

Parappa



NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BOAT "PARAPPA"

ISSN 1835-4548

NO. 9. JANUARY 2012

Parappa's third owners - the Jager family at Lune River

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. Originally constructed as a gaff-rigged yawl with an auxiliary 10 hp Union brand engine, she was built with a large wet well for cray, line and small net fishing. Her structure has been modified extensively over the decades, but her basic hull 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 editions of this Newsletter.

In 1936, *Parappa* was sold to Alexander John Jager, of Lune River, in the far south of Tasmania. No record remains of why the Bowtells sold the vessel at that time; they had retained ownership through the great depression of the 1930s when fishing was in the

doldrums, but sold her a few years later. But the Jager family were in the market for a large fishing vessel, and *Parappa* was one of the largest of the southern Tasmania fishing fleet at the time.

Alexander John Jager, known as Jack (and later as Jack senior) was born in 1884. He, as his father before him, was involved in timber milling, fishing and apple orcharding. In about 1910, in partnership with Andrew Tyler, he had established a mill for cutting box timber at Jagers Bay, near the southern shore of the Southport Narrows. He built a house at the spot, which is on the Ida Bay railway line, about midway between the start of the line at Ida Bay and the end at Deep Hole.

Timber milling provided ready access to supplies of good timber, which enabled Jack Jager's first substantial effort in boat building. At the Southport Narrows, he and Andrew Tyler built the vessel *Elsie Jager*, a 48 ft yawl, which was launched in 1918. But this vessel was sold fairly soon afterwards. Johnny Hitchens recorded that "When he didn't do any good, he sold the boat and bought a portable mill".

The timber at Jagers bay was worked out after only four years, and the mill was moved a little inland. After working out the timber on the plains south of



The Southport and Lune River area of far south Tasmania. *Parappa* was moored in the Lune River at Jager's Lune River house.

Parappa's third owners (Cont.)

Jagers Bay in 1928, the mill was moved to Cave Hill in the vicinity of the Ida Bay limestone quarry. Timber cutting continued on this site until the mill was sold and *Parappa* was purchased in 1936. The last timber cut at the mill was for the next boat the Jagers would build, the *C & J Jager*.

In about 1930, the family had moved from Jagers Bay, further up the Lune River to a site across the river from the Lune River township. Their property was on a hill on the eastern side of the river, looking across the river to the Chesterman's sawmill and the small township on the western side. The road through the township, northwards to Hobart and southwards to Catamaran, ran through Lune River township, but to reach the road and the township the Jagers had to row across the river. Mollie Hitchens, one of Jack snr's daughters, who was bought up in the Lune River house, well remembers rowing across the river to go to school; there were always dinghies on the bank to go back and forward, she said.

Jack Jager had married Christina Tyler in about 1903, with 21 children being born from the marriage, although many did not survive infancy. In 1936, when *Parappa* was purchased, Jack Jager, then aged 52, had six sons, five of whom became the mainstay of the family operation of *Parappa* over the next 60 years. Their names, showing their German heritage,

and ages in 1936, were:

John Alexander (Jack jnr)	28
Henry Lawrence Clyde Falcon (Billy)	20
(Died in an accident in 1936)	
Handy Ernest Everard (Andy)	16
Bernard Hans Alfonso Scott (Scotty)	13
Luxemburg Lenin Liebknecht (Bob)	9
Einstein Wilber Holstein Surrey (Unk)	4

Initially it was Handy, aged 16, and Scotty aged 13, who worked *Parappa* with their father. Scotty later said that "after 5 or 6 years, Jack snr went ashore and starting building the *C & J Jager*, while Handy and Scotty took *Parappa*". This would have been in about 1941, when Jack senior was aged 57 and probably ready for a less strenuous occupation. Handy and Scotty were aged 21 and 18 respectively, and, although young men, were experienced fishermen and no doubt capable of handling *Parappa* themselves.

Jack senior seems to have been sick around this time, as his wife Christina sometimes worked *Parappa* with the boys. A remarkable woman, Christina bore 21 children, but still had the energy to be involved in fishing with the family. Unk later remarked that his father "had bouts when he wasn't really well. There were trips when he wouldn't go out, so Mum would go. Mum was a good fisherman!".

Jack snr started building a new boat, the *C & J Jager*,



Christina and Alexander John Jager (Jack snr) at their home at Lune River, in the late 1940s

Parappa's third owners (Cont.)

in about 1940 or 1941, assisted by Bob who was 13 or 14 at the time. She was 47 ft in length, five feet shorter than *Parappa* but with the same beam. She was not launched until 1945, which Bob explained: "There was a hold up for a couple of years because they were going to confiscate her, yes, the Military. because they confiscated all the bloody boats around the place". (The Jagers earlier boat, the *Elsie Jager*, which the family had sold well before the war, was requisitioned from its then owners for military service in 1943).

In 1944, the year before the *C&J Jager* was launched, Handy married and left the family fishing operation, going to work at his father-in-law's sawmill. His place on *Parappa* was taken by Jack jnr., the eldest of six Jager sons. Jack jnr had left the family fishing operation at Lune River and moved to Hobart in about 1940, and worked at the Zinc Works until his return in about 1944 to replace Handy. Handy may have returned at least intermittently to work on *Parappa*, as he later said that he and Scotty worked *Parappa* together for 14 or 15 years, from about 1936.

Unk told me that Jack jnr and Scotty worked the *Parappa* together for quite a few years, up to about 1949. Scotty lived at Catamaran, and they would take the *Parappa* in right up to some rocks there and Scotty would go out along the nose pole of the *Parappa* and Jack would edge her up to the rocks and Scotty would jump off and go home for the night and Jack would come and pick him up next morning.

When the C&J Jager was launched in 1945, the family owned two large fishing boats, *Parappa* and *C&J Jager*. The allocation of men to boats (with ages in 1945) was Jack jnr (37), Scotty (22), and possibly Handy (25) working on *Parappa*, and Bob (18) with Unk (13) working on the *C&J Jager* with their father, aged 61 at the time.

In 1949, two of the Jager boys built their own boats. Scotty built a 28 ft boat named *Vacuna*, launched on 29 October 1949, an event recorded in an article in *The Mercury* at the time. Scotty was then living near Moss Glen at Recherche Bay and had a young family, so may have found it more convenient to do day fishing from his home base, rather than be away for weeks at a time on *Parappa*.

About the same time Handy built the *Elynne*, a 28 ft mainly open dingy, powered by a 10 hp Southern Cross diesel.

So, in 1949, it seems that both Handy and Scotty had stopped working on *Parappa*, leaving Jack jnr in charge. Unk told me that he worked with Jack jnr on *Parappa* for 18 months or two years at this time.

In 1951, Jack snr died, at the age of 67. He had been easing himself out of day-to-day fishing for lighter working in his garden for a few years. After he died, his wife Christina supervised the operation of her sons in the two family vessels *Parappa* and *C&J Jager*. *Parappa* continued to be skippered by Jack jnr, now assisted by his son Harry (aged 15), and a variety of deckhands – Ralph Leary, Roy Nicolls and Colin Riley. Harry's time as crewman on *Parappa* was eventful, and will be covered in the next newsletter.

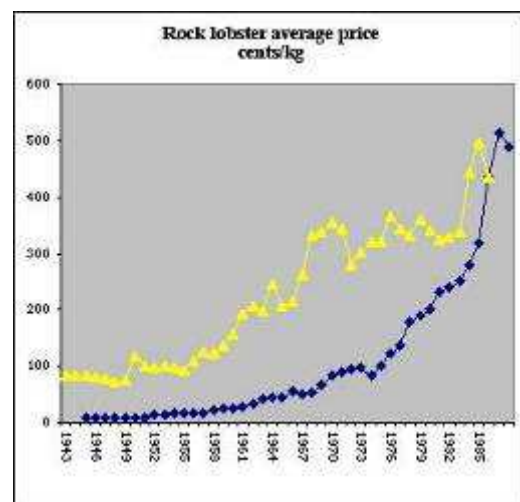
Christina Jager died in 1953, two years after her husband. *Parappa* was left to Handy, Scotty and Jack jnr, and the *C&J Jager* to Bob and Unk.

A note is necessary about ownership. For a vessel registered as a British Ship, as *Parappa* is with number 151544, the legal owner is as recorded on the British Ship registration certificate. When Jack Jager purchased *Parappa* in 1936, the registered owner was recorded as his son Handy, who remained as the official owner until ownership was transferred to Scotty in 1955. This is in contrast to the arrangements in the family, where Jack snr and Christina were the practical owners up to their deaths, and then Handy, Scotty and Jack jnr.

Crayfish prices were not always sky-high

In the 1930s and 1940s the value of crayfish was only a fraction of what it is today. The price paid to fishermen for their crayfish rose steadily from the end of World war II until 1973 (blue line). After 1974 it rose more quickly but the yellow line that shows prices adjusted for inflation suggests a steady increase in real returns to fishermen. In 1984 and 1985 there was a marked jump in prices. Since then the price has continued to rise steeply.

From A. J. Harrison, *The Development and management of the Tasmanian Spiny Rock Lobster Fishery 1803 -1985*. <http://www.users.on.net/~ahvem/Fisheries/Lobster/Crayfishery.html> accessed 11 January 2012



Handy Jager on Fishing from *Parappa* in the 1930s and 1940s

I talked with Handy Jager in 2004 about fishing from *Parappa* in the early years of ownership by the Jager family. I first asked him where they went fishing:

“We fished all up the east coast, and around the west. We used to go up the east coast for about 6 weeks or a couple of months from about mid-October. We would usually get up as far as Bicheno. And we worked deep water. The east coasters, they never worked the outer edges of the bottom, but you had to for the new shellfish. That was out to about 35 or 40 fathoms. We were hand hauling pots with coir line – your hands would bleed for a start of the morning, but it didn’t matter what you did with coir line, that’s all you could get during the war.

“I suppose we almost pioneered the west coast [Port] Davey up. Those times there was only about four boats working the west coast. There were big crayfish, but you only got 8 shillings a score, it didn’t matter what size they were. You might have to chuck in an extra one or two – that’s how it came to be 24 to the score. In earlier days, if crays were a bit small that’s what they done, chucked the extra four in. That’s how it came to be 24 to the score. A working man’s wages were three pounds a week then – it only went up to three pounds the year I finished on the Cave Road, that would be about 1938.

I asked if they made a good living fishing for crays:

Oh, I made just a living. There was nothing in it. As soon as you started bringing in a few extra they [the buyers] dropped the price. They manipulated the market pretty well – there was only Bowtell and Cassimatty [Bowtell and Cassimatty were the two fish merchants in Hobart].

I asked him how long they would stay out on a fishing trip:

“About a fortnight was average, unless you went up the east coast. The year the war broke out (1939) we had six weeks or something in Port Davey, because of the weather. That was a bad winter.

“We had the mail run to Mat [Maatsuyker Island] at that time. For a trip from Hobart there and back we were paid £10. As well as the mail we took supplies, anything they were short of.. But out of the £10 we had to buy petrol and everything else. You had to go up to Hobart to pick up the mail, too, but sometimes you could

put the upwards mail on the bus. There was the mail bus that went from the Lune to Hobart every day, and we could send the mail up on that. But we took all our fish to Hobart in those days anyway, there were no merchants or anyone processing fish down this way then. But there was a steamer service up to Hobart – they used to put them on [the fish] and send them up that way sometimes”.

It was not always uneventful fishing around the south of Tasmania:

“The *Parappa*, she had a bit of a charmed life. We came back from the east coast once, and got stuck on the bar at Southport. We hit the bar, so left her on it overnight, and went up the Lune to get some gear. When we come back she was almost ashore. She came right in on top of the bar with the tide, working her way in. We was battling with her for a short while there. We didn’t drop an anchor over because she would only have busted herself on the anchor, really.

“We had a bad go with her once under the South West Cape - got caught there with a bad one [storm]. We only had about 6 foot of the mainsail up, and we had the dinghy afloat on the deck. That’s the first time I seen two water spouts go, the only time I ever saw good water-spouts. They went up hundreds of feet, and you could just see the water twirling as it went up in. The waves were coming over the deck. The water, it just came at you solid, just sheets of water. And wind, I reckon gusting up to a couple of hundred knots. The boat she was almost laying flat in the water”.



*Parappa on the Southport Bay in 1963. This is probably a later grounding to that described above by Handy Jager.
Photo taken by Wayne Evans.*

Scotty Jager on fishing from *Parappa* in the 1930s and 1940s

The following recollections of fishing from *Parappa* are from an interview with Scotty Jager recorded by Garry Kerr in 1997. Garry started by asking where they fished in the early days:

“When I first started off with Dad we’d go round to Elliotts Cove, [near Low Rocky Point, marked as Nye Bay on the charts] then in later years we’d got up as far as Trial Harbour – that’s the furthest I’ve been up the West Coast, and up to St Helens up the East Coast. We used to start up the East Coast about the middle of October, and work up there until Christmas time, then work the West Coast from then on till the end of the season, which could be into September some years”.

He asked how many pots they used to work in the early days in *Parappa*:

“Dad only used to work 10 pots, and four or five graballs [nets]. Aw yes, he didn’t go much on crayin’ – he liked the trumpeter – net fishin’. I remember one year we was in Hobart every Monday morning with a load of fish from the West Coast - striped trumpeter and bastards. Trumpeter then was about twelve bob a dozen, an’ crays, they was only about eight. For every dozen crays you could carry a dozen trumpeter. Only had one little corner of the well fenced off for crays, the rest for trumpeter. Just kept on goin’ round an’ round the nets – them times there was no motors in the dinghy, it was all row-twelve foot dinghy with a well in. Up around Elliotts Cove and those places you’d only work about two nets, because you couldn’t keep ‘em clear. You’d only get about two dozen fish at the most in the well [of the dinghy] and you’d have to run back to the big boat and dip ‘em out, and back again. With four or five nets you just couldn’t work ‘em – two was plenty. Then a lot of times there was strangled fish – you couldn’t get ‘em out quick enough. We’d work little corners where there was string kelp – two of three fathoms, into a fathom.

“They don’t seem to go for scale fish now like they used to those times. You used to see ‘em them times, especially around Walkers [Walkers Island, close to Maatsuyker Island] and places like that down around Matt [Maatsuyker Island] - you’d see a school of stripies an’ it would take ten minutes for ‘em to swim past, an’ you couldn’t see through ‘em they were that thick, but they very seldom got ‘em in the net – just wouldn’t net!

“After five or six years me and Handy took the boat and he [Dad] went ashore and built the *C & J Jager* then. He and Bob – they built the *C & J*

while we kept on fishing. After that scale fish didn’t worry us, it was all crays. If we couldn’t get ten score from a shot with twenty or twenty four pots, we’d shift out of the place. On a trip, if you saw another boat, it was nearly a celebration! Now, if you can get away on your own it’s a celebration! We went trip after trip an’ never saw another boat. Them times there was only four boats fishing the South and West Coast, that was Syd Dale with the *Arlie D*, Neville Peg and Clyde Clayton with the *Marie May*, ‘course ol’ Billie Maysie an’ Les with the *Lurline* used to go up into Port Davey and they’d spend three or four months up there. And there was Fred Marks with the *Valma* – that’s all there was on the coast! Them times you’d tell anyone where you worked, and if anyone was goin’ to a place, well you wouldn’t butt in on ‘em, you’d just let ‘em go there if they suggested it first. But now, what you try an’ do is put someone else behind you all the time – you try an’ get in front – you never tell ‘em where you work!

He thought that Scotty was one of the first to work the deep water:

“Yes, we had it all to ourselves for quite a few years. Them times we had one special place we used to work - we knew we could get forty or fifty score for the day there. If there was any other boats around we wouldn’t work it, then if we started to go a bit bad we’d be out there and we’d finish off the load in the day that we’d be out of there. The *Parappa* held a hundred an’ twenty score. That went on for years and it was only a few years ago that they found out where it was, now they’ve just killed it.

Scotty mentioned the incident when the *Victoria* squashed *Parappa* again the wharf.

“The ol’ steamer *Victoria* run into her at Princes Wharf an’ broke about 20-odd timbers along each side where she squashed her against the wharf. When was putting a bit of sail on with a bit of breeze she’d leak like anything - you was always on the pump! Dad said there’s something wrong there somewhere, we better have a look. So we stripped the lining out an’ here they was, right along each wing an’ that. You could poke a cigarette through between where she’d snapped the timbers off. We went on the Domain Slip and pulled all the caulkin’ out and just hit her with the mallet and the seam just come back together. Then we re-timbered between each one with huon pine timbers right through - never leaked since!”. [Scotty’s recollection is quite different to Handy’s, but they at least agree it was the limestone barge *Victoria* !].

Parappa today - Re-fitting the fo'c'sle

Parappa's fo'c'sle occupies the forward third of the boat, from the front of the well to the bow. Over the 97 year life of the boat it seems to have been changed and changed again numerous times to meet the needs of a workable fishing vessel.

When built in 1915, the fo'c'sle was about 4 ft. 6 in. high which would have made for very compact living. Much of the space would have been taken up with gear stowage, but it also accommodated bunks and a galley, with a wood-burning stove. There was probably ceiling (internal lining) of 3 in. wide boards on the hull, as sections of this remain in the engine room, and there are small parts visible under the concrete ballast beside the well. The main mast is keel-stepped, and comes through the middle of the fo'c'sle, providing a convient support for a table.

In the 1960s Scotty Jager raised the deck above the fo'c'sle by about 18 in. (45 cm), making enough head high so that an average man can stand, with his head between the deck beams. This must have been luxury, to live in a space where you could stand up!



"Diddy" Jager with his son in the fo'c'sle of Parappa in the early 1990s

The photo above shows part of the fo'c'sle arrangement as it was in the early 1990s. The fitout is with pine boards; the entry ladder is on the right, and the bottom of the mast on the left, and the galley stove on the right.

In the major refit around 2000, a redevelopment of the fo'c'sle was attempted, but was only partly successful. The hull was lined with Tasmanian myrtle paneling, a beautiful timber, but the effect was spoilt by rough workmanship and the rust stains from water entering through the plentiful deck leaks rusting the ordinary steel nails used for fixing the paneling. It seemed best that in a wooden boat with the hull in poor condition the hull interior ought to be visible, so the leaks could be seen! So the myrtle paneling was removed, the only part of it now remaining being on the fridge door.



The fo'c'sle fitout in about 2000, looking better in a photo than it did in reality

While the fo'c'sle was clear of fitout it was a good time to look under the floor to inspect the ballast and the state of the hull and keel. Lifting the floor revealed a 97-year old compost of crumbled concrete, rusty iron and river boulder, as shown in the



Under the fo'c'sle floor in 2005.

picture above. When the boat was built a shell of concrete about 2 in. (50 mm) thick had been laid on the keel top and hull planks, and probably river boulders as ballast placed on that. But later, as further ballast was required, large pieces of iron had been roughly cemented in on top, and over the years, all had melded to a rusty iron- concrete - boulder compost. Although it looked alarming, it had done its job of preserving the hull timber perfectly, there being no sign of deterioration on the huon pine planks.

The fo'c'sle was fitted out with shelving and used as a workshop while the wheelhouse and well were being fitted out, from 2008 to 2011. In 2011, the workshop shelving was removed and new under-floor bearers were installed to support a new floor as shown in the photo below.

Throughout 2011 work continued to redevelop the

Refitting the fo'c'sle (Cont.)



New sub-floor bearers were installed to support a new floor. The original 1915 layer of concrete on the hull was in good order.

fo'c'sle with a new galley and bunks; this is at least the third galley the boat has had, and probably the fourth or fifth.

The new galley has a bench and cupboards built on the sloping front of the well, so although they look spacious they actually have little room inside. The appliances are 240V, relying on the boat's genset for power for cooking. There is a 50 litre storage hot water cylinder, and both 24V and 240V pressure pumps to supply hot and cold water to the galley sink. The galley is equipped with microwave, electric kettle, frypan and toaster (not a wood-burning stove). On the left in the picture is the fridge, which is gas/12V/240V, at the moment only connected to 240V. On the floor is vinyl flooring and marine carpet covering the new floor made of 20 mm thick formply.

The galley has been fitted out in Tasmanian myrtle timber to match the wheelhouse, and to continue the theme of Tasmanian timber in a Tasmanian boat. The approach of retaining the old fabric of the boat and building new structures within it has been continued here, so the hull and ribs are completely visible, for the practical reasons of allowing ventilation and easy inspection, but also to show the extensive modification and repair over 97 years.



The 2011 fo'c'sle fitout is at least the third, and probably the fourth or fifth the boat has seen

Have we been here before?



These two photos of *Parappa* on the Derwent shown on this page were taken 90 years apart; the changes are so extensive that it is hard to recognise them as the same boat. The photo on the left was taken by J.W. Beattie when *Parappa* won the fishing boat race at the Hobart Regatta in 1921. The one below was taken by Margaret Warren at the Wooden Boat Festival in 2011. Removing the sails and installing a large wheelhouse did nothing for the elegance of the vessel, but it made her a more functional working boat. The rig and sails are due to be reinstalled in 2012.

There have been many, many changes to the boat over her 97-year life. The most obvious in these photographs is that the sails and rig have been removed and replaced by an engine. Although an engine was installed when the boat was built in 1915, it was only 10 hp and was certainly an auxiliary to supplement sail power. As engine power and reliability improved, engines became the primary power source until, in the 1990s, the mast was still in place but there were no sails.

Another obvious change has been the addition of a wheelhouse, which necessitated



Parappa



NEWSLETTER

Published by Des Beechey
26 Malga Avenue, East Roseville, NSW
2069

Phone: Sydney (02) 9417 4980

Mobile: 0402 002 042

Email: desbee@optushome.com.au

changes in steering; in fact, this is the third and largest wheelhouse, installed in about 2000. When built in 1915, steering was by tiller and there was no shelter for the helmsman, but today the helmsman has the comfort of a warm, dry aluminium wheelhouse. Steering is now hydraulic, powered by a hydraulic pump on the front of the main engine, which operates rams to move the rudder. There is even an autopilot interfaced to the hydraulic steering, unimaginable in 1915!

