

Although many more fish seemed to be attracted towards the boat about this stage in proceedings, a few of the lesser spirits abandoned ship to enjoy the solidity and stability of Phillip Island, where lizards and rabbits were the quarry instead of fish.

Included in the number who preferred to suffer on the surge for the good of the cause was a very experienced sailor and fisherman called Sam, who, so he told us, sailed the seven seas when Adam was a boy and long before Fletcher Christian started his little pranks on the "Bounty."

Sam, as you probably know, works in the Mess. But he was in a much bigger mess that day. He soon became so enfeebled by repeated visits to the gunwale that he sought relief by collapsing prostrate in the bilge, nobly sticking to his post and retaining a firm grip on his line in his agony.

Suddenly he felt a tremendous tug on the line. The transformation in the seeringly lifeless figure was wondrous to behold. He leapt to his feet and everybody forgot about their own stomachs and fish to yell encouragement. From the strain on the line the fish must be a big 'un, or at least a whopper, there being only two possible sizes.

Now the line goes slack and Sam, acting on shouted advice hauls it in frenziedly. Now it tightens, and nearly pulls him into the drink. Skilfully recovering his balance Sam braces his foot against the side of the boat and, pale and trembling, continues the battle of brawn and wits with the monster he has hooked. With all his 210 pounds of twisted sinew he can make no impression on the straining line. He yells urgently for assistance. As he turns the line goes slack again. Perhaps the whale - it can be nothing smaller - is tiring too.

With renewed vigour Sam begins to play his catch once more with the hand of a master angler, rivalling the piscatorial proficiency of the S.W.O. himself. But try as he may - and Sam was certainly a trier - he can make no impression. That fish just won't give in. At last Sam can struggle no more. Completely exhausted he turns despairingly to the other yelling fishermen who begin to fear that the boat will be sawn in two. He seems them all far from perturbed, without a vestige of excitement.

The blighters were all doubled up with mirth, unable to contain themselves any longer. A terrific roar of laughter rocked the boat even more than before. Sam's expression changed in a flash from despair to suspicion, horror and disgust. Some dirty, low-down steered so-and-so had hooked his line from the other side of the boat, and, yelling encouragement all the while had played under-water tug-of-war!