

## TACOMA PRESERVATION SOCIETY



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June 2020 - Newsletter # 16

Ahoy Shipmates

Not much to report in the past three months as the plague shut down our operations prematurely, luckily our tuna trips had been completed and 2 of our Charity trips will be rescheduled for this coming season as restrictions are lifted. No doubts the crew's gardens are looking wonderful and the painting caught up on with all the spare time.

Bookings are already coming in for next year's trips so hopefully our State borders will be open for business soon. There has been mooted a five-day tourist trip after the Tuna Poling adventures are completed - so we will keep you informed.

Next month we are heading to the slip so it will be all hands-on deck for a week or two. All volunteers are welcome, especially those able to hold a paintbrush! Hopefully it will be a tad warmer than this week.

Friday morning work and coffee meetings have now been reinstated so hopefully we will see you all sometime soon.



***Pugwash***

Peter Jessep

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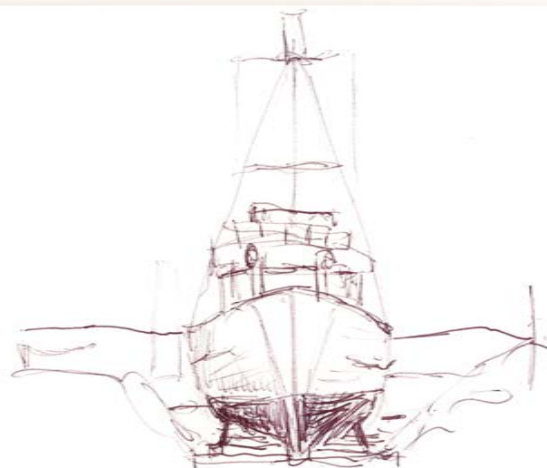
**All contributions newsletter will be gratefully received**

**Please email them to me on [medley0246@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.tacoma.org.au)**

**Editor: Chris Houweling**

Once more down the slip my friends  
and fill that ditch with our hearty souls  
never forget that if you were in bed  
you will miss the smell  
of rotting foul marine growth  
the joy of rising to great heights  
for a crowded galley  
full of hardy lonely souls  
so once more and  
those that missed this time would wish  
they were not in their cosy beds but sheltering  
under the great hull of Tacoma in late July  
on a freezing cold day.



## **HARDY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

**27<sup>TH</sup> & 28<sup>TH</sup> JULY**

### **BERTH UPDATE:**

Things continue to head in the right direction. Local and State government agencies are across the various historical issues concerning the design and construction of a community pontoon adjacent to the Marina Hotel and the Fisherman's Memorial.

The TPS welcomes the transfer of the current pontoon licence from the Sarin Group to the Port Lincoln Council. Negotiations are underway between the PL Council and the State government to increase the leased area to accommodate a 90-metre community pontoon. Member for Flinders Peter Treloar is discussing the matter with DPTI Minister Stephan Knoll. One possibility has the design and approvals completed by July 2021 and construction completed by December 2021. That would be in good time to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Tacoma in Port Lincoln in January 1952.

The existing Licence Agreement is unchanged with an annual fee of \$4,060.00 per annum + CPI. According to PL Council meeting minutes, *'consideration will be made within the Annual Business Plan and budget to formally design and upgrade the pontoon, with an application being made for funding from the Boating Facilities Fund.'*

The TPS proposal before the PL Council is to construct a 90-metre x 250 tonne pontoon along the face of the Marina Hotel and Fishermen's Memorial. The Tacoma Preservation Society proposed this in 2011 and members have been working tirelessly to achieve this win-win-win outcome for the Port

Lincoln community since that time. The current developments provide light at the end of a long tunnel.

The transfer of the lease to the PL Council is an important step towards the construction of a community pontoon which, when it is completed, will provide the opportunity for a berth for the *Tacoma* and much needed pick-up and drop-off facilities for other tourism and recreational vessels, including the State Government owned sail training tall ship the *One & All*.



Premier Steven Marshall is being kept informed of the developments in the Marina.

## **THE TUNA CATCHING PAPER TRAIL:**

Did you know that to be allowed to catch Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) commercially...

- The Tacoma Preservation Society (TPS) need to buy a SBT quota. Having a quota allows us to catch and sell the tuna. Australia's quota is around 6000 tonnes. Each year TPS need 1.5 tonnes. Last year the price was \$5.00 a kilogram for whole fish.
- For the last five years, Guy Manthorpe has supplied us with the SBT quota we need.
- From here things get interesting. Guy's fish are on his bit of paper and we need them on our bit of paper. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) are the go-to people.
- GOFISH is a computer system which trades fish and Narelle Williams is the go-to lady who helps us navigate the registration and all the other password issues.



- You can't catch tuna with any old boat. You need to be surveyed. A marine surveyor is engaged each season for an annual visual check on all the equipment on board – life rafts, harnesses, lifejackets, fire extinguishers and flares. An EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) is used to alert search and rescue services in the event of an emergency. It does this by transmitting a coded message via the free to use, multinational Cospas Sarsat network. A 406 MHz distress frequency signal is sent via satellite and earth stations to the nearest rescue co-ordination centre. Some EPIRBs also have built-in GNSS receivers which enables the rescue services to locate your coordinates to +/- 50 metres.
- There also has to be as an annual visual check of the hull inside and out.
- We are monitored closely by AFMA using a vessel monitoring system VMS. Canberra knows where we are every five seconds. Yes, CRIMFISH is a real thing!



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

**Contact: 1300 723 621 CRIMFISH: 1800 274 634**



*Catching Bait*

The first night is spent baiting. This is putting a light over the stern at night, hopping into dinghys at about 3.00 am and encircling the bait fish attracted to the light. If all goes well, at dawn the tanks are full of live fish - mostly pilchards.

Days before, the weather is consulted, along with friendly tuna spotter pilots and CSIRO data predicting where the fish are to be found.

[www.cmar.csiro.au/gab-forecasts/sst-forecasts.html](http://www.cmar.csiro.au/gab-forecasts/sst-forecasts.html)

The fish could be anywhere from east of Kangaroo Island to west of Rocky Island or south of Coffin Bay. They are 20 hours of steaming apart. There is a lot of water to look through!

The following day we search for SBT. Once a school is spotted on the surface, life becomes hectic.

Usually four or more polers stand in the racks at the stern of the boat. Another 'chums' with the live bait, to keep the tuna following the boat. Four or more deck crew attempt to restrain the fish when they are landed.

The poled tuna are submersed in a brine slurry. Three to four kilos of ice to one kilo of fish is needed to lower the body temperature of 23c. You can never have enough ice!

After the last tuna has been poled, the fish are G&Ged - that's removing the gills and gut. This amounts to about 11% of the whole fish.

A tag is attached to every fish which means every fish has a number and can be traced. Last year we used 150 tags. The fish are then carefully placed in a plastic bag with a strop around the tail (for easy

handling) and re-submersed in brine till we return to port. The heavy-duty plastic bags assist to ensure each fish is delivered to port in the best possible condition.

Back in port, the fish are weighed and measured to the last kilo. Paperwork is then completed and it is submitted to Canberra.

The tuna is then transferred to the processing plant and either sent off fresh or frozen to 35 retailers. If we caught too many SBT, we have to buy more quota. If not, we can carry the quota forward to the next fishing trip.

The boat is then scrubbed from top to bottom, inside and out. The bait net is winched off the boat on to the pontoon for the next trip before it's stored in Tacoma's boat shed.



*Tacoma steaming along, a wonderful shot taken from the "Jane Kerr" earlier this year*

Birds are wonderful fish spotters. The keen-eyed fliers can lead you to the promised land.



*Gannets breed at Cape Jaffa and in Bass Strait*

*Birds!* It's a shout from the crow's nest. That is sure to get the crews hearts racing. A quick scan of the horizon and there they are. Maybe it's a knot of gannets dive-bombing dolphins and tuna or a pair of albatrosses quietly sitting on the water.

No doubt about it - birds mean business offshore. Marine life is not equally distributed across the deep oceans of the world. It's concentrated in small pockets. Bottom structure, currents and tides, upwelling and other factors help shape these pockets that hold the majority of marine life, including baitfish and pelagic species. And not many of nature's creatures are better equipped to locate these areas of bounty than seabirds.



*Shearwaters mutton birds  
breed locally and fly to Russia in  
the winter*



*Crested terns, breed & stay local*

Birds possess several natural advantages that make them superb seagoing hunters, with the power of flight being the first and most obvious. As the lofty crow's nests of any tuna fleet will tell you, altitude gives you an incredible advantage when trying to locate activity down deep or at a distance. Any gain in elevation allows the captain to not only see farther toward the horizon, but also to peer into the water at a better angle to see far below the surface. A bird soars hundreds of feet over the ocean's surface, where the view literally stretches for miles in every direction.

Combine this with a bird's high-power vision, and it's a very potent combination. It's hard to say just how well certain bird species see but it's pretty much a given that they have excellent long-range vision. Birds are also tuned into the visual cues from one another. When one diving gannet's wings flash white in the sun, it's a visual cue that's seen by others for miles around. It's the reason why one feeding bird turns into 50 in just a matter of minutes.

Then there's their sense of smell. Some species of sea birds smell baitfish extremely well and at much greater ranges than humans. David Lee, the recently retired curator of birds at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History says that storm petrels and other low-flying species use their sense of smell to detect fish oils released by baitfish. "You'll see them tacking back and forth into the breeze like sailboats," he says. "Once they find the scent, they'll head upwind until they locate the source, which may be quite a long distance away - a couple of miles or more. They may not feed on the larger baitfish, but it's still a pretty good indicator of a concentration of predators and prey."



## **RESURRECTING THE WESTERN FLYER:**

Article contributed by Ross Haldane - March 2020

*The Western Flyer - John Steinbeck's  
escape into environmental science.*

The shipyard next to Boat Haven Marina in Port Townsend is a health and fitness clinic for big boats. The Hawaiian Chieftain sits on drydock. Rumour has it that Pete Townsend's yacht comes in for check-ups. Big cabin cruisers, a shiny sky-blue 80-foot sailing yacht, a *ginormous* rusty metal fishing boat all scatter the boatyard. The star of the show these days however is the *Western Flyer*.

This eighty-foot wooden former sardine fishing vessel, originally named the Gemini, was the home of author John Steinbeck and biologist Ed Ricketts back in 1940 when they embarked on their four-month long journey documented in the book *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research*. The boat itself is an historic artefact - a symbol of adventure, freedom, camaraderie, or perhaps even refuge for John Steinbeck (*Western Flyer Foundation*). At the time Steinbeck was under public attack for his novel *Grapes of Wrath* and its depiction of America during the 1930s Great Depression.



Steinbeck and Ricketts hired Anton ‘Tony’ Berry and his fishing vessel. Once in the Sea of Cortez, habitat to an unmatched collection of sea flora and fauna, Steinbeck’s attention was fastened to what he saw. He documented the unqualified inter-dependence of sea-life, unwittingly writing the first supplementary textbook for the study of ecology. The book documents the scientific findings and tells the story through Steinbeck’s narrative.

Built in 1937 as a purse seiner, the *Western Flyer* first fished for sardines out of Monterey Bay. After the epic journey documented

in the book, it returned to Monterey and continued sardine fishing until the early 50s when it went to Alaska as a fishing vessel. In the 60s it fished in northwest waters and then caught crabs in the 70s. It changed hands several times during the next few decades, ending up in Anacortes where it hauled salmon to canneries.



In 2013 it was salvaged from the dregs of Puget Sound where it had sunk twice during the previous winter. Several entrepreneurs made plans to revive it for moneymaking purposes. Finally, in 2015 it was purchased by a geologist John Gregg. His dream is to restore the vessel exactly as it had been when it made the historic voyage that became the birth of today’s science of ecology.



It’s an awesome sight to see the work being done by Port Townsend Shipwrights Co-Op to restore the boat to its original state. Remnants of the original hull are stacked near the warehouse. The skilled boat builders work long hours, steaming wooden planks to shape the boat’s hull. Countless schools’ field traipse through the shipyard learning about the history of the boat and its role in exposing our planetary interdependence. The owners expect the ship to be finished this year and hope to use it as a floating classroom for the study of marine biology. If you get a chance to visit Port Townsend, check it out. The site is open to the public and welcomes visitors.

REF: Article and drawings from <https://1.bp.blogspot.com/PtTownsendWesternFlyer2>

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

**Cruisers Hub Café**

**29 Jubilee Drive Port Lincoln**



**The Fresh Fish Place**

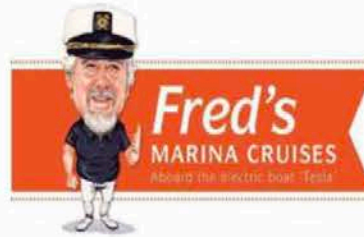
**20 Proper Road Port Lincoln**

**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**



*.... and finally a note from TPS supporter Tony Miles*

Hi Ross

Re our last phone conversation, here are the two sheer blade knives for the boat that I've finished making. I would make old Jack the custodian of them as he would have used them a few of these in his day. I've not sharpened them as everybody sharpens a knife differently.

I hope you are happy with them.

Regards

Tony Miles

P.S. Paul and I will be back for round 2 sometime in the near future and hopefully bring reinforcements LOL

Cheers T



*PJ giving 2 hand crafted, sheer blade knives to Jack Bellamy, the custodian nominated by Tony Miles*



*This is a moment that makes me realize how rewarding it is to be a member of Tacoma Preservation Society*