



City of Port Phillip Living Heritage Project
Edited transcript – Leonard “Dugga” Beazley
Interviewees: Leonard “Dugga” Beazley [DB] and Frances Beazley [FB]
Interviewer: Cathy Dodson [CD]
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Different nets for different fish

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CD: So there are clearly different nets for different types of fish?

DB: Yes.

CD: Let’s talk a little bit about that. What kind of net would you use for Snapper for instance?

DB: In the winter time we used to use four inch nets, four inch mash. That’s the size of the mash is 4 inch, for the snapper, and 20 meshes deep. But, yes we used to do that but they banned it, oh about 20 years ago. Prior to that we used to use 6, 7 and 8 inch nets for big snapper.

DB: You know and we caught some very big catches in the nets with them. [*To Frances*] We had 3 tonne one day didn’t we?

FB: Mmm.

DB: And, yes, but what happened there is greed. Greed got in the way of that because a couple of blokes from Sandringham put a big wheel on their boat.

DB: A big roller, put the nets on it.

DB: And they were shooting the nets out in deep water out in the Bay and they were getting 30 or 40 boxes a night in them. And, of course ... the rest of the fishermen down there saw it, so in the finish there was about half a dozen doing it, you know? But ... they were leaving the nets all night, but it would take them a few hours in the morning to pull them in and take the snapper out and of course all the anglers seen them, and they kicked up a stink about it, and it was a real stink. And anyway the Fisheries banned us catching the snapper with the big mash.

CD: So did that force you to change what you were using then, at that time?

DB: Oh well, out in the deep water we were just long lining them. You know, we were quite happy to get them on the long line, you know? But we weren’t catching them in that sort of numbers, they were just slaughtering them. The arse dropped out of the price of them in the market. You know?

CD: And there was ill feeling between the professional and the amateur fishermen?

DB: Oh there was a lot. There was a lot of ill feeling between a lot of the fishermen too. All the long-line fishermen wasn’t very happy about it. But these blokes who were doing this, previous to that were long-lining like the rest of us were and getting half a dozen boxes a day and getting good money for them. But they weren’t satisfied with that. It all started over one bloke.

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CD: So what about other sorts of nets you'd use for other fish?

DB: You'd use smaller mesh for whiting. You'd go down to 2 inch mesh for whiting. Two and half and two and three quarters for flathead, you know? Five inch for flounders.

CD: And you'd put those nets in different places depending on which type of fish you wanted to catch?

DB: Well, for rock flathead and stuff like that, you've got to go in the sea grass. Big thick deep sea grass. Right around the shore line, mainly in Corio Bay. There's not a lot of grass in Port Phillip Bay, but in Corio Bay there's a lot of grass, but right in close. And there's always been good catches of grass whiting because the amateur fisherman don't catch them. You know it's very seldom that you'll catch a rock flathead on a fishing line. Yes, but the whiting too, you'll get them in the grass, but you'll also get them out in the mud too, you know? Yes.

CD: Ok. And what about in deeper water, what would you catch in deeper water?

DB: Oh mainly flathead, Bay sand flathead out in the deep water... Yes, that's what I used to do when I first started fishing, catch flathead. Because when I first started fishing –

CD: This is when you were working with your Dad and your Uncle?

DB: Yes, in the 1950s. We used to get up at 7 o'clock in the morning, oh no, 6 o'clock I think. And we'd leave the lagoon about seven. We used to use 25, 30 nets. One net is 45 fathom, that's 90 yards, roughly, and we used to join 30 of them together. They used to be in bundles, you know? And on the way down the Bay we would bait them. We used to put pilchards or white bait in them. And we'd get down the Bay, it would take us an hour and a half, hour. And we'd shoot the nets out, and leave them, you only had to leave them down an hour, that's all it needed, and we'd lift them again and they'd be loaded with flathead. And we used to come home and sell them out the boat, at the Lagoon, alongside the pier.