

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2533

Sams, Jess

(1897 - 1989)

Born 1 January, 1897, Milton New South Wales Australia

Died 31 December, 1989

Occupation Fishing Champion

Summary

In 1938 Jess Sams won a nationwide fishing contest for heaviest catch with a 330lb striped marlin.

Details

Daughter of Dan and Mary Ann Millard, pioneers of the Ulladulla region, Jess Sams moved to Sydney as a young woman to work as a seamstress and milliner. She married Captain Archie Sams in 1926, and was an active member of the Ulladulla Ambulance Service, the Country Women's Association and the Hospital ladies' ancillary.

In 1938 she took part in a nationwide fishing contest as part of Australia's 150th celebrations, sailing in a 30 foot double-ended carvel fishing launch with two brothers, Michael and Salvatore Puglisi. Over 580 anglers entered the competition to win a series of valuable trophies. Sams and the Puglisi brothers were aiming for the £500 trophy for the heaviest catch. On 27 February 1938 found herself hanging on with all of her might to a stout split cane rod, eventually pulling in an enormous striped marlin.

Back at the Ulladulla wharf consternation ensued as it was discovered that there was no provision in the rules for women anglers to win the competition's major trophy. Officials in Sydney soon backed down after angry phone calls from the townspeople. Working on the telephone exchange, Sams' niece overheard discussions implying that the fish would be disqualified as it had not been weighed on the official scales. Sams and her husband responded by driving straight to Jervis Bay, arriving at 4am for a weigh-in. The fish turned the scales at 330 lbs – standing today as the Australian 130lb line class women's record for a striped marlin.

A supporter of Game Fishing, Sams' donated her trophy to the Australian Fishing Museum. Today the annual Game Fishing Tournament is held at Ulladulla and named in Sams' honour.

Published resources

Site Exhibition

She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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Digital resources



Title: Jess Sams with her prize catch

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