

Tacoma

Port Fairy Special Newsletter

www.tacoma.org.au | Tacoma Preservation Society | Port Lincoln

The Journey from Port Lincoln to Port Fairy and Back



Tacoma on her way to Port Fairy

After the toil of the previous two weeks, the Tacoma finally got off the Boston Marine slip on a Tuesday, loaded the boat on Wednesday, then departed on Thursday. The plan was to treat the trip to Port Fairy as a leisurely steam to the Moyne River, with restful overnight stops at Thistle Island, Kangaroo Island, Robe, and Portland before a final triumphant entry to Port Fairy. But that would have been too easy. Not surprisingly, the weather played up. We had a weather stop in Antechamber Bay on the eastern end of Kangaroo Island and a SW swell. A topping of southerly slop made the third day from Robe to Portland a rolling and bumpy affair before we finally arrived at Portland at 3.00 am for a much needed rest. Then off to Port Fairy in the morning for a planned 2.00 pm entry of the Moyne River.



Tacoma squeezing between the stone breakwater and the dredge

The Port Fairy Welcome

Grey skies greeted us as we approached the Port Fairy lighthouse, but seeing the lighthouse gave us the feeling of being nearly 'home'.

Off shore, we circled for an hour waiting for the word from director Doyle that all camera equipment was ready. At the Port Fairy dock, some five hundred locals and chanting school kids waited. On the Moyne, Garry Stewart in his boat, Miss Lyla, was to lead us in followed by the Port Fairy work boat to act as tug if we needed it, and finally the bagpiper; all was ready.

Before entering the river, the Tacoma crew was busy clearing the decks. Ballast water was discharged before we left Port Lincoln and a ton of new chain was added to bring the bow down and lift the stern. We felt like Admiral Nelson clearing the decks before the battle of Trafalgar.

Getting closer, we could see cars queuing up on vantage points on the south beach, gazing west to gain the first glimpse of Tacoma's crow's nest and bridge.

Then, lights-camera-action! The sun broke through the clouds at 1.50 pm. Then a phone call came telling us that a dredge blocked the channel - dredge or no dredge, we were going in. Tacoma lined up to enter the Moyne River 72 years after leaving at 6.30 am on January 6, 1952. Of those people who left Port Fairy on Tacoma that day, only Jack and myself were onboard. We both stood on the bridge overwhelmed by emotions.



Carin waving us in as we pass Haldane's Landing

The last final step after 72 years



Tacoma surrounded by a crowd

With only centimetres to spare, we cleared the dredge and passed Haldane’s Landing to see the river banks lined with waving onlookers. As we passed Martin’s Point, Carin Haldane waved two sticks with streamers while the children were chanting, "Lets go Tacoma, lets go..." I blasted the ship's horn, trying to follow the children's rhythm, only to reveal my lack of musical talent.

The bagpiper played as we slowly slipped into our berth with only a few feet clear forward and aft. A flow in the river added a last test to my boat handling skills. Nudging in and with a delicate kick forward and astern, Tacoma settled safely along the dock. I was unaware that the harbour work boat had given the stern a little push, perfectly executing the docking. Three drones overhead zoomed in to capture the

THE STANDARD

THE VOICE OF THE SOUTH-WEST SINCE 1872

\$2.30
INC GST

Welcome home

Crowds lined the Moyne River heralding the return of the Tacoma to Port Fairy 72 years after the historic wooden tuna clipper left the town.

STORY: P7





Jack Bellamy, 90, celebrates the Tacoma's return. He was 17 when he and his twin brother left Port Fairy on the boat bound for Port Lincoln, where it founded the tuna industry. Pictures by Anthony Brady



RSPCA TO EXIT CITY'S ANIMAL SHELTER

PAGE 7

Jack waving like a King



Tony Ford's happy group at "Fish on Fire"

Ashley King, the Port Fairy coordinator for the Tacoma return, planned the event “to a T” with clear blue skies and no wind for which we were grateful. All the while, Movie-director Ian Doyle, with a cameraman at his shoulder as if directing Steinbeck’s “Cannery Row,” captured the event for an ABC Landline segment.

A media scrum quickly swarmed over Tacoma to capture the moment.

Difficult to remember the sequence of events after that, but my wife Carin and I, along with friends, had a lovely meal at the Stump. Unstylishly, I was in my rubber boots and wearing a woollen jumper my grandmother had knitted some 80 years before. The room in the pub was loudly rolling away to the in-house music.

The following morning, we cleared the decks to be ready for “Open Boat” after midday. The visitors kept coming during the following five days!



Tacoma ready to receive some 1,200 boarders



A deck load of people on Tacoma

Tacoma on Display

Saturday and Sunday were the most hectic. Tony Ford, renowned Port Lincoln Chef and stand-up comedian, performed a “Fish on Fire” culinary exhibition featuring tuna and prawns. Clare Webber produce an Oscar winning performance with a duel act of sardines and tuna and how best to look after them once caught. Braden Stocham, always a great Emcee, kept the crowd entertained, and I spoke about “From Couta Boat to Tuna Clipper”; the story behind Tacoma’s early life in Port Fairy. Garry Kerr, alias “The Grim Reaper”, focused on his documentary productions of historical fishing. On the sidelines, original crew member Jack Bellamy, kept every Nursing Home staff busily delivering their residents to Tacoma to meet ‘Slim’s brother’, alias Jack. Everyone wanted to tell their Tacoma story and their experiences, when the boat was launched; Wolf, the Alsatian dog, was mentioned more than once — apparently Wolf did a good job keeping inquisitive young boys at bay while the Haldane men were busy crafting Tacoma. A feature of any tale is to piece together who was who in the colourful Tacoma drama. We started by writing a list of the fishermen’s nicknames in order to add a little colour to the story line; "Tubby," "Slippery," "Strangler," and "Red Lead", to name a few.



Carin, Katrina, Ros, and Claire



Sean and Tony



Jack loves fish and chips



Haldanes Landing

The local sail and rowing group appeared on the river late Saturday for a wee row up and down the Moyne. Tacoma's surf boat joined in the melee as Australia's oldest surf boat. She was quickly boarded by a local surf club crew and took her place next to whale boats and modern plastic surf boats. On Saturday, the Storm Bay, a 54 foot fishing smack from 1926 arrived, sailed down from Melbourne with Tim Phillips and his wife onboard. Tim is known for his work on saving the Cousta boat fleet. For the occasion, Tacoma and Storm Bay moored together as a perfect post card image to be sold at the visitor information centre.

The Tacoma arrival in Port Fairy was on the big screen in the Wharf Restaurant, and the Tacoma Model in pride of place on the service desk at the other end of the dining room; a selection of my paintings were also on display. The small models of Tacoma sold like hotcakes at the local newsagent and at the visitor information centre. At our Tacoma tent at the dockside, we did a "roaring" trade of t-towels, coffee mugs, mini hand painted life rings, t-shirts, Tacoma jackets, smoked and jarred tuna, hats, postcards, small prints of Tacoma paintings and photo books. By the day's end, Carin and crew David, along with sales helper Marion, were ready for a sit down and a glass of wine. Mandy and Ashley King were the perfect hosts; the crew were treated to Ashley's roast at their East Beach 'shack'.

Along the dockside, the Port Fairy Art Group quietly sat in their chairs, documenting the scene with brush and paint.



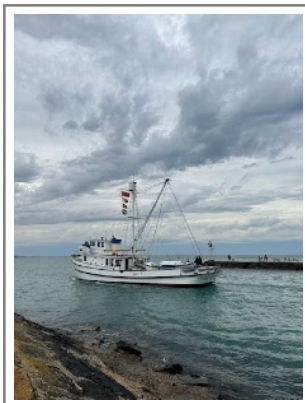
Storm Bay. A 54 foot Barracuda fishing boat, 1925.



The Mayor's and the famous Tuna Toss

PLO Mayor Diana Mislov, Pt. Fairy Mayor Ian Smith, Ashley King, and Ross Haldane

The official welcome, attended by Port Fairy Mayor, Ian Smith, and Port Lincoln Mayoress Diana Mislov, was not a lengthy affair but involved a Tuna Toss to determine which town would gain the rights to next year's Toss. Diana's lengthy throw ensured Port Lincoln won next years' event. Diana also assured Mayor Smith that Tacoma was only on a visit to Port Fairy and the two communities would maintain their shared history.



Home Ward Bound

On Easter Monday, it was time to return to Port Lincoln, departing on a rising tide at 2 pm. Tacoma quietly slipped her berth and headed to Portland to fuel up for the journey home. The crowd wanted us to blow the horn, but we thought it was better to just go as silently as Tacoma did 72 years ago. We set the course West in a fresh South Easterly.

Portland provided the crew with a welcome rest, but several local trawler men visited us in their wet weather gear. After two days listening to the wind, we finally cleared Laurence Rock with a southeasterly wind blowing over our Port quarter, destination Emu Bay on the North Coast of Kangaroo Island for a rest. From there we had a lovely run to Port Lincoln. Back home, arriving at our berth, we were greeted by a cheerful group of well-wishers.



The Tacoma crew: Lyndon, David, Ross, Braden, Mark, and Craig

“When we come to this time of abatement,
To this passing of Summer to Fall,
It is manners to issue a statement
As to what we got out of it all.

Though the shabby unbalanced the splendid,
And the bitter outmeasured the sweet,
We should certainly do as we did,
Were we given the chance to repeat.”

DP

