

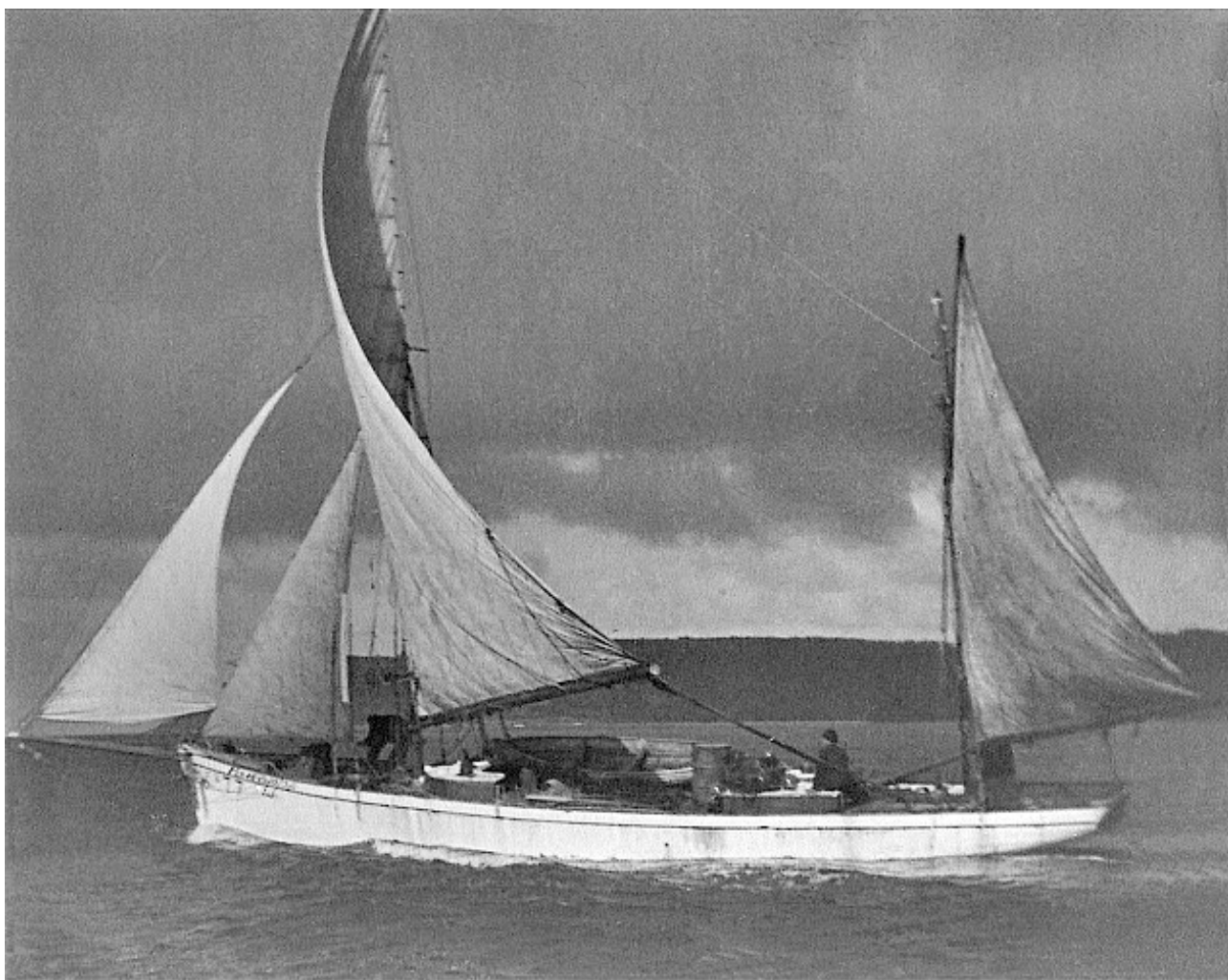
Parappa



NEWSLETTER

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Parappa - 94 years of maintenance and modernisation



Parappa south of Kinghorne Point, D'Entrecasteaux Channel. This photo was probably taken after the Second World War, when the gaff rig had been replaced by bermudan rig. A wheelhouse had not yet been added, and steering was still by tiller. The foredeck had not been raised, and the long bowsprit was still in place. Note the wooden dinghy, for working around the craypots. (Photo supplied by Harry and Stephen Jager).

Parappa is a 94-year old Tasmanian fishing boat that spent her working life around southern Tasmania, and the last three years on the hard stand at Kettering. With a major refit finished, she was re-launched on 24 December last year (1998).

Built in 1915 by Edwin A. Jack at Trevallyn in Launceston, *Parappa* has an overall length of 52 ft (15 m). Construction is of huon pine planks over light-weight hardwood ribs. The deck is of celery top pine, installed in the 1960s when the level was raised.

Parappa was built as a gaff rigged yawl, complete

with a 10 hp petrol engine. The photo above shows her as built, but after the rig had been changed to the more manageable bermudan rig, and the mast lengthened.

Having lasted for 94 years, and now set to see out another 94, *Parappa* is an important example of Tasmanian boat construction in the early twentieth century. But just as important is the record she provides in her structure and equipment of how fishing boats were changed over the period, to keep up with the introduction of new equipment and materials..

The 2005-2008 hull repair project

Before I bought Parappa in April 2004, much effort and money had been expended over the previous four years on a major refit to bring the vessel up to the standard of a modern fishing boat. The old wheelhouse had been replaced with a modern aluminium structure, capacious and watertight. A genset had been installed, providing 12V, 24V, 240V and 415 V power, and the boat rewired throughout for 24V and 240 volt lights and 240 volt power outlets. A hydraulic system had been installed for steering, pot hauler and anchor winch. The Bedford diesel engine had been overhauled, and new fuel and water tanks installed. New radios and navigation equipment had been installed in the wheelhouse, and a wheelhouse console built, with engine, genset and electrical system instrumentation. The water circulation holes in the well had been blocked, and electrical wiring installed in preparation for refrigerated tanks in the well.

However, renovation of the hull structure had been neglected, and it was apparent that a re-fasten of planks to rib timbers was necessary. From the pattern of copper nails fixing planks to ribs, it was clear that the hull had never been systematically re-nailed over its 90 year lifetime. Many of the copper nails were completely or partly corroded through, and the planks were not pulled up tightly to the ribs. The hull was very flexible, making it difficult to achieve tightly calked seams.



Re-screwing the planks to the rib timbers

The first task in the refit was to re-screw the planks below the waterline. Scraping off the antifouling by hand exposed the bare huon pine planks, in excellent condition after 90 years in the water, with butt joins as sharp as the day they were cut. Using the rows of copper nails as a guide to the position of the ribs, two 316 grade stainless steel screws were put into every plank at each rib. A huon pine plug was glued over each screw and sanded smooth. Above the waterline,

the same procedure was used, but with only one screw per intersection. The re-screwing tightened the hull substantially, pulling planks up to the ribs, sometimes by as much as 6 mm.

In preparation for splining, seams were raked out,

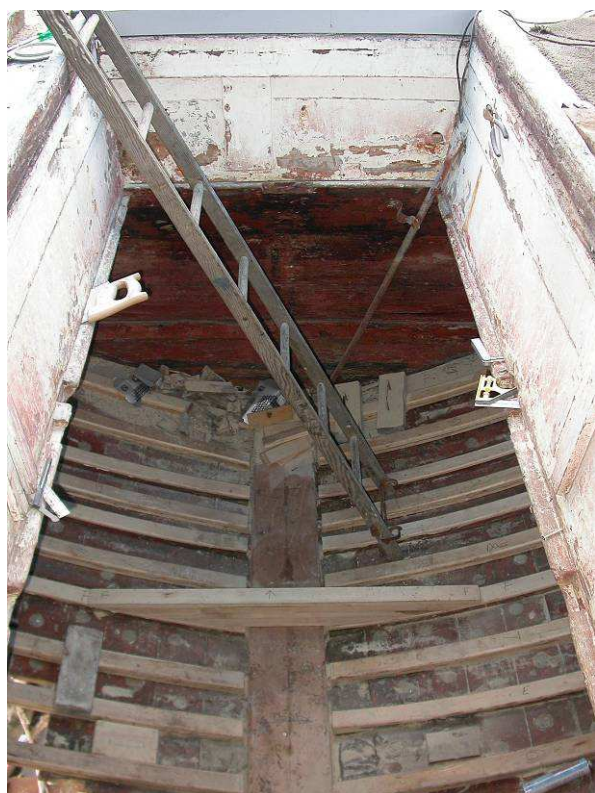


Hammering in caulking above the waterline

removing old putty and some of the caulking, and opened up to a standard width with a circular saw or router. The boat was no doubt built with seams of uniform width, but over the years planks had moved so that seams varied from 2 mm to 12 mm in width, and even wider in a few distorted areas. The seams were caulked with cotton in most cases, or with oaken for the wider seams. King billy pine splines were shaped and fitted in the seams, coated with epoxy glue, and firmly hammered home. After leaving the glue to dry for several days, the splines were sanded flush with the planks. As the splining was done over a two year period, some of the splined seams opened up in the summer 2007-2008. The wider ones were redone, but those that had not opened up much were left, as they would become watertight as planks expanded.

Above the water line, seams were widened out to a standard 6 mm by circular saw, caulked with cotton and filled with linseed oil putty before painting. It would have been preferable to continue the splining from the waterline to the deck level, but the cost was prohibitive.

When I took over the boat in 2004 the water circulation holes in the well had been blocked, but the well had been opened up again by removal of a section of plank, as it was considered the vessel was unstable with the increased buoyancy. But it turned out that making the well watertight required much, much more than closing the circulation holes. I was fortunate to obtain the services of the experienced shipwright Adam Brinton, who recognised serious problems in the well. The junction between the keel and



New top on keel, new ribs and a new floor in the well

the garboard plank was more a gap than a junction, up to 20 mm wide in places, as the top of the keel was badly deteriorated. The ribs in the well were very weak, and several sections of hull planking in the well were split. To rectify these problems in the well, the top 3 inches of the keel were removed (by hand, mainly by hammer and chisel) and a new keel top laminated in place for the length of the well. The original ribs, about 70 x 30 mm, were strengthened by laminating similar sized pieces on top, and new ribs installed between the old ones. As work proceeded it became apparent that the boat had been built with a centreboard through a slot in the keel, so transverse floors had never existed in the well. To



Split planks removed on starboard side

strengthen the structure, floors were installed, bolted through the hull and fixed into the keel with copper dumps.

The split hull planks were removed and new celery top pine planks shaped and screwed into place. This involved replacing about six plank sections, between a metre and two metres in length. One section of the garboard plank that had been eaten away by worm was also replaced.

When the splining and hull repair work was complete, caulking of the major seam between stem, keel, stern timbers and the hull planking was attended to. This seam was variable in width, so it was opened out to a standard width of 8 mm. It was only loosely caulked with oakum, as the expansion of the now rigid hull would meet the expanding keel along this seam. The seams were then sealed on top of the oakum with bituminous putty.

After the splining and sanding was complete, one of the original waterline marks was renewed. There were three waterline marks engraved on the hull – the lowest presumably the original 1915 line, and two above that. We selected the middle one to renew. Above the waterline mark the hull was painted with two coats of Northane grey primer and two coats of Northane gloss enamel. Below the waterline it was treated with Adam Brinton's special primer of 50% creosote and 50% antifouling, and overcoated with two coats of antifouling.



New hull planking beside the well, low down on the port side, splined and ready for sanding back.

Re-launch, 24 December 2008

Parappa was re-launched on 24 December, 2008, after three years and three months on the hard stand. The bottle of champagne was broken over the bow by the grandchildren of the first three owners, Peter Smythe, Barbara Ditcham and Sally Delaney.

As the hull had dried out and shrunk over the long period ashore there were many leaks, with the bilge pump operating for about a minute every 10 minutes. The main points of water entry were around splines that had come unglued during the previous summer, through cracks in the keel, and along the garboard seam. The obvious holes had been sealed with bituminous putty that would be squeezed out as the planks expanded, and this worked to a fair degree. As soon as the boat was launched sawdust was thrown into the water around the hull, as this would be drawn into holes thus blocking them. This also worked to a fair degree, but some leaks were just too large for this technique to correct.

As the engine is mounted very low in the boat the water level inside came up high enough to enter the engine sump and gear box, and these later had to be pumped out and the oil replaced. Later it was found that the starter motor had also been submerged, requiring a replacement.

After a few days the boat was hauled out again and the various leaks repaired, and the boat re-launched. Some leaks still remained; a leak along the garboard



Above: Sally Delaney and Barbara Ditcham breaking the bottle of champagne on the bow to re-launch *Parappa*



Left: Grandchildren of the first three owners of *Parappa*, at the re-launch. (Left) Peter Smythe, grandson of Ned Pulfer, the first owner. (Right) Barbara Ditcham, granddaughter of William Bowtell, the second owner. (Centre) Sally Delaney, granddaughter of the third owner, Jack Jager

Below: *Parappa* afloat again after 3 years and 3 months on the hard stand

seam seemed to be due to loose caulking, and a flow around the depth sounder transducer was due to rot around the area. The boat was hauled out again to repair these problems, but during the haul out water was running from several cracks in the keel and from the bottom of the keel above the slipper. It appeared that the centreboard slot through the keel in the well had never been properly closed up. So the slipper was removed in this area and the slot closed by gluing in filler pieces, and a temporary slipper refitted. On re-launch, the leaks had been substantially reduced, but several persistent ones remained. Over the next three months these gradually closed up as the hull and keel expanded, but some unaccountably stopped and started a few times. Six months after launch the bilge pump was operating for 30 seconds every two hours.

