



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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Collecting and pickling mussels

1.11.15

DB: I had his [*father's*] brother, who was older than him, and my aunty, they lived down in Pickles St. I used to go down there a fair bit when I was young too because they used to get mussels a lot, and they used to cook them and bottle them. And she used to take them down the Lagoon of a Sunday morning and sell them down the Lagoon. But I used to go down there with them, when they were cooking the mussels, and used to pick the mussels out the shells and put them in jars. And they used to boil the vinegar. They used to boil the vinegar so it would make the mussels go sour and they used to drain the water out the mussels, and get all the grit out of it, and mix it fifty-fifty water and vinegar. And put it in, fill the jar up with mussels, then tip the mixture in to it, 'til it just cover the mussels. Then you'd get a cork. Used to get the corks up South Melbourne. Used to go 'round the bottle shop 'round in Nott Street and get chutney jars. You know, they were about that big. They had a cork, a top about that big in them. You'd put the cork in. You used to have this wax, and you'd have a big ladle and big sticks of wax, about that long, about as thick as your finger. They'd have the gas going, you'd just put it in the thing and it would go “pshhh”, it would just melt like that. You know, and when you'd get the ladle full of it, you know you'd get the bottles and just put them in and go like that. [*Dugga mimes dipping the upside down bottle into the hot wax.*] And seal them all, you know?

CD: So tip the bottle upside down and dip it in the wax?

DB: Yes, upside down. Yes, just the neck of it, you know, just the neck of it. And you'd pull it out and it would seal the top so the air couldn't get in you know? And you'd just put them up like that and put them up like that and it would be hard. [*Dugga mimes turning the bottle the right way up and placing it on the table.*] Just had to hit the air, you know?

CD: And she would sell them at the Lagoon as well?

DB: Yes, two bob a bottle.

CD: So was that something she would do every week? Or just every so often?

DB: Oh, no they used to do it every weekend, you know, through the summer months, when the mussels were - Because the mussels didn't used to be good all the time. There's a season for them you know, around about from Christmas around to about Easter, you know, they would be nice and fat. But through the winter months they used to shrivel up to – You'd cook them and they'd come out about that big. [*Dugga gestures with his hands.*]

CD: Right, so they'd be too small for –

DB: Yes, no good. Yes you'd get a mussel about that big and you'd get meat out of it about that big. [*Dugga gestures with his hands.*]

CD: And where were the mussels from?

DB: We used to get them off the Station Pier. Town Pier when the Town Pier was there. The Drain Pier at Pickles St. Kerferd Road. There used to be diving boards between Kerferd Road and St Kilda, and another one between the Lagoon and Kerferd Road, and they used to have good mussels on them. We used to go out the lightship, Gellibrand lightship and get them, over Williamstown. Didn't cook them from – The ones from Williamstown were no good to cook. Too much fresh water, coming out the Yarra.

DB: But we the ones we used to get over there, we used to use, sell them for bait.

CD: So family members would go out and collect them, the mussels, to give to her, or she would collect them?

DB: No, no, her husband.

CD: Her husband.

DB: Yes. I used to go with them getting the mussels. I've got the boat they used to use.

CD: Which one was that?

DB: The *Greta*.