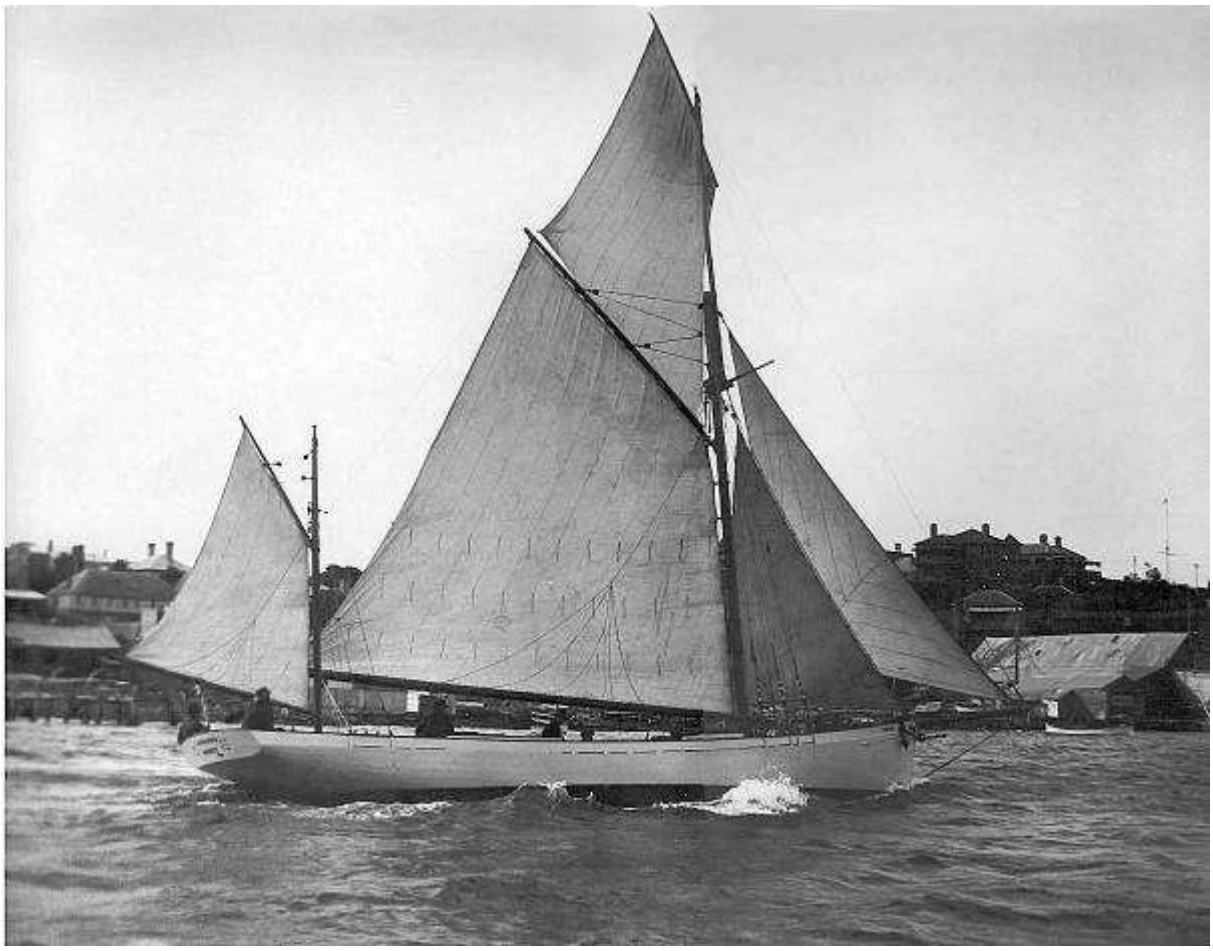
Parappa NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BOAT *"PARAPPA"* NO. 3. MAY 2007



"Parappa" off Battery Point, sometime before the 1960s

Parappa is an historic Tasmanian fishing boat that was built in 1915 by E.A. Jack, at Trevallyn, in Launceston. Built of huon pine planks on hardwood frames, *Parappa* is typical of the lightly constructed boats turned out by the Jack boatyard in the 1900s. She was probably not built to last almost 100 years, but with the almost indestructible huon pine hull and careful handling by her several owners, she has survived into the 21st century. *Parappa* is now on the hard stand at Oyster Cove Marina, Kettering, for the 90-year service, which will ensure she will last into the 22nd century.

Parappa has been used throughout her entire career as a fishing boat in southern Tasmania, and has been maintained, repaired, adapted and modernised to keep her as a competitive working boat in the Tasmanian fishing industry. But with the death of her owner of over 50 years, Scotty Jager, she was retired from service in 2004. An upgrade to modern fishing boat standard was attempted before her retirement, but it became apparent that the basic wooden hull was not competitive with modern boats. With steel, aluminium and fiberglass hulls being more robust than wooden vessels, and with the move to more powerful diesel engines that allow greater speed, and the extensive use of hydraulics and electronics, *Parappa* admitted she was outclassed and went into graceful retirement.

Parappa is being repaired in her last operational condition, rather than being restored to the way she was built in 1915. The value of *Parappa* now is to preserve an excellent example of a Tasmanian fishing boat with her history intact. As well as preserving the fabric of the vessel, the history of the men and women who worked in her is also being collected and preserved If you were one of them, please contact me so we can write it down!

More on Parappa's first engine

by Mori Flapan

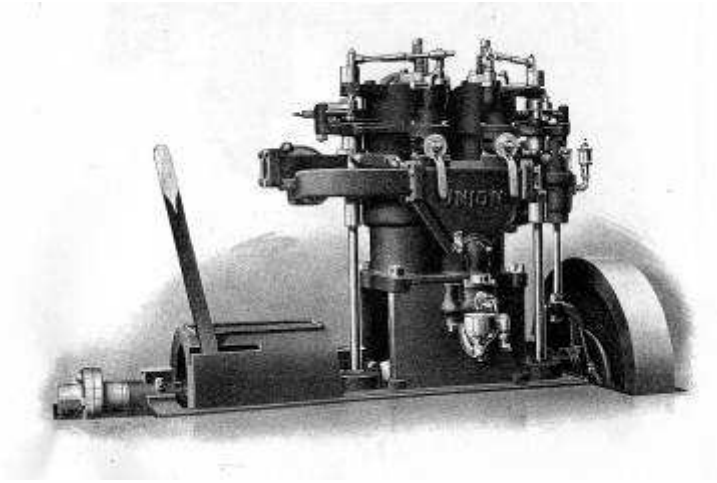
In the last issue of this newsletter I described *Parappa's* first engine—a 10 HP, 1912 model Union petrol engine. A single cylinder Union engine dating from 1897, but similar to the one used in *Parappa* is still in use today in the launch *Swan* at Echuca on the Murray River. Mori Flapan, who with Andy Munns was part owner of *Swan* in the 1980s sent this article on what it was like to operate the engine:

Everything on the engine was manually controlled. Before starting, all the lubricators were opened, checked for oil and topped up where necessary. The operator had to adjust the mixture, timing, compression, throttle and battery switch to suit the needs of the moment. The engine was started using a hand crank on half compression and battery power with timing on neutral and out of gear. A few turns of the crank, and all being well, she would fire and gradually build up revs. To get underway, the compression was switched to full, she would be put in gear and revolutions controlled using the timing rather than the intake throttle. The mixture would then be adjusted by viewing the exhaust gasses passing out of the top of the funnel using a mirror that lay on the engine casing. Normally, black smoke would appear indicating an overly rich mixture. The fuel mixture cock was gradually closed to give a leaner mixture until the black smoke disappeared. Too lean a mixture would result in white smoke. We would then check the number of revs by counting against the second hand of a watch. Over 400 rpm, and everything was running sweetly. You could easily count the revolutions because 400 rpm meant only 200 power strokes per minute on a four-stroke motor. Once the boat was clear of obstacles and was unlikely to engage in manoeuvres, you could change the battery switch to dynamo. As the engine warmed up, the mixture changed and you had to adjust it from time to time checking the colour of the exhaust and the revs.

The sound of the engine was less like an explosion and more like a mechanical 'cough', with some wheezing, particularly at lower speeds. Prior to manoeuvring, you had to remember to change that battery switch, otherwise at the most crucial moment, the engine would stop firing. It would still be turning over for a few moments because of the inertia of the massive flywheel and in that time you still had a window of opportunity to flick the battery switch. You manoeuvred using the compression, timing and reverse gearbox. It was a great help to have someone else to take the steering wheel, though on occasion, the one person handled both the engine and helm.

The electrics were low tension. If the engine did not fire, you could visibly inspect the make and break chamber by opening a port and flicking the ignitor open. You had to be careful though because the mixture inside the chamber might ignite (This is the voice of experience here!). One time we were motoring along when there was an almighty bang from the engine compartment and we stopped. Looking inside, we found a snow-like substance falling inside. Investigation found that the ignitor had stripped its thread in the cover and the snow was mica that had disintegrated. The mica was used to insulate the ignitor post from the engine. We had to use the hand-crank to get back to the mooring.

There was no carburettor. Instead there was a device similar to a globe non-return valve. At the place where the handle of a globe valve would pass, there was a needle valve. The vacuum from the engine would lift the "non-return" part of the globe valve striking the needle valve and drawing in petrol. A crude mechanism, but it worked. Sometimes, if there were difficulties starting up you would be alarmed to see petrol coming out of this device into the bilge! However, the boat was arranged with a dual combustion air intake. One intake came from below the engine and acted as a bilge scavenger to reduce explosive fumes. The other intake took preheated air that had passed through a jacket formed on the lower part of the engine cylinder. The engine was apparently arranged to also burn fuels less volatile than current petrol.



Union 10 HP petrol engine as used in "Parappa" 1915-1936

Before you could run the engine, you almost had to serve an apprenticeship. I now wonder as people jump into their cars, turn on the ignition and drive away, how many would have any perception of how much they are relying on the automated technology under the bonnet.

Ned and Jack Pulfer—*Parappa's* first owners

Parappa was built in 1915, and owned until 1921 by Ned and Jack Pulfer. And that is almost all we know about the boat's first owners. But we are very fortunate in having photographs of the Pulfers on *Parappa*, during their brief period of ownership. The photo to the right is probably of Ned and Jack on *Parappa*; and the photo below is probably one of them.

Probably Ned and Jack Pulfer on Parappa between 1915-1921

The photographs are from Owen Pulfer of Lindisfarne who contacted me when an article on *Parappa* appeard in *The Mercury* last year. Ned and Jack Pulfer were Owen's great uncles, and the photos had been kept in the family. Although the originals of these two photos don't have any information written on the back of them, a third photo in the same series is identified on the back as Ned and Jack in Owen's mother's handwriting. We can be sure that they are of the Pulfers on *Parappa*, as that was the only boat the Pulfer family owned, and these were the only boat photos in the family archive. And the layout of the deck is right for *Parappa*, at that time.

The Pulfer family is long established in southern Tasmania. Charles Pulfer arrived in Hobart in the 1840s and moved to Port Esperance (Dover) in the 1850s.

An unknown helmsman on Parappa, 1915-1921

Many descendents have lived around Dover, the Channel and in Hobart. Owen's two great uncles Ned (Edwin Owen Pulfer) and Jack (John Edward Pulfer) were from a family of 15 children. Owen's grandfather Ted (Eldred) was a younger brother to Ned and Jack; he operated a brass foundry, now long since disappeared, in Victoria Street, Hobart.

We get outline information on the Pulfers ownership of *Parappa* from several different sources. The first is Handy Jager, who I spoke to in 2004. Handy was only 15 years old when his family purchased *Parappa* in 1936, but he clearly remembered the names of the first owners. The second record of ownership during that period comes from Hobart Regatta programs. *Parappa* competed in 1919, with owner "Pulfer Bros.". In 1920 she competed again, still with owner "Pulfer Bros.", but in the 1921 race the owner had changed to W.G. Bowtell. Confirmation of the sale from Pulfers to Bowtell is in the British Ship Registration Certificate of 1921. And lastly, the photographic record held by the Pulfer family records their great uncles' ownership.

So we have good information about Pulfers being the first owners of *Parappa,* and excellent photographs of them and the boat from that period. But we know little of why Ned and Jack Pulfer purchased her and went fishing. Was the vessel built for them by E.A. Jack in Launceston to their order, or did they buy it off the shelf? Were they experienced fishermen, or was this their first fishing venture? Why did they keep the boat for six years only, selling it in 1921? What did they do after selling *Parappa?* Did they move up to a bigger vessel, or give up fishing?

Any information you can provide about Ned and Jack Pulfer, or contacts with their descendents, would be much appreciated.

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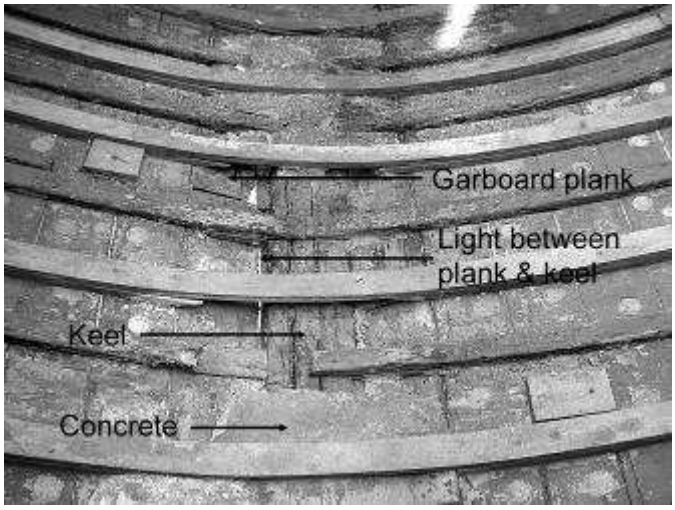
Parappa today—excavating below the water line

Parappa is still on the hard stand at Oyster Cove marina at Kettering. Able Marine are splining the hull, and I am waterproofing the deck by sealing between deck planks and repairing the odd patch of rotten timber. The spots where the staunchions pass through the cover board (the outside deck plank) have been the most susceptible to rot, sometimes needing timber patches to be glued in.

While the boat was ashore the opportunity was taken to investigate the condition of the timber in the well. Paul Delaney had commenced sealing the well with the intention of installing refrigerated tanks there. He plugged the 96 two-inch diameter holes, and installed extra ribs for greater strength, but on returning the boat to the water found the well was not watertight. On removing the three inch layer of concrete at the bottom of the well it was apparent that the garboard plank was not meeting the edge of the keel tightly, and that the keel rebate was missing in some spots. Steve Jager tells me that damage to the garboard was done by crayfish when the concrete covering was not complete.

The hull construction can be seen clearly in the photo on the right. The new ribs are the continuous ones that cross the keel, while the original ribs join in the middle of the keel. (Or are supposed to; the one at the bottom of the picture has lost a bit!) The keel is held on by the garboard plank being rebated into it, and by each rib being nailed by a single nail to the keel! She was built like a giant dingy, without a keelson or floors in the well.



Looking down at the keel in the well. There is light between the garboard plank and the keel under the concrete.

It was thought advisable to lift the sole in the fo'c'stle to inspect the condition of the timber below. On removing the sole, the remarkable sight shown in the photo below was revealed—ballast of river boulders, rusty iron and crumbling concrete! A shell of concrete about 2" thick had been plastered again the hull when she was built. Scotty Jager added extra ballast of river boulders, scrap iron and concrete when he raised the freeboard in the 1960s, to put her further down in the water. The concrete had crumbled over the years and the iron rusted. But underneath it all, the hull, keel and ribs were in perfect condition.

Under the sole in the fo'c'stle was revealed ballast of river boulders, rusty iron and crumbly concrete