



## Fishpot Competition 1958-1961

The most fascinating competition ever seen in Australia!

The first Fishpot Competition was held in February 1958. Local school teacher Mr Ross Kirkpatrick and many other local identities formed a committee to organise the event. The fish were tagged by a senior Fisheries Department Officer under the scrutiny of a Justice of the Peace and duplicate tags with the prizes attached placed in sealed envelopes in a bank vault. These sealed envelopes were not opened until the end of the competition when the results were announced and the awards presented.

Percy, a silver sand whiting, was the first in a number of tagged fish. Percy caused such a stir that Paul Rigby the cartoonist for the Daily News featured him in a cartoon. Percy was a survivor and after release was never seen again.

The Fishpot rules were simple and everyone had a chance of winning prizes.

- Fish entered in the fishpot competition had to be caught within the set areas.
- Fish had to be caught on a handline or a rod and line- not a fixed line or a net.
- A fish to be entered in the competition could not be refrigerated. It had to be produced at the Fishpot Office within 18 hours after capture.
- Minimum sizes and species of the fishpot fish for the week were nominated at the Fishpot Office at 6pm every Friday.
- Sharks and Rays and undersize fish were excluded from the competition.

Young and old could enter into this grand competition. Why? Because they had nothing to lose- no entry fees- Just catch your fish- enter it in the competition- record the catch on the Ampol card – produce it at the Fishpot Office and then- eat your fish, and perhaps, win some prizes as well. There were first, second and juvenile prizes.



# MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS

MANDURAH COMMUNITY MUSEUM

## Fishpot Competition 1958-1961 cont'd

In 1959 £10,000 in prizes were offered at the annual Ampol-Mandurah Fishpot.

Willie the Whiting was the richest swimmer in the Mandurah estuary, he was worth £7,500 if caught on Saturday February 28, £5,000 if caught on Sunday and £2,500 if caught on Monday March 2.

Many tagged fish were released, all worth valuable prizes to the lucky fishermen who caught them between 9am and 7pm each day. Prizes such as a £14 Aladdin stove, £13 rod and reel, £10/10- nylon prawn net, a week's accommodation for a couple at Hotel Brighton, a £15 canteen of cutlery, £10 box of groceries and a £14 11ft fiber glass beach rod were being offered.

Even a £160 Block of Land at Melros Beach for the biggest fish hooked or speared between the dates of the competition was available to win.

Statistics relating to that time record the presence of 200 boats from the bar to the bridge, 2,000 cars within the immediate vicinity of the Mandurah foreshore and up to 3,000 lines in the water. It is believed that the bridge was packed by people watching the release of fish and that many people spent the night before the competition in various places around the foreshore on blankets ready for the event the next day.

The Fishpot competition was re-introduced when the Kanyana Carnival started in 1966 and was one of many events at this carnival.

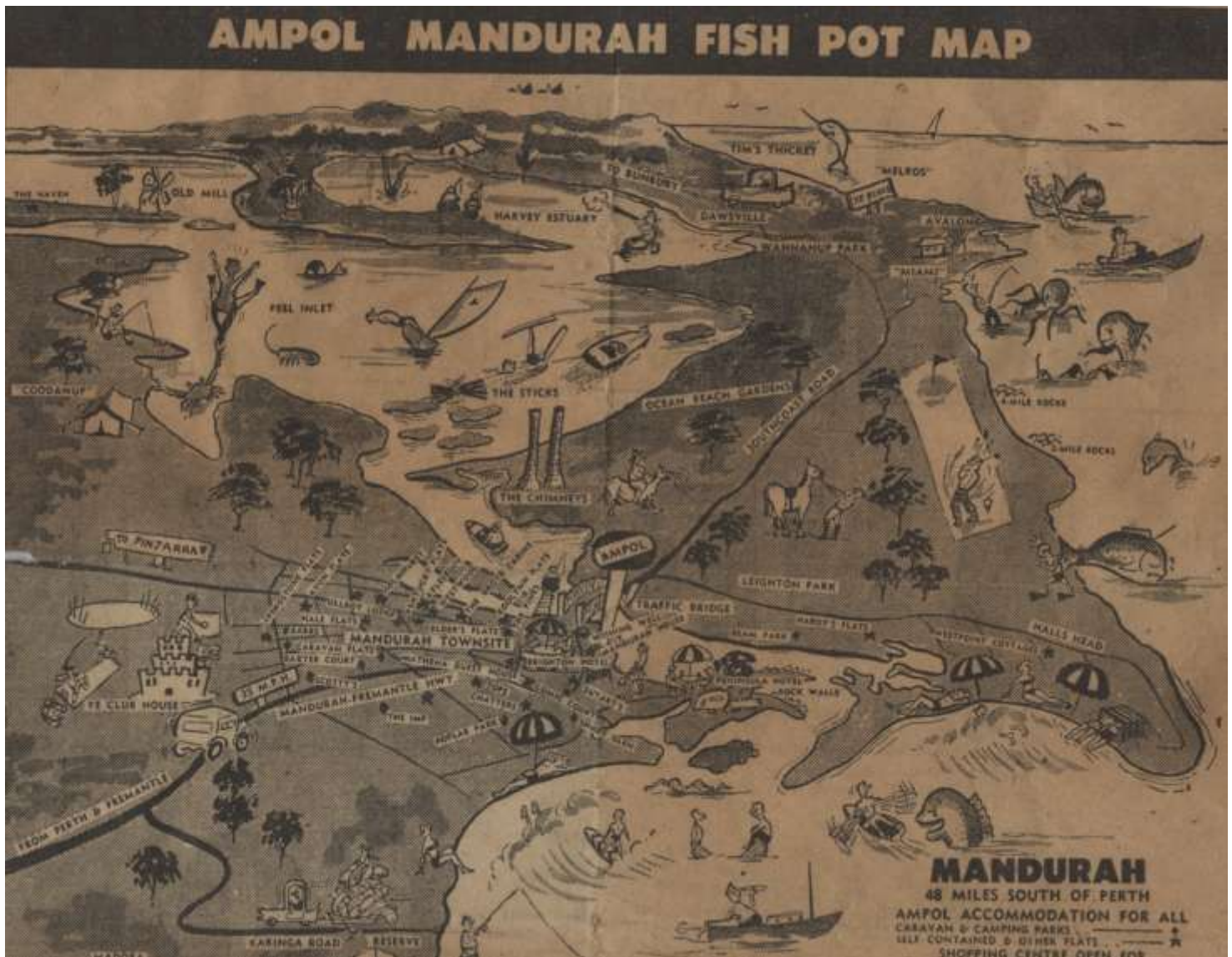
It was aimed at juniors and had an entry fee of 5c.

It not only included tagged fish, but the biggest fish, biggest crab, biggest blowie and best mixed bag.

Judging and prizes were given each day.

## Fishpot Competition 1958-1961 cont'd

This map shows the areas where Fishpot entrants were allowed to fish in 1959.



**Reference** (Information relating to this article is taken from Newspaper reports by Frank Semmens some years later, and also from a Flashback article by Jill Burgess in the Coastal District times 1995).