

WEDNESDAY MARCH 27, 2024

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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
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PAGE 7

ecutive officer Dr Liz Walker but we hope to work closely committed to maintaining



Ross Haldane, Jack Bellamy and Andy Haldane aboard the Tacoma that was built on the shores of the Moyne River in the 1940s and left in 1952. Picture by Anthony Brady

Emotional welcome home for a reel piece of history

Community

Katrina Lovell
Warrnambool

IT WAS an emotional homecoming for the Tacoma when it sailed down the Moyne River into the town it left more than 70 years ago.

To the sound of school-children chanting, bagpipes playing and the boat's horn blaring, it docked at the Port Fairy wharf in front of a large crowd of onlookers.

Jack Bellamy, 90, joined the crew on the five-day trip from Port Lincoln back to Port Fairy where as a

17-year-old he said goodbye to his home town for a life at sea in South Australia.

Jack and his twin brother Keith had grown up on the Moyne River and watched on as the Haldanes spent seven years building the boat on the river banks next door between 1944 and 1951.

He and his brother joined the three Haldane brothers and their families who all set off for a new life in Port Lincoln in 1952. "It's a beautiful boat," he said.

But his memories of the boat come with a tinge of

sadness after he lost his twin brother in a fishing tragedy when they were just 25. Mr Bellamy lived on the boat for 15 years before he got married, and over the years worked on other boats, fishing until he was 65.

Ross Haldane was just four-and-a-half when he left Port Fairy, and the welcome back to the sound of bagpipes was a nod to the family's Scottish connections.

"My grandfather was Scottish. When they left Port Fairy they were invited to go to Fletcher Jones' house.

They played the bagpipes and had haggis and that was the last time the family were in Port Fairy," Mr Haldane said.

"The boat you see today is a tuna boat from 1950s with the 1950s decor." The Tacoma was also involved in shark, salmon and prawn fishing. Andy Haldane was 18 months when he left Port Fairy and spent his life on the boat.

Port Fairy's Ashley King said it had been an expensive exercise to bring the boat to Port Fairy. He said he was aware of the signif-

icance of the boat, and his father was mates with the boat's builders.

When the boat visited the wooden boat festival in Hobart a number of years ago, there was an attempt to visit Port Fairy but the weather dashed the plan.

"It needs the highest tide available and Easter provides that," Mr King said. When he heard about the attempted visit, he decided to help make it happen. "It's been three years in the making," he said.

He said Tacoma Preservation Society, who own the

boat, had brought it to Port Fairy for the public to look at and tour. The Port Lincoln mayor will officially welcome it home to Port Fairy on Saturday at 5pm.

The boat will be open to the public from 2pm daily until Friday. Cost is \$5.

On Saturday and Sunday, there will be presentations on 10am and 2pm on the boat from Ross Haldane, Garry Kerr, Clare Webber and seafood prepared by a celebrity chef will be served. Cost is \$60 per person. Tickets can be booked online or at the wharf.