

Parappa



NEWSLETTER

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Parappa at the Shipwrights Point Regatta in 1922 or 1923. The photo was taken on a glass plate by Edward Linnell, who was an orchardist near Huonville. His great granddaughter Lesley McCubbin kindly provided the photograph.

Parappa is a 52 ft wooden fishing boat that was built by E.A. Jack in Launceston in 1915. She is constructed of huon pine planks on light-weight hardwood frames. The original configuration was as a gaff-rigged yawl with an auxiliary 10 hp Union brand engine. She was built for cray, line and small net fishing with a large wet well for storing the catch. Her structure has been modified extensively over the decades, but her basic hull and well remains unchanged. Retired from fishing in 2004, *Parappa* is being maintained in her last working configuration. She is an invaluable record of the changes made in fishing technology over 90 years, from almost the beginning of engine power to the start of the 21st century.

Parappa's first owners were the brothers Ned and Jack Pulfer. They kept her for only six years, selling in 1921 to William Bowtell, fish merchant and restaurateur of Hobart. The history of *Parappa* under these first two owners has been described in earlier numbers of this Newsletter.

In 1936, *Parappa* was sold to Alexander John Jager, of Lune River, in the far south of Tasmania. For the next 68 years, *Parappa* was operated as a fishing boat by the Jager family, working out of Lune River, then Southport, and finally Dover. Jack Jager worked the boat with various combinations of his sons Jack jnr, Handy, Scotty, Bob and Unk, until his death in 1951. His sons and later his grandson took over the family fishing operation, working *Parappa* until her retirement in 2004. The period of ownership by the Jagers up to Jack Jager's death in 1951 is documented in *Parappa Newsletter* no. 9.

In 1944, the eldest of Jack senior's sons John Alexander Jager took daily working control of *Parappa* from his father. Known as Jack junior, he had left the family fishing business in about 1940 and moved his family to Hobart, where he worked at the Zinc Works. However, he returned to working on *Parappa*, and in 1952 he recruited his own son Harry Jager to work with him on the boat. Harry had an adventurous two years on *Parappa* as described in the following pages.

Harry Jager goes to sea

Harry Jager, the son of Jack Jager jnr. and grandson of Jack Jager snr. first went to sea on *Parappa* during his school holidays, at about the age of 13. Harry was born in 1937 when his family lived at Lune River, but moved to Hobart with his family in about 1940. He went to Cosgrove High School, leaving in 1951. At first he went firewood cutting, and then in 1952, at the age of 15, he started full-time on *Parappa* with his father and crew member



Harry Jager in the 1950's.

Colin Riley.

Harry's first trip of the cray season in 1952 was up the east coast. He described the trip:

We were in Halfmoon Bay, behind Maria Island, and it came in south-easterly. The old man said I think we'll make a dash to Schouten Island, and we did: 12 hours, 80 miles an hour wind, mountainous seas, lost a sail out there. A terrible mess, but we got to Schouten Island, but I

can still remember, about 2 o'clock in the morning the old man came in with his charts and slide rules and all that sort of thing. I had to ask him what he was doing. He said "I just wanted to know when we were going to pass White Rock." But anyway we got to Schouten Island there and we licked our wounds, the old man put

some patches in the sail where she had been blown out, and we got to Wineglass Bay.

Fishing had not been that good - they only had about 20 score of crayfish - when they went back to Triabunna to unload. Harry continues his story:

The old man said "We'll slip over to the wharf for some petrol". (With the Napier engine, you started on petrol, then turned over to kerosene). Anyway, the old man was down in the engine room there, cranking this bloody Napier, you see. This Napier she had a big maggy on her. Because it had been blowing easterly all the time, the thing was sweated, everything was sweaty, the engine room was full of petrol fumes. I still hear him saying now "If she'll turn, she'll start". Meanwhile me and Riley have our heads down through the deck hatch watching him, you see, sparks all across the maggy, and up she went with a mighty explosion. Busted all the deck beams, made a terrible mess in the engine room. We're trying to put it out, it burnt all our faces. The old man had to run through the fire, all his hands and face was burnt. We had started to panic a bit, throw water on the fire to cool it. But over at Triabunna wharf was Lorry Croft, Dick Purdon, and McDougall. They saw what was happening, so they rushed over and took us off and took us to Hobart. The old man he was in hospital about a fortnight I suppose.

Those fishermen saved the boat and us, but if they knew what was down in that engine room ...! Because there was a biscuit tin, with geleignite and caps, because we used to use it for fishing for trout and maybe other things. Anyhow, they brought her back to Hobart and put her up on the slip, and when the old man came out of hospital, they took the boat back down to



Jack Jager jnr and his wife Kathleen

THREE INJURED IN BOAT FIRE

TWO men and a boy were injured, one of the men seriously, at Triabunna yesterday morning when the engine of their fishing boat exploded and set fire to the vessel.

The injured are Mr. Jack Jaeger (45), of Glenorchy; his son, Harry Jaeger (15); and Mr. Colin Riley (30), of Lune River.

The three men were treated by Sister B. Thompson at the Triabunna Bush Nursing Hospital before being taken to the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Mr. Jaeger has severe burns on the face and hands. His condition last night was reported to be satisfactory.

His son and Mr. Riley were treated for burns at the out-patients' department.

It is believed a spark from the engine of the fishing boat, *Parappa*, ignited petrol fumes and caused the explosion.

The craft was anchored off the deep water jetty, and by the time other fishermen rowed to it, the decks and cabin were ablaze.

The fishermen extinguished the fire and took the injured men to shore.

Tpr. A. T. Canning said last night that the cause of the explosion would be investigated today.

Damage to the fishing boat is estimated at £100.

The report of the explosion from The Mercury, 31 October, 1952



the Lune, and Chestermans cut the deck beams for us. I don't know whether they charged us or not, I don't think he did, that was Alan Chesterman. That's when my grandmother said "You've got to get those petrol engines out of that boat". So they took the Napier out and put in a 65 horse Perkins. Got the Perkins off the Marion Bay, 65 horse at 2200 revs.

I asked Harry if he had any lasting effects from his experience:

No. All my face was burnt and all my hair was burnt, I still remember I was a bit embarrassed because my head was bandaged up. But when they took the bandages off all my hair was burnt. There was a barber down the bottom of Macquarie Street, Williams his name was, he used to play football for Hobart. I went down there with my head down, and he said, "Got burnt on that boat?" At the time it used to cost two shillings for a haircut, you see, he said "I'll give you this one for nothing".

Altogether, Harry found fishing a lifestyle that was no easier than wood cutting - getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning, being wet all day, pulling pots by hand - it was a strenuous occupation. Regular hard work was manageable, but another major incident was another matter. Harry explained:

Virtually 12 months later to the day, an event occurred that, to my knowledge, has only happened once since then. Leaving Louisa Bay, I said to the old man "Are you going to put the sail up?" And he said no; he was expecting a rough trip up. Whether he knew something I don't know. Water was coming over the bow, getting down into the engine room, so I'm down there pumping her out, you

see. I just finished pumping her out, we were going across South Cape Bay. I'm sitting back in the engine room. Next thing I remember was this wall of water coming at me. And I don't remember anything more until I came to out off Recherche Bay. What happened, was there was a north-eastern slop coming down, a big southerly swell coming up, and the tide coming out, and they all met in the one place. She was breaking right out to sea as far as I could see. So anyhow, we had two 6-volt batteries to start this Perkins, one of which whopped me on the head and cracked my skull. and gave me concussion. If we'd had the sail up, we would have been gone. This is going to be hard to imagine, but Parappa rolled over that far that she rolled the dip stick out of the engine. And if that sail had been up, we'd be gone. But anyhow, she came back, levelled out, we limped into Southport,

I came to around Recherche Bay. The old man had-stuck me under the aft part of her, he was thinking I was dead, you see. When I came up on deck I suppose he was happy I wasn't dead. I went back to the port cabin and laid down on the seat. Next thing I knew they was lifting me out on a stretcher, and nine days later I came to in the hospital in Hobart.

To people's surprise, Harry went back fishing for a while after this second incident, but when his grandmother died in 1953 his fishing career came to an end. She left Parappa to three of her sons, Handy, Scotty and Jack jnr. and Scotty bought out the shares of his two brothers for £500 each. In 1954 Harry joined the Tasmanian railways, where he remained for 36 years, apart from a break for National Service.



Harry Jager in 2008

Fisherman Badly Hurt

A fisherman is in the Royal Hobart Hospital in a serious condition with burns and head injuries.

He is Henry Jager, who was taken to the hospital by ambulance from Dover on Friday.

It is believed that Jager was injured during a fishing trip when batteries fell against him in rough weather.

The article from The Mercury on 30 November, 1953. Henry is Harry's official name. Dover rather than Southport must be journalistic licence.



Parappa's Napier engine

Parappa has had about a dozen engines over her 97 years. She was built with a Union brand 10 hp petrol engine, which was replaced in 1936 by a Junkers diesel. Then followed a series of engines, the exact sequence of which is yet to be determined. Harry Jager has given us good detail on the Napier engine which caused the explosion on 30 October 1952.

The Napier was put in just before I went to work on her [in 1952]. Where they got this Napier from I don't know. A beautiful motor, 21 horse she was, she actually had 12 spark plugs and six cylinders. Why the two plugs there I just don't know.

He said that the Napier had a big magneto, and was started by crank handle. She was started on petrol and then switched over to kerosene. Although there were 12 spark plugs, only one set was wired up.

The Napier brand of cars and trucks was manufactured by the old British company D. Napier & Son. By the early 1900's they were building prestige cars that competed with Rolls Royce. During the First World War they built cars and trucks for the war effort, and their first aeroplane engine, the Napier Lion. Their Sabre aero engine was widely used in WW2. Later the company manufactured the enormous Deltic engines which powered British locomotives.

Napier returned to manufacturing motor cars only briefly after the end of WW1. The last model built, from 1919, had an alloy engine with a detachable cylinder head, a single overhead camshaft, a seven-bearing crankshaft, dual magneto/coil ignition and 12 plugs, and a Napier SU carburetor with an auxiliary carburetor for starting and slow running. By 1924, only 187 of this model had been sold, and car production ceased, with the firm continuing with aeroplane engines.

I am reluctant to believe it, but the Napier engine that Harry Jager described in *Parappa* in 1952-53 must have been manufactured before 1924. This would make it nearly 30 years old when it blew up on

Parappa. But Napier produced quality engines, with their cars competing with Rolls Royce before WW1, so perhaps that age is not so remarkable.

To tie down the exact specification of the engine, I wrote to the Napier Company in UK, but they were unable to exactly identify the model. The models of engine they suggested were:

- A 6 cylinder E50 model of 30/35 HP, 3½" x 5" cylinders, built in 1916.

- A 4 cylinder E50 model of 16/22 HP, 3½" x 5" cylinders, built in 1919.

Harry Jager's specification of a 21 HP, 6 cylinder engine does not exactly fit either of these, so I sought assistance from a Napier expert, Howard Fitness of the Veteran Car Club of South Australia. He said that Napier car engines up to 26 HP were built with four cylinders and engines of 30 HP and over had 6 cylinders. Truck and commercial engines were generally of heavier construction but not necessarily of more horsepower or more cylinders. This fits with the models suggested by Napier, so I think it likely that the engine in *Parappa* was the E50 model, and word-of-mouth passing down of the engine specification to Harry was not precise.

Howard Fitness explained the function of the dual ignition: "The twin ignition would be due to the engine running on both magneto and coil. The coil ignition made the engine easier to start by hand cranking, and the magneto was more manageable for even running". Only one set of plugs was connected in *Parappa*, and the magneto was the spark source used, so it seems they tolerated the more difficult starting.

Napier cars and trucks were readily available in Hobart in the 1920s and 1930s. Advertisements in *The Mercury* offered the Napier 20 hp touring car for £450, a secondhand Napier 6-cylinder car, and a 3½ ton 40 hp Napier lorry. The agent was W.T. Thorpe of Liverpool St., who offered secondhand cars and trucks occasionally. Perhaps the most interesting is an advertisement in *The Mercury* in 1942:

FOR SALE tyres, tubes and wheels complete. Rugby engines, perfect order, also two **Napier engines**, baby Austin Sports Model car, handy size roller, also a winch. Large quantity conduit piping, various sizes. Also chain. **MARINE JUNK CO. HOBART**

Was this the source of the engine in *Parappa*?



Napier engine, 4 cylinder dual ignition truck engine in Finlay Museum, NSW. Photo thanks to Howard Barber

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