

## THE BATTLE FOR BRIBIE

OR

### OPERATION WHITING.

The last rays of the full moon bathed the area in a soft light as the contestants began to assemble at the embarkation point. It was three o'clock on the morning of D day, October 30th. Zero hour was still two hours off, but already the tension of battle could be felt.

By four o'clock the last of the men had arrived at the assembly area in a varied assortment of vehicles. Instructions were given by captains. A last minute check of equipment was made. This was to be an "infantry show" and every item of unnecessary weight was discarded by the battle wise veterans.

As the last of the 'ammunition' was distributed the embarkation order was given, and soon the invasion barges were out in the channel en route to the beachhead. The subdued murmur of voices could be heard above the drone of the diesel engines, discussing the coming operation.

A rendezvous was made at first light with a small ship carrying further men and within a few minutes an unopposed landing was made on Bribie Island.

A last briefing by the commanding officer, and as the starting signal was given, 240 anglers with rods at the high port and bait tins of ammunition at the ready, went into action at the double. Contact was quickly made with the enemy and before long the whiting casualties ran into hundreds.

This was the commencement of the annual Bribie trip to fish for the Tristram Shield, and the second round of the South Queensland Light Gear Championship, conducted by Q.A.F.C.A.

Bribie Island at the northern end of Moreton Bay, is twenty miles long, and separated from the mainland by Pumicestone Channel. The competitors embarked at Toorbul Point aboard wartime invasion barges which normally provide a passenger and vehicular service across the threequarters of a mile of this channel. Toorbul Point is about fifty miles north by road from Brisbane and opposite

the southern end of the island.

The three mile stretch of beach on the southern end of Bribie is one of the most prolific whiting grounds of the Bay from September to December, and it was here that the competition was decided. Tangalooma, the venue of the first round competition fished in September, is only ten miles across the water on Moreton Island and is renowned as a night time fishing ground. Although they are within sight of each other, Bribie fishes best in the daytime.

This year, competitors faced a four mile walk from the landing spot to the weigh in point at the Bribie Hotel on Ocean Beach. What better spot could there be to rest, after a four mile walk that seemed like fourteen?

The first two miles to the favourite spots on Bald Point were covered at the gallop by many of the young and energetic anglers. One old hand remarked, that after covering the two miles at a jog trot, he found that some had already caught six fish when he arrived. It was a sorry sight however at noon when the competition finished. Most competitors were still faced with a two mile trudge to be at weigh in by twelve thirty. Bowed backs and hanging heads were the order of the day.

The majority of the fish were caught in the first three hours to the top of the tide. The tempo slowed down considerably with the ebb, although odd good fish were still being creeled when the competition ended. Some anglers who did not join the race for Bald Point were rewarded by better quality fish near the landing spot. Some fine whiting of a pound weight and better were creeled in this area.

Many competitors wore white war paint under shady hats as additional protection against sunburn. It was a typical cloudless summer day, with an 80 degree shade temperature. Weather and fish played their part in making this one of the most successful competitions held at this location.

A total of 3,573 fish, almost entirely whiting, was weighed in by 170 anglers, and to this figure must be added at least a thousand caught by those competitors who did not record their catch.

Scarborough Club again showed their ability and superior knowledge of the ground by winning the Tristram Shield with a six man team catch of 206 fish. It was their third win in this area. Their team members also took individual honours of first and second. Fraser Summers top scored with 53 fish, followed by Ian Uhlmann with 49. Next best with equal points were Roy Gripske of Victory Club with 50 fish and Dave Schulz of Virginia Nundah with 48 fish.

Jim Menzies of Mirimar Club, the first round leader in the South Queensland Light Gear Championship, has now been displaced by Roy Gripske, with Ross Law, also of Victory Club, in third position. The first 40 anglers will now contest the final round at Jumpinpin next June. Although the leaders have a fair margin of points, anyone can still win if the bream are as prolific as usual next year.

And so the Battle for Bribie was fought and won. Sunburned faces, sore backs and aching limbs will be forgotten by next year and you can be sure we will all be back again in 1956 for "Operation Whiting."

.....