreader, I lifted the net and as the drawstring cleared the water, I lowered the rod. Continuing to lift the net, the weight of the eel could be felt in the net, and I drew breath for what seemed the first time in many minutes.

Lowering the net to the ground at my feet, I took out my pocket torch, and separated the folds of the net to have a look at the cause of all my anxiety. There it was, one rather large eel which looked capable of beating my previous personal best of 4:10. I reached for the "Avons" and weighing net and zeroed the dial with the net hooked up. Removing the net, I unhooked the eel, and placed him in the weighing net, hooked the net back on the scales and nervously lifted the scales to check the weight. Arms shaking I tried to read the dial, definitely a new personal best, but, I couldn't for the life of me be certain if the needle showed 5:00 or 4:15!!! The longer I tried to steady things, the worse the shakes became, until the needle was rattling between 4½ and 5½! I lowered the eel to the ground, took two or three deep breaths, and lifted again, but it was no good. I was well and truly keyed up and couldn't hold things steady. There was nothing else for it, I'd put the eel in the keep net and check the weight properly in daylight.

The rest of the night passed normally enough, with twitches and lifts at regular intervals, and the capture of two tench, one another personal best of 5:07, and both taken on the suspended bait.

At 4.00 am, I couldn't wait any longer. I packed most of the gear away and returned to the car to collect the camera and tripod.

I zeroed the scales with the net again, transferred the eel from keep to weighing net, and hoisted the scales up again, this time using the landing net handle as an angled support for the scales. The eel settled down, and the needle settled down at 5:01! My relief was considerable and I had a really good swear! Laying the eel out on a damp sack, I even rechecked the scales and weighing net to see if there was no mistake.

The tape measure revealed the eel's dimension as 36 ¾" long with an 8 ¾" girth.

I checked the weight of the tench again, 5:07 and then, with the camera on the tripod and the air release in position, I ran off a whole reel of film, mostly of the eel, obviously, with a couple of the tench, naturally enough, and a couple of the two together. I don't suppose too many anglers have had a 5:00 plus eel and tench in the same session even if one was an accidental capture.

With the film run off, I returned both fish, with particular pleasure and reverence where the eel was concerned and prepared to make my happy way home.

It would be impossible to draw firm conclusions on the subject of "off-bottom" baits, but 1 hour 40 minutes after casting out this particular rig for the first time, to catch my first five, I will most definitely be using "off-bottom" baits.

"I THINK I'VE ARRIVED" - Cont'd

My thanks go to AIS for pushing the idea for so long with little response. It took me a long time to get there but I think I've arrived!!!

Terry Jefferson

