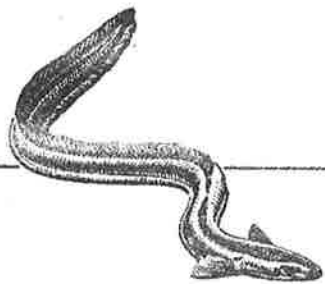


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The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

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It is with great pleasure, combined with a sense of wanting to get on with the job, that I take up my pen to once again write this page. Not having done the job since the latter half of last winter had left in me an empty feeling. It is indeed gratifying to know that you all wished me to continue as Editor. I can only promise that I will do my very best to ensure that your Bulletin maintains its reputation for excellence.

As I have said many times, the end product stems from your efforts, without which there would be no magazine at all. What I require from you now, as a matter of urgency, are your Bulletin contributions. Old topics or completely new ones - there is always something that you can write about. And you can write so well, as you have proved again and again. It is a constant source of amazement to me that among that scruffy bunch of blokes I meet by the water there are so many literary entrepreneurs. However, if you are the odd one who feels that he cannot set down on paper a piece in suitable form for the Bulletin, let me say this. Write down what you are thinking and don't worry about the writing or the spelling - that is where I come in. I will knock your efforts into shape without altering material content in any way. If you are afraid to try, then you will never know how good you are!

I look forward, naturally, to receiving articles from our new members, but perhaps even more, I want articles from our older members. From them comes much of the ideas and experience on which we can build. The last issue of the Bulletin was excellent in every way. I found myself picking it up time after time to read again those articles which I had already read several times. I do not often congratulate individual writers and in fact, I will not do so now. What I will do is to congratulate all those who wrote for the last Bulletin and who contributed to so fine an effort. Thank you all, but keep it up.

Remember that through our "Letters to the Editor" feature you can have your say. Any subject you like (I'm broad minded) as long as it is both serious and meaningful. If you wish to see an additional regular feature or indeed any useful alteration to our usual format, then do please drop me a line so that we can take it further.

I bid a hearty welcome, on your behalf, to our new members, and my wish to you all for a happy Christmas and a bumper new year.

A J Sutton
Editor

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

I hope the recent AGM of the National Anguilla Club will mark an important mile stone in our history.

Firstly, Brian Crawford stepped down as Chairman and I was very honoured indeed to be elected in his place. When one considers the people who have held this post previously, then perhaps you can appreciate why I consider the onus is very much upon me to carry on the good work that has gone before. I would like to thank Brian personally and on behalf of all the members for the tremendous amount of work he has done for the Club during his years in the chair. As I think he wrote in one Bulletin, it is not an easy job and not always pleasant to hold the membership together. I think that the continued existence of the Club is very much due to the hard work put in by the Committee and I feel extremely confident about the future.

If any member is not satisfied with a particular Club policy then it is up to him to raise the matter as either the Annual or Spring General Meeting or if it is a particularly urgent matter by raising it with either myself or any other Officer of the Club. In the past, the inability or unwillingness of members to do this (now former members I believe) has led to disagreements between apparent factions within the Club which should not have been allowed to come into existence.

I was pleased to see the faces at the AGM that have become familiar to me over the past number of years and, in particular, I was pleased to meet for the first time, David Taylor and Stewart McGowan. It was pleasing to note that there are further provisional applications for membership in the pipe-line. The membership has remained stable for the past couple of years but I think the general opinion amongst members was that the time had come to consider increasing the membership if suitable applicants came along.

As I stated at the AGM, whilst we should encourage new applications for membership, I do not think that we should completely forget or, in any way, discourage former members of the Club from re-applying. Going back over the years some very fine anglers have been members of the National Anguilla Club and if any former member wished to reapply they would receive every support from myself.

The Club made a very important decision when it decided to abandon the reporting scheme which for a long time has been the mainstay of collecting the results of our fishing. I hope that the new system which was agreed upon at the meeting will provide us with the information that will assist us to catch more large eels. My feelings about the old reporting scheme, perhaps more so over the past year, was that this was simply not the case. The load of the Club Record's Officer has now been greatly reduced and I am sure that Dan, as a Committee member, will be of great use to the Club. It is important for members to realize that although the new scheme, as discussed at the AGM, is not so rigid as the old reporting scheme - it is essential for all members to comply with the new scheme and, of course, it is a condition of membership that this is done. Guidelines for the new scheme will be available at the Spring Meeting.

Could I encourage all members to write something for the Bulletin. We have a very efficient Editor who can knock even the roughest draft into shape and I am sure you will agree that the Bulletin makes very interesting and worthwhile reading and is a very essential part to the Club. The standard of presentation and contents is very high and as someone mentioned at the AGM, considering the size of the Club and the facilities at our disposal there is not that much difference between our Bulletin and the NASG magazine "Freeline". I am sure that if any member was prepared to forward material to the Editor for "Freeline" there would be little difficulty in getting an article published.

As you may be aware, I have recently been appointed the National Education and Development Officer for the National Anglers' Council for the North West. This will involve me in co-ordinating the work of 60-odd NAC coaches in the North West and administering the new National Anglers' Council proficiency award scheme. We already have a National Anglers' Council Coach in Brian Crawford and if any other members are interested in gaining this qualification perhaps they would like to contact me direct. Brian, I am certain, considers it very worthwhile.

I am writing this, having just returned from a Chub fishing session on the Upper Severn. The highlight of the day came whilst staggering back to my car with all my gear. A large herd of Friesian heifers were paying particular attention to me and were following me along the river bank. I did not take any strong objection to this as they were being inquisitive rather than aggressive. However, from their midst emerged a very stocky Hereford bull who obviously thought I was interfering with his harem - he snorted and scratched the ground with his hoof, I broke into a trot.....and so did he! But I was able to throw myself over a fence, just in the nick of time!!

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

As a final note you may be interested to know that Ernie Orme and myself are forming an elite eel fishing club to be named after a well-known tackle manufacturer - North Western Blanks.

Mark Davies
Chairman

MY SEASON 1981

The SGM and NASG Conference over, my thoughts turn to the coming season and how to break that five pound barrier. Time to reflect that back in 1976 (that long ago) I caught two 5lb+ eels on consecutive nights. Since then, I haven't seen one on the bank.

This year I plan to fish waters not previously fished. Also I had a good quantity of Glycin Amino Acid which I had prepared in various quantities from two ppm to eight ppm.

Every one I talk to was keen and raring to go - all that was needed was some warm weather to get the water temperature above that critical 50°F (10°C) mark. The canals are usually the first to warm up during early April. Mark Davies and I decided to try the Shropshire Union at Soudley for openers. It is a lovely feeling setting up the bivvy for the first session but the elements let us down, it was bloody cold and windy and the canal was full of floating rubbish which kept catching the line. Mark did manage one eel but even that looked pretty lethargic.

During 1980 I was fortunate enough to get permission to fish two local lakes for eels during the close season and although they have produced very few eels, one was over 5lb. The smaller of the two lakes is particularly inviting, approximately 40 acres with depths up to 9 foot, very muddy and ringed with head-high rushes with a smattering of water lilies. It has a colossal amount of natural food. In the summer, the water is black with daphnia, and even the shrimps are specimen size. In fact, it is the best potential "big fish water" I have ever fished. I reckon that if I could just get one eel that it would be something special. The only spot which can be bank fished didn't look too inviting and I decided to tackle the water from a boat. Fortunately, in the winter a couple of the other anglers who visit the water had repaired two punts to fish from. During the first week in April, we travelled down in a Unigate Milk Wagon to launch them.

Now, eeling from a boat is a real headache and following my first session on 2nd May, I staggered ashore with hypothermia. Also, there was this horrid problem of the boat swaying about, setting off the alarms all the time. We all go together on this one, and came up with the "gadget" previously described in a recent Bulletin. These proved extremely efficient, especially when we replaced the canes, used as bank sticks, with lengths of screwed conduit up to 15 foot long. About this time, Arthur Sutton sent me a couple of his superb "gripper" alarm units. Now, no-one who has used any of his alarms will doubt that Arthur is the finest builder and designer of alarms in the country, and his "gripper" is a sure-fire winner.

I adapted an old fly-tying vice to clamp these alarm units and rod rests to the boat... they worked like a dream. By laying out my bed chair and sleeping bag I could now fish quite comfortably and, what's more, in reasonable warmth, from within a sleeping bag. This lot was kept dry by gluing a load of fertiliser bags together and slipping the sleeping bags inside them.

I had several trips on both lakes and enjoyed my fishing but sadly no eels were caught. However, I am confident that should the privilege be extended in future seasons, I will get a good one.

Unfortunately, I was away during the Club's trip to Bra Lake, but Brian and Richard were kind enough to get permission for two of us to visit the water for the weekend prior to the Whit Trip. I believe that Bra is capable of producing big eels but it is unlike any other water I have fished with those twitchy bites and baits that disappear into the soft mud. I think the eels spend most of their time buried in this mud, even to the point of moving through it to feed. The only answer I could see, was to fish very small baits and sit by the rods for an instant strike. There are certainly a few problems to work out and although we weren't fishless, only two eels came out of a weekend when it rained and rained and rained.

During the latter part of May, two friends arrived one evening to discuss the venue for the glorious sixteenth - I was duly dragged off to the nearest ale house and many hours and several pints, or was it many pints and several hours later, all was agreed. Whitmere was the chosen spot.

Now, I should explain that Pete and Roger were looking for bream and tench, as for me, I'll go for anything, - even fish occasionally, but have this failing when it comes to eels. The reason behind our choice was due to the fact that during the previous winter, Mark Davies, Pete and I, had done a full survey of the lake with an echo sounder. Now, if you think you know a water, I recommend you try going over it with an echo sounder. The sounder threw up several hitherto unknown features. The most interesting being in one corner where although the depth changed only slightly, the bottom varied from sand and gravel to soft mud. A trip was arranged to view the intended swims and this sorted out, we commenced pre-baiting. Now Pete was going to the water as much as four times a week and during the three weeks prior to the season opening many gallons of maggots and thousands of lob worms were put into the three swims. The groundbaiting followed the exact method of pre-baiting - in this case, approximately seventy yards out from the bank: the bait was dropped from an inflatable boat. I very rarely fish worms without groundbaiting, and the usual amount is about 200 lobs and 2 pints of maggots which are put in approximately every twelve hours. Through the session this usually turns something up in my pitch even if it is only jack pike.

Collecting that amount of bait is extremely hard work and I dread to think just how many worms I have uprooted from our local cricket pitch. My current record is 100 lobs in three minutes five seconds.

Come the eve of the sixteenth, Roger had to work but fortunately Mark managed to get a few days off and three of us settled down in our allotted swims. Even though it was the fifteenth you can't just sit there waiting for midnight, at least I can't!! I have to admit to cheating and was soon catching, with three eels to 3:08.

In addition to the usual single lob I also had a swimfeeder and maggot rig set up and late in the afternoon hooked into a good eel which I unfortunately lost. Pete also started catching with eel after eel hitting his net. Now, he was fishing a 4lb line and 3lb hooklength with maggots and swimfeeder and was landing eels which got bigger and bigger. He ended up with several around the 4lb figure. Fair to say, he did lose several which bit through the hooklength, these were when he fell asleep.

The second and third days, my swim tailed off and I suspect that eels had been attracted into the area by prebaiting and it was not a natural holding spot. Pete, however, was going from strength to strength and I suspected Mark too was getting slightly jealous of this breamy sod catching our eels - I certainly was.

Pete's keepnet, now full of eels, looked as if a gallon of maggots had been mashed up and thrown in around it. Proof, if any further were needed, of his amazing success in training these eels in the delights of maggot munching.

On the last day, I did land an eel of 4:1, Pete had one of 4:6, then I caught a perch of 2:5 - he answered with a perch of 2:6. Fortunately, for me, that I had to go home-- I couldn't stand too much more of his crowing.

A few days later, I contacted Pete and casually enquired if he was thinking of another trip to Whitemere. "No" came the reply - he was already baiting up "OSS". The eels were all mine.

20th June and back to the far corner and Pete's swim. Lots of prime lobs and a gallon of maggots; alas, I only had one night but long enough to land three eels and all big threes. The tackle I was using is my standard set up for this type of water. 11' - 12' carp rods, three of which are through action the forth fast taper (funny thing is they all cast exactly the same distance), Mitchell 306 reels, the perfect eel reel, and 8lb Sylcast line. Occasionally I go up to 11 lb when fishing on or near snags and down to 6lb or even 4 plus 5 with Mitchell 300's when the going gets tough.

The most important part is the business terminal rig this is:-

Each item is most carefully scrutinised even down to the use of the bead. The Arslay bomb is attached by the "stick" seconda reed which was designed for use over weed - but it has proved so effective that I seldom fish without one. Ernie Orme first sent me a couple for trials and I have used them ever since in various lengths depending on the type of bottom fished over. Very easy to make, I paint them matt black, grey or some other sombre colour. The split ring is the type used on the Drennan swimfeeders (obtained from Trev Moss) they have proved far better than swivels. The bead helps to stop the line twisting around the split ring when long casting or retrieving the line.

The type of hook used is very much a personal choice but it is probably far more important than any of us give it credit for. Time and time again I find that, as with any other type of fishing, it pays to scale down. The "Stilletts" pattern previously used is still available but not to the same standard and I now use Must, d No. A5220 or A5240 - these are obtained from Woolworths.

The size I use most is 12 for medium lobs (I rarely use the jumbo lobs), 14 for small and size 10 for doubles. These hooks are much smaller than most eel anglers use but give them a try; for my money they are a very good pattern.

I must emphasise that I am always varying the set up and this is only my standard "Starter" rig, I can not see any point in just sitting there waiting.

On June 26th, I prebaited Whitemere and moved to Crowsmere which during the 1975-78 period proved the most consistent big eel water I have ever fished. It was here that I first worked out the most successful margin technique that has proved so effective. However, since 1978 only two bootlaces have visited the inside of my keepnet and this particular trip did not add to the number. So it was back to Whitemere, with another 200 lobs and two pints of maggots groundbait. Later I was to wish that I had stopped

the full weekend because during the night I had one eel of 4:1 and was just tucking into breakfast at 7.30 am on a super morning when the line tripped off again and this time it was an eel of 4:2.

By now, the weed had really gained a hold and landing fish through it was proving difficult. Each fish took twice as long as normal to land - one thing I did learn on this trip was not to be afraid of fishing over or through weed. There were oceans of the stuff growing up from the bottom and yet these eels were finding my offerings without any difficulty.

No doubt in amongst all the weed was a great deal of food and this was where the eels were residing for the summer months, I almost said warmer months but I am sure you remember our summer and all those NW winds!

In July I attended a two week course in Gloucestershire and in amongst all the normal clobber was my fishing tackle and a chance to fish some of those South Cerney Pits. It was 40-odd miles to South Cerney from where I was staying and on arrival I stopped at various rod laybys and gazed over the hedges and across hundreds of acres of differing gravel pits that festoon the area. Just contemplating starting had me flying up and down the main "spit" road searching for a likely eel spot. Eventually following advice from some anglers, I settled on a well-established lake and fished a fairly shallow weedy area. Run after run had bootlaces hitting the bank until I tired of the whole process. I baited with eel strip and the bites stopped.

A couple of nights later, I tried another pit and had a blank but the following week, with the car laid up with wheel bearing trouble, I had to stay on the camp and join in the boozing with all the other lads.

Back home, I went eeling again on August 1st and this time tried Blakesmere, unfortunately, an over-enthusiastic working party had moved in on the trees. It is sad to think that the main holding spots are in and around the tree roots and branches that overhang the water. Now there was not even a blade of grass to hide behind. The far bank remains like a jungle and no doubt the eels will have moved across and the only way to get at them would be from a boat.

I stayed at Blakesmere and managed one 2lb eel but was quickly away at first light, cursing those wood cutters that had reduced the canal side bank to a dreary desert.

Two weeks later I visited a large number of possible eel waters and even baited Newton mere for a few days only to have the place erupt with algae. They all looked wrong somehow and so it was back to Pete's spot yet again.

This time, I had company as my seven year old son Martyn fancied a weekend with me. I reckon he must think he has a five-day father during the summer. We arrived to find the water had cleared and it was possible to see the bottom in 8' of water and as the groundbaiting ritual commenced we drifted over the spot and there, quite clearly, was the reason behind the success of the spot. On previous visits it was noticeable that all the action came to rods 2 and 3, rods 1 and 4 on either side had no bites at all despite trying to fit all the baits in the narrow band where the bites come from. Across the swim we paddled and the bottom was of gravel and sand - suddenly the colour changed quite distinctly to a darker mud which was covered with clumps of heavy weed growth.

Eels did not move out of this band of darker mud and this was evident by the dead worms from previous groundbaiting runs still visible on the sandy areas to either side. The fish were perfectly happy to feed in such shallow water, even in the daytime, but would not move onto the lighter sand for the free offerings thrown to them.

Armed with this information the groundbait was all dropped into this narrow band and what a weekend we had with four big eels, two over four pounds and the best 4:6. Martyn couldn't cast the distance even when I tried to help him, so we rowed the boat to the best

spot and dropped his bait exactly in a small clear area on the mud strip added a good dollop of maggots and returned to the bank. Two hours later at 3.30 pm he landed an eel of 3:10. I took a couple of photos and the best shot appeared in the local paper. The result was one very happy lad who thinks eel fishing is dead easy. Later that month we had several more trips to Whitemere and a couple of 3lb+ eels. It was apparent that plenty of eels still inhabited the swim and were happy to take the free offerings but the bites were now very finicky and would drop the baits for no apparent reason despite scaling down the tackle.

At the beginning of September I had a long weekend trip to Hawkstone Park, Shropshire. I enjoyed the trip and caught some good fish but only two small eels. One big rudd took a huge bunch of worms and came out with worms festooned all around it, I even had a 2½lb crucian off a lob.

Some very big eels have been taken on the water and a load of them have been caught on luncheon meat. It was from a small pit near here that a lad had a 8:14 eel on meat and 1980 the same water produced a large 7lb, on the old plumrose too. Me, I can't get a bite on it.

Arthur Sutton journeyed the long distance to Whitemere for our annual jaunt and he even managed to drag out Ernie for a trip. All was set for a good three day session until the weather took command. The winds blew so hard I even had a willow tree collapse across my swim. Arthur retired to his car and I am not too sure what happened to Ernie. We all survived, but only just. The same trip last year saw 16 good eels, this time we returned home early with a good soaking and a hatred for gale-force winds.

Another trip to Crowsmere was a waste of time and a full 24 hours were spent gazing at the lifeless swim through never-ending rain. The highlight of the weekend was collecting mushrooms, it certainly wasn't the fishing. With the arrival of October we were nearing the end of the eel year but I had one ace still left to play.

Marbury mere produces big eels in October when they move into the deep water (20' plus) at the back of the church. The only trouble is they only appear every other season and always on an odd year never an even, which is quite remarkable. Success dates back to 1961 so there is a good track record.

I pre-baited on three occasions and then arrived at the swim around 8 am and put in another load of bait. Nigh fishing at this time of the year is not for me, I can't get out of my sleeping bag besides it is commonsense that if the eels are to feed then it's a good deal more likely to be in the daytime when the temperature is at its best.

My 10' cane MK IV carp rod always gets used at Marbury, it is a family tradition and yet again it turned up with the goods when the only bite of the day produced a 3:10 eel.

The following weekend Mark joined me for another Marbury session but unfortunately frost on the previous three nights put paid to our chances. So much for the season of 1981, I can't help but feel that I missed out somewhere. Somehow I never got around to fishing any new waters that I had lined up. Those amino acids seemed a waste of time and I hardly caught a fish on any of my mixes.

It seems that the harder you try the harder those really big eels are to catch, perhaps a completely different approach may do the trick. Whatever. I can't wait for 1982. When the dust can be shaken off those eel rods and once again the car will be heading towards some likely eel spot.

Already I am missing the whole scene, those long weekends when the light begins to fail, the splosh of the leger as it comes down far into the lake, the test of the alarm when the rod is nestled in the rests, then the long wait in the still night air and the chance of a run.

To me there is nothing to match eel fishing and I hope I will always enjoy it.

Total Sessions:	Eels	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5
29	26	4	5	3	9	5

Best eel: 4:6 14.8.81

I had a motive in writing the above article which I hope may prove of interest and benefit to others.

For too many years we have condemned one of our members with the monumental task of compiling the year's session reports. I believe it is far too much for one individual. The answer must be for each member to take notes throughout the year and at the end of the season forward them for inclusion in the Bulletin. This way the onus will be placed firmly on the shoulders of the individual members themselves.

What do you think?

Dave Holman

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

May I take the opportunity of wishing you all a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year. I hope that 1982 is all you want it to be and all the hard work and effort which goes behind every fishing season is duly rewarded. I look forward to typing all your end-of-season reports and hope that there are plenty of 5lb+ eels amongst them.

Best of luck and tight lines,

Yours sincerely

Jan Jefferson
