

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT OF THE WESTERNPORT ANGLING CLUB

Our family oriented social fishing Club started in 1974 after a group of neighbours and friends, having a beer after fishing, decided to become a legally constituted club.

There were 40 original club members with Phil Gannon being the Founder and first Club President.

From 1974 to 2016, a period of 42 years, the office bearers have contributed greatly to the Club's success and growth as summarised in the table below.

Position	No. of persons previously occupying position	Longest serving
President	22	Bob Wilkinson – 6 years (current)
Secretary	13	Kevin Toohey – 18 years (current)
Treasurer	18	Yoita Henderson – 7 years
Weigh Master	16	Ross Anderson – 8 years

Membership boomed in the 1980's; for example in October 1985 there were 76 male, 48 female, and 58 junior members. A truly family oriented club. Family activities included car rallies, boat rallies, trips on and around French Island, progressive dinners, Macclesfield trout farm, and the very popular Christmas party with Santa.

In the early years meetings were held in the Coast Guard shed (near original public pool), RSL hall, Hastings Football Clubrooms and Western Port Marina. The need for its own clubrooms was obvious and by June 1977 planning negotiations and permits for the club house became a priority. It was not until the end of 1989 that construction of the current clubhouse was completed on Crown foreshore land near the Hastings boat ramp.

The Club's financial viability is due to the many fundraising activities which included crayfish and beer raffles, cake stalls, street stalls, special effort raffles, funny money nights, Bunning's BBQ's and in particular the annual Whiting Challenge.

The inaugural Whiting Challenge took place on 17 and 18 February 1990. The Grand Prize was an outboard motor and \$500 for the first King George Whiting caught over 1kg. Not only is the Whiting Challenge a major fund raising activity but also has become a major club promotion within the local and fishing community.

So too is the club's participation with a 'float' and club members boats in the annual Hastings Day Parade, the first of which took place in February 1983.

Detailed fishing records have been maintained by the Club's Weigh-Masters of the day for catches both in and out of competition. For example the final weigh-in figures for season 1981/1982 shows that 1,692 fish were caught, comprising of 15 species, with a total weight of 2,491 kilograms. Fish were weighed "Scaled, Guttled & Gilled" until mid 1989 when it was changed to fish weighed "Whole".

Not only has the Club conducted many fishing competitions in Western Port Bay, but has, over the years, organised trips away including:

Apollo Bay & Kilcunda (surf), Bemm River & Tambo River (bream), Lake Mulwala & Lake Eildon (murray cod), San Remo (couta and shark), Port Welshpool & Bermagui (game), Whyalla (snapper), Nagambie & Glenmaggie (trout), Mt Martha creek & Patterson lakes (bream), Blue Rock lake, Portland (blue fin tuna), as well as Bass Strait (game).

In the 1970's and 1980's one of the major community activities for the Club was its involvement in bay rescues for the Western Port Safety Council and the Water Police. For many years the Club was on call 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Club members conducted many rescues as well as demonstrations on safe boating practices, and use of flares.

Great clubs are to be respected and become involved with, and Westernport Angling Club is one such club. Its members are willing to contribute, having a wealth of knowledge of the Bay and fishing in general. There are thirteen Life Members who are a testament to the loyalty, commitment and hard work that has helped write this Club's history.

Compiled by Club Historian
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