

TACOMA PRESERVATION SOCIETY



www.tacoma.org.au M: 0476 173 860 P.O. Box 3088 Port Lincoln SA 5606

April 2020 - Newsletter # 15

Captain's Report

Ahoy Me Hearties

The log says we have been very bus - well at least it should. Frantic February and Mad March saw us undertake four tuna poling escapades and a charity trip to boot. I think the boat driver is exhausted - as are we all!

Keeping up the flow of bait, ice and provisions, not to mention unloading and processing tuna, as well as maintenance was an almost overwhelming undertaking. All those involved worked their bits off and are to be wholeheartedly congratulated. Unfortunately the last trip was a blank - but I didn't hear too many crew complaining.

We have had some interesting characters on board over the past two months and not to be outdone, even the charity trip threw up a star in the making.

We have had many debates by the polers – did the ort or starboard side performed best, did the girls or boys catch more fish (am I allowed to use genders?) and who cooked the best meal (I think the Cous Cous won hands down as it was the most talked about).

We have had a range of crew which this year, apart from the usual suspects, included the effervescent Electric Fred and the unstoppable Chay Haldane with the indomitable Gerry Veitch making another guest appearance. Thank you guys for filling in when others fell by the wayside due to work and other commitments.

All things aside, it has been a rewarding time both in monetary terms and in camaraderie, something we are going to miss in the coming months I am sure.



No doubt you are all aware our program has been curtailed by the plague that is weeping the planet and hopefully that will all abate by the start of next season.

Wishing you all safe in the months to come.

Pugwash

Peter Jessep

All newsletter contributions are gratefully received
Please email them to me on medley0246@gmail.com if you have an article to offer
I encourage you to have a look at the TPS website www.tacoma.org.au
Editor: Chris Houweling

“ALL IN A DAY’S WORK”

Maintenance of the ‘Bait Net’ (Sounds simple yet!)

Ross, PJ, Jack and the two Freds drove the bait net on the back of Ross’ ute to Hart’s air strip for repairs. The net, a mere 70 metres long by 15metres deep took a lot of pulling and tugging to lay flat on the airstrip. The ragged holes in the net varied in size and many were up to 20cm in diameter. It was back breaking work. Next the broken floats were replaced and fixed, more bending & groaning.

Left to right photos – Jack, Ross, PJ and E Fred



Ross and PJ hard at work fixing cork floats



PJ fixing a cork float



OOOPs found another hole. Jack and Fred team up to mend it.





*Ross' ute with
bait net
alongside the
Atlas.*

Once finished, it was just a matter, (tongue in cheek) of slipping the net back into the box on the back of the Ute and OOOps, another hole is discovered.

Next stop, the Marina to call upon the help of the winch aboard the "Atlas" (A Haldane Bros. prawning vessel). The net was swung from the ute over the aft of the Atlas and down to Chay and PJ in the flattie. From there the flattie putted its way back to the birth at Sandy Point where the crew were ready to winch the net from the flattie back on board the Tacoma.

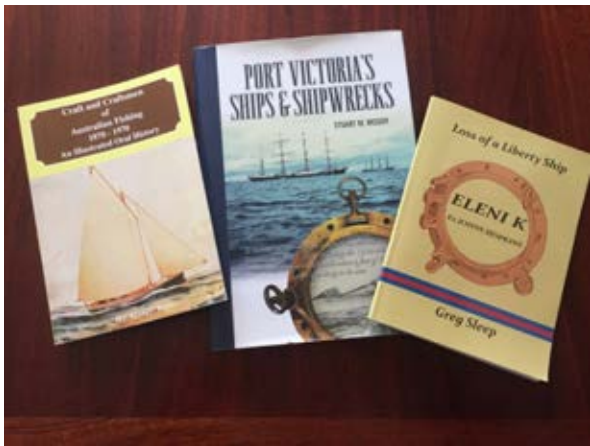
Another job well done, thanks to the Harts (use of airstrip), Atlas (H B prawning vessel) and crew.



*Bait net being lowered
to the flattie*



*Bait net safe
on the flattie*



MARITIME HISTORY

This year's 'Big Trip' on TACOMA was to take a group of wooden boat lovers, historians, maritime industry leaders and fishing enthusiasts on a sightseeing and tuna fishing adventure to Pearson and Flinders Islands off the coast of Elliston, South Australia. The group was mainly put together by Gary Kerr, who has made several DVDs about the fishing and boating industries including one about TACOMA.

On board were our passengers, 6 Victorians, 2 Queenslanders, 1 Northern Territorian and 1 South Aussie along with Ross the Skipper, Jack the Cook, Gerry Veitch the Chief Engineer and Greg the Assistant Engineer/Deckie. Interestingly there were four Garys in the group which caused much confusion and laughter at times – I'm sure we all got called Gary at some point, I certainly did! Gary No. 2 (Stewart) is arguably Australia's best wooden boat builder, based in Port Fairy, Victoria. So it was very fitting that a wooden boat JANE KERR which he built in 1981 for Gary No. 1 (Kerr) accompanied TACOMA on the outward part of our trip. Current owner Tim and his crew joined us for several of our evening 'nibbles' sessions. JANE KERR is a two masted ex Cray boat with an aft wheel house. She has beautiful lines and has been meticulously maintained. It was a pleasure for all on board TACOMA to have her steaming/sailing alongside us.



JANE KERR steams up the coast with us

JANE KERR alongside TACOMA when we caught our live bait



We left our berth at 5.00pm on Friday 28th of February, went to Port Lincoln's main wharf to take on ice then headed out into Boston Bay to wait for dark to attract some bait fish. We all got out of our bunks at 3.00am to unload the small boats and set the net – Wow! What a haul of baitfish, it was more than we could handle.

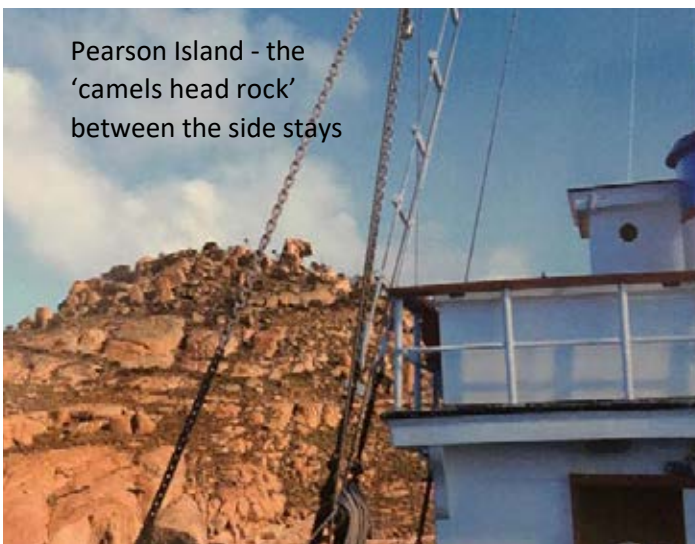
So with that promising start, we headed off at 7.00am for Taylor Island where we dropped the anchor and set the scene for an easy restful day there, after the busy night. Some of the

passengers rowed the dinghy to the island and did some exploring. Then in the afternoon we had a practice run for kitting up the passengers for poling tuna and they tried poling our dummy fish 'Tina the Tuna'.

A 7.00am start next day had us steaming around the southern end of Eyre Peninsula to Perforated Island where we trolled for tuna, but to no avail. Then around Point Sir Isaacs and into Coffin Bay (we did not venture into the township) for a safe anchorage as 30 knot SE winds were forecast. We set all of the anchor chain as a precaution. The strong winds came and pretty much stayed with us for the rest of the trip, so we stayed on anchor all morning. In the afternoon we moved closer to Gallipoli Beach which was the setting for the movie.

Next day the wind was still blowing hard but we went with it all the way to Flinders Island in the Investigator Group, passing close to the towering Topgallant Islands. The highest of these is 101 metres high with the southernmost rock (55 metres high) looking somewhat like the image of a ship's upper square sails. This is why Mathew Flinders named them Topgallant Islands. On the way to Flinders Island we could just make out the silhouette of the mystical Pearson Island in the haze in the western horizon. Meanwhile the boys fishing from the stern had one hookup of a tuna on the troll lines but it got off before they could get it on board. We dropped anchor in Flinders Bay on the northern side of Flinders Island which has been farmed since 1867. It is a large island of 3,642 hectares with a lot of maritime and pastoral history. Next morning Tim from JANE KERR took a few of us ashore in his inflatable boat. Some of us hiked through the low prickly scrub to the lighthouse while others walked west along the beach into the next bay and discovered a small shack which has a mooring out from it. We saw some interesting tracks on the beach which looked much like turtle tracks and a possible egg laying depression. Although turtles do sometimes come this far south, I have never heard of them laying eggs here so I now think it must have been the marks made by a sea lion hauling out and sleeping on the beach. Once back on board, TACOMA headed west to the area around Ward Island where we hoped to hook a tuna on a couple of lumps. Alas, no tuna but we did pull up some monster sweep – the biggest I have seen! We headed back around Flinders Island to our same anchorage for the night.

On Thursday 5th March we left Flinders Island and steamed for Pearson Island, a place so remote that only fisherman and research teams ever get there. These islands are spectacular with their rocky peaks as high as 238 metres. Sheoak and tea tree abound, as do



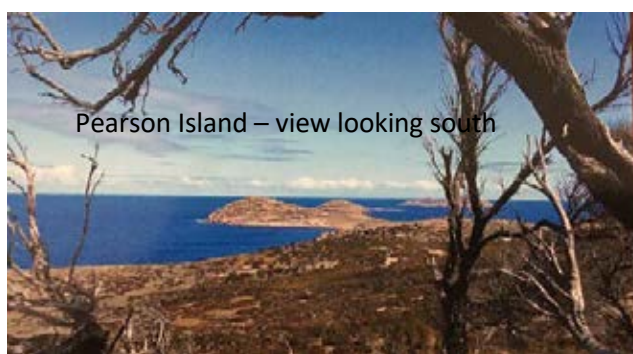
rock wallabies, bush rats, lizards, sea lions and fur seals. We arrived there around midday and hoped to have a BBQ lunch on the only small sandy beach there in the anchorage cove, but the swell was a bit too lumpy for landing. So we went to the northern side of the island and anchored in eastern cove and had our BBQ lunch on board TACOMA. After lunch we ferried nine people to the island to go exploring. A few climbed to the 'camels head rock' on top of east hill and from that vantage point we had

amazing views north and south. Those on the island all saw many rock wallabies, dragon lizards, sea lions and fur seals. Later that evening JANE KERR arrived in the anchorage and Tim and Chris came aboard and told us about their day on Flinders Island where they met the owner Peter Woolford and his wife. They also came for goodbye drinks. Next day we were going south, and they were going west to Streaky Bay and Ceduna and then right around Australia back to Portland, Victoria.



We got away from Pearson Island at 7.00am and headed for Greenly and Rocky Islands. We passed Greenly (which is quite similar to Pearson) around midday and went on to Rocky Island hoping to catch some tuna. About 2.00pm we started trolling and chumming and the guys finally caught three tuna on rod and reel, but we couldn't entice a school to the surface for poling. Ross had talked about anchoring at Greenly Island for the night but with stronger winds threatening we headed for the refuge of Avoid Bay, arriving there at 8.00pm to find two cray boats already there.

On Saturday 7th March we left Avoid Bay at 7.00am and headed straight for the Cabbage Patch. The rough conditions made progress slow. With the troll lines, we slowly caught another eleven tuna but couldn't bring fish to the surface for poling. This was disappointing however we had some happy chappies at the back of the boat. Gilling, gutting, washing and icing down the tuna was a very difficult job in the rolling conditions as we steamed back to the mainland. After rounding Cape Catastrophe, we headed for the anchorage at Taylor Island, arriving there around 9.00pm for tea. It had been a long rolling day. Our illustrious cook had somehow roasted three chickens and cooked our remaining vegetables in those conditions. Thanks Jack!



On Sunday we could sleep in a little and have an easy time packing up and cleaning down in preparation for our last leg back to Port Lincoln. There was no point in rushing because we knew that the very low tide would not allow us to get into our marina berth. We finally got in there late afternoon and our passengers started to go their own ways.

All in all, the entire trip had been a great adventure getting to some very out of the

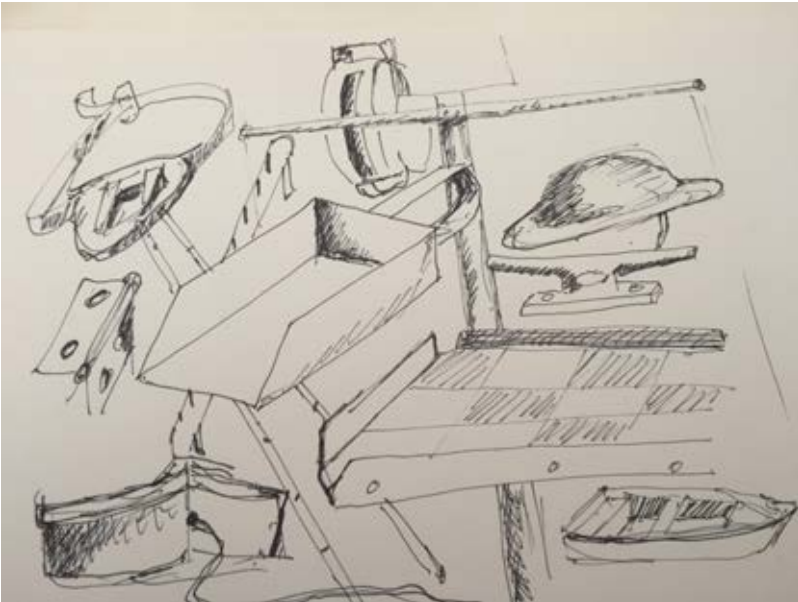
way islands. The tuna weren't as plentiful as we had hoped and the weather wasn't so kind. Plenty of wine and beer helped and in the mornings, the rattle of pill packs helped with the creaking of old bones and hearts. Our average age was around 71.

Well done everyone!

Greg Sleep

LOTS OF LOST THINGS RETURN

Tacoma lay decommissioned for three years awaiting her fate before finally in 2009, out of the mist emerged a group of marine enthusiasts calling themselves the TPS – the Tacoma Preservation Society.



Tacoma then became a little like Humpty Dumpty and it took time to gather her pieces together again.

The “Cross Tree” you can see up the mast today was discovered on Axel Stenross’ flagpole.

The Aga lay thrown over the side at the government slip way and over time her brass fitting had found new homes.

The Signalling flags, Paper echo sounder (with hinges) were retrieved from the wreck of the Clara Alan.

Fiddles for the galley stove and the coke scoop handle jumped back on board from a garden shed.

Bits and pieces of the Atlas, the original motor found a new life. (The Atlas once used in American landing craft during WWII).

Bamboo poles, 50 years old, again bent to the pull of tuna. Waders, helmet and pads - fish lures, a chumming bait net and lights.

It was as if all had just been put away, awaiting to be used another day. Curtains neatly folded, boxes of yearly fishing logs, letters, notes, photos, sound recordings, paintings, plates, kettles, pots and pans. It was as if a conductor was standing in front of an Orchestra, all the bits were coming to life. Or Peter Pan’s flute calling all the bits out of sheds, from under beds and from dusty shelves – and ‘They All Went To Sea In A Great Big Beautiful White Boat’.

Ross Haldane



**Support Local Outlets that sell
Tacoma's Jars of Line Caught Tuna**

Cruisers Hub Café

29 Jubilee Drive Port Lincoln



The Fresh Fish Place

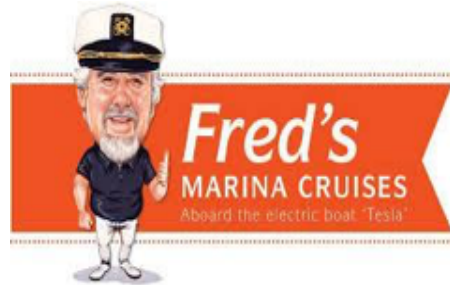
20 Proper Road Port Lincoln

The Pantry

30 Tasman Terrace Port Lincoln



28 Tasman Terrace Port Lincoln



**Fred's Marina Cruises
Port Lincoln**

Oyster HQ

The Esplanade Coffin Bay



**Adelaide Pasadena and Frewville
Foodland sell fresh tuna in
season during February & March**

**The Port Lincoln Airport Café
serves tuna sandwiches & sells
Tacoma's jars of tuna**