



MEDIA RELEASE

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TACOMA RETURNED HOME TO PORT FAIRY

The Port Lincoln based 84-foot wooden tuna clipper MFV Tacoma returned to Port Lincoln this afternoon (6th April) after a sixteen-day voyage and visit to Port Fairy, 73 years after it was launched at Port Fairy. Two of the original 1952 crew were onboard from Port Lincoln, 90-year-old Jack Bellamy and Tacoma Preservation Society (TPS) President and Skipper Ross Haldane. The vessel was enthusiastically met by more than 500 people as it returned to the Moyne.

The MFV Tacoma was built by brothers Bill, Alan and Hughie Haldane on the banks of the Moyne River between 1944 and 1951. This was the second serious attempt to enter the Moyne, after strong winds and a rising sea made conditions too hazardous in February 2011. The vessel at the time was returning to Port Lincoln after a week in Hobart as one of the feature vessels in the 2011 Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

The MFV Tacoma steamed from Port Lincoln with a crew of seven and arrived in Port Fairy at 2.20pm for the high tide on 26th March. The vessel was moored in Port Fairy until 1st April. Hundreds of visitors boarded the vessel during the Port Fairy visit.

The Mayor of Port Lincoln Ms Diana Mislov attended and participated in an official welcome from the Moyne Shire Council Mayor Ian Smith. Mayor Mislov demonstrated her tuna tossing skills and enthusiastically encouraged everyone to attend the new look Tunarama in coming years.

The Tacoma has been restored and preserved over the past fifteen years by a group of skilled and enthusiastic volunteers in Port Lincoln. They are all members of the Tacoma Preservation Society (TPS) www.tacoma.org.au

“We were keen to return the vessel to Port Fairy to ensure an important part of the town’s maritime history is celebrated. It was a nostalgic time for all onboard and I know it bought back a lot of memories for older residents of Port Fairy,” Ross Haldane, son of boat builder Bill Haldane and TPS President said.

The water depth of the Moyne was tight for the Tacoma, and beneficial dredging was conducted by the Moyne Shire Council to allow the vessel to enter the river port.

Various information and demonstrations were conducted on the deck of the Tacoma during the visit. Port Lincoln celebrity Chef Tony Ford provided a culinary adventure with a side of laughter. He served up a feast of seafood delights and demonstrations including filleting Southern Blue Fin Tuna. Other well received presentation were provided by Maritime Historian and fisher Garry Kerr, Fishing industry advocate Claire Webber and TPS President Ross Haldane.

It took the Haldane brothers seven and a half years to build the MFV Tacoma. It was launched on the high tide on Monday 5th November 1951. An important chapter in the history of the Australia fishing industry began with the launch of the MFV

Tacoma. It was Australia's first purse seine vessel, and it pioneered the multi-million-dollar tuna fishing industry in Port Lincoln. Its design was based on vessels being used in the expanding tuna fishing industry in the Pacific North-West.

The plans for the vessel came from the Western Boat Building Company in Tacoma Washington in the US. The company was very helpful in providing support for Bill Haldane and his two brothers in the difficult time following WW2. As a result, the brothers decided to name the vessel Tacoma.

There were sixteen people on board on Sunday 6th January 1952 for the MFV Tacoma's maiden voyage to Port Lincoln: the three Haldane brothers, their spouses and seven children. Also, on board were all their household possessions including wardrobes, bikes and beds, Hughie Haldane's Alsatian dog *Wolf* and two cats.

Other crewmembers were Port Fairy locals, identical twin brothers Jack and Keith Bellamy. They watched the vessel being built. On completion the Bellamy boys were asked to join the crew. They jumped at the chance of a life adventure. Their mother was less enthusiastic and reluctantly agreed to let them go. The twins celebrated their 18th birthday on the voyage to Port Lincoln in 1952.

Keith Bellamy was tragically lost at sea from the MFV Tacoma in February 1959 when he was poling for tuna off the south coast of South Australia.

The Haldane brothers were fishermen at a very young age at Port Fairy. Before the Tacoma, the boys had demonstrated their boat-building prowess by constructing three smaller fishing boats, Petrel (23ft) Amaryllis (40ft) and Dolphin (40ft). Their father Hugh Haldane had been a shipwright on the River Clyde in Scotland. He had taken a job as Lighthouse Keeper and Harbour Master at Port Fairy and provided useful advice during the construction of the Tacoma.

The South Australian (SA) government under Premier Playford wanted to develop a new purse seine fishing industry in SA and provided the Haldane brothers with a 20,000-pound loan to complete the vessel. The loan conditions included the three Haldane families moving to SA from Port Fairy, the Tacoma be based at Port Lincoln and the fish they caught were to be marketed through SA fish markets.

The Victorian government attempted to intervene and encourage the Haldane brothers to change their position and remain in Victoria. The decision became something of a political football and was widely reported. The 6 January 1952 departure for Port Lincoln meant Victoria had literally 'missed the boat.'

"The impact the Tacoma had on the South Australian fishing industry and Port Lincoln was significant and long term. Our parents were true pioneers, and we are really pleased the Tacoma is returning to Port Fairy.

We greatly appreciated the support and interest from the Port Lincoln and Port Fairy communities for Tacoma's homecoming," Ross Haldane said.

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