



STEAMLINES

Newsletter

December 2021



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Editorial

Jeff Malley



It is the little and unnoticed things that often keep organizations like BSMM going. Particularly during tough times like the past two years with the COVID 19 pandemic. Tony Lewis, our Chairman, reports on many of the bigger issues that Wattle has encountered over the last two years. I would like to draw attention to some of the "little" things that have bound us together over this period.

The emergence of Board Shorts (BS), a weekly summation of the last week's work and the jobs for next week, along with comments on characters, incidents and issues, has kept the volunteer group informed and together. Each issue of BS is added to the front page of the Wattle webpage

(www.tugwattle.org.au) for a wider audience to read. A simple solution to a communications problem solved by Tony.

Another little thing established over the last two years is Rosemary's ongoing contribution of cakes, pastries and shortbreads which mysteriously appear in the mess shed every Saturday morning. For many Rosemary is unseen but her effect is that there is always an early morning crowd to see what she has produced. Pete the Swede is eternally grateful.

On the technical front the intangible skill and knowledge base of our volunteers becomes evident in little things that are solved or made. Where would we be without Dave turning some minute fitting that would otherwise be unobtainable. Or Hal, Tim, Jim, Wally, Bruce putting pen to paper to draw specifications and plans for items that are otherwise not seen.

The solution to the corrosion on the inlet of the "new" GS pump is now hidden from view but much thinking and trialling carried the day. Other little things accomplished included levelling the battery box seats, sorting life jacket (PFD) storage, awning wind stabilization, block revarnishing and a thousand other little things. Thanks to all you little hidden workers.



Rosemary's Christmas delights



Rosemary's cheesecake

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT December 2021

Tony Lewis Chairman, Bay Steamers Maritime Museum Ltd. 5 December 2021



From Chairman's reports in past "Steam Lines": 2016: 'We are now planning to raise steam and begin trials in 2017...' 2017: 'I'm confident 2018 will be the year of the Wattle.' 2018: '...our endeavours to bring Wattle to the stage where we can look forward to 2019 as the year we return to full operation.' 2019: '... the foregoing catalogue of achievements tells us how close we are to returning to full operation, to once again steam down the River Yarra and out into Port Phillip. ...next year we will reap the rewards of our labours.' 2020: '... but surely this time I'll be right: 2021 will be the year when Wattle once more graces the waters of Port Phillip and the River Yarra.' What a sad catalogue of

frustrated ambition and expectation. Is it too much to suggest that 2022 will be "The Wattle Year"? On the basis of the foregoing record, I hesitate to make predictions or express hopes. Nevertheless.....

The inability to achieve our ultimate goal over the last two years can be laid firmly at the feet of COVID 19. A contributing factor is also that wharf repairs kept us distant from the ship for over three months. But while these factors cut our volunteer attendances and made work difficult and hence reduced the results achieved, we did make progress: We have an as-new general service pump installed and can take pride in our innovative approach to its repair. We are more than half way through the process of our twice COVID-delayed boiler survey, having passed a preliminary inspection - the boiler is cleaned and most of the valves are stripped and reassembled and cracked girder stay retaining caps in the firebox have been replaced. The starboard toilet has a new door. The forward davit has been refurbished and is ready to be installed again. There are new cable handrails in the saloon. Final installation of the dumb waiter may be completed by the time you read this. Engine room repainting is close to being finished.

There are also many minor jobs tidied up, forgotten or too small to mention. A small return for a year's work you may think but you must be mindful of the fact that we worked less the fifty percent of our usual year's tally of hours. We would have expected to work about 4200 hours this last year - we managed about 1800. Damn that virus. A lot of those 1800 hours were worked by a small and constant band of volunteers who were licensed to carry out emergency maintenance on the ship. These six or seven presented each weekend during the lockdowns to turn the main engine by hand, to lubricate and turn over small engines on compressed air, to check bilges and moorings and generally to ensure Wattle did not 'freeze' or corrode during the lockdown. These worthies are owed a debt of gratitude from us all.

When lockdowns were lifted, volunteers' affection and enthusiasm for the ship were apparent in the speed with which our numbers built every Saturday. Fifteen to twenty hands attended once we were free of restriction. We thank all of them for their patience and efforts. We must also of course thank our sponsors Sorrento Steam for their forbearance and support. They have not wavered in their determination to see Wattle steaming again. We all share their frustration at the delays and wish we could be further along the path to realising the expectations of us all. We assure them that when circumstances permit, we are as intent on steaming as they are.

Thanks are also due to Development Victoria for our tenancy in Shed 2. We enjoy this rent free just as we enjoy our berth on the wharf rent free. For the latter we thank the Waterways Team at the City of Melbourne. We are secure in the shed until at least 30 June 2022 and the expectation is beyond that date because of the apartment building slow-down.

There is still no sign of a permanent home for Wattle and the other members of Melbourne's heritage fleet. Reduced activity has seen a smaller number of new sponsors this year. Nevertheless we welcome to our Donors and Benefactors list Tomm's Tyres (forklift tyres), Keble's Trading (cable handrails). Welcome and thank you for your support. My thanks go to Board members and all active volunteers for their efforts during the year. All are deserving of gratitude and praise for their contributions and perseverance during this frustrating year. May the next year be better. On behalf of the Board and all volunteers, we thank you, our sponsors and supporters for your commitment and goodwill during the year. Maybe 2022?

Captain Dick Francis – reminiscences.



Dick Francis retired from active participation in Bay Steamers and Wattle matters last year and I was remiss in not acknowledging Dick's contribution in last year's annual report. I seek to redress that omission with this reminiscence of our times together and an account of Dick's contribution to the affairs of BSMM and Wattle.

Dick first came to Wattle some time in the early in 2000s as a volunteer skipper and quickly became a regular on the skipper's roster, usually being the first to be asked when a charter was booked. Former Chairman, the late Brian Ashton described him as having a "light touch and the best Wattle skipper I've ever sailed with". Dick captained Wattle on many short trips and many Bay charters and became familiar with Bay Steamers and the volunteers active at the time.

Something must have clicked in Dick's mind and appealed to him about us and the ship because before long he was a volunteer himself at the weekly working bees. My earliest archive note is of him at a working bee in February/March 2005. November 2005 saw him elected to the Board and in 2006 he became Chairman and Chairman again in 2009, 2010 and 2011. It seems when he wasn't Chairman, he was Secretary and Treasurer as well as editor of Steamlines for many editions. A considerable and noteworthy contribution to the Wattle cause and to BSMM - one that should never be overlooked.

But here I will depart from a mere catalogue of worthiness and indulge myself in a bit of hubris and reminiscences of the darkest days of Wattle in recent times. Dick, Brian Ashton and myself came together as Board members, Chairmen, Secretaries and Treasurers in the period 2002 to 2009. They were the darkest of times for Wattle. No survey meant we couldn't steam charters so there was no source of income, we were saddled with a \$30,000.00 loan debt (\$45,000.00 today) and with Lyttelton II whose hull condition was far worse than Wattle's, \$60,000.00 (\$88,000.00 today) on loan there but with Buckley's chance of us recovering it; lack of steaming meant volunteer numbers were down (seven was an extraordinary and noteworthy turn-up for a working bee), there was a recurring, constant threat of eviction (along with Alma Doepel) from the most decrepit of premises at 20 North Wharf. Things were very grim.

We three never really formalised a plan, we just seemed to agree over curry lunches and nice reds that Wattle wasn't going to go away. We made serious investigations into what dissolution of BSMM would mean to members and what their liability (if any) was and what the actual scrap value of Wattle was (it wasn't enough to cover the debt). Our unspoken resolve was that we'd not accept the thought of scrapping Wattle and have the ship come back to us from China as razor blades and railway lines. Without a real plan, we began a campaign of delay and procrastination, obfuscation and deceit. We resorted to all the 'soon-to-be-bankrupt's' tricks to gain time: no invoice was ever paid until a Final Notice was received; the BOC cheque was posted to Bunnings and the Bunnings cheque posted to BOC; when the BOC cheque finally went to BOC, we'd 'forgotten' to sign it; when we received Notices of Intended Fine from the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) we dialled the number at the Traralgon office and hung up if we got a voice that wasn't the one we recognised as being a 'soft touch' and sympathetic to our sob story; we'd re-dial until we got the voice we wanted and pitch our tale of woe. I don't think we ever paid a fine. We termed ourselves the League of Devious Bastards (LDB). The deviousness worked - we hung out, ducking and diving, dodging and deviating, gaining time, putting off the fatal day, waiting for Sir Galahad to ride in to rescue us.

Did we act illegally? I don't know, but I can remember a few sleepless nights with the phrase "trading while insolvent" running around my head. Desperately? Certainly - Dick had to talk Brian out of taking a mortgage out on his house to raise funds to tide us over. Dishonestly? Doubtful - we could be said to be evasive with the truth at the best, inventive with the facts at the worst. Exhaustingly - too bloody right. I don't think there was a federal or state minister of relevance who didn't receive a letter from us, likewise councillors and mayors, CEOs and directors of philanthropic and commercial organisations.

We invested our last BSMM dollars in a professional and nationally renowned fund raising firm who got us as far as a Committee Meeting of the City of Melbourne council. Just our luck for that to coincide with a cut-back in Council spending. The fund raisers admitted they'd never encountered such reluctance to support a cause such as ours. To quote - "It is a huge disappointment to have not identified some donors. I am perplexed at how we can raise tens of millions of dollars for other clients each year but that we could not in this case" (Craig Gravestain, CEO, Xponential Fundraising).

And then, during one of Dick's Chairmanships, in 2007, Sir Galahad, in the form of Sorrento Steam appeared with a offer Bay Steamers found hard to refuse. The relief was palpable, the joy was immense and sufficient justification for another curry lunch or two. Talks started with Dick in the Chair at the time and Brian was in the Chair when we finally negotiated the sale of Wattle and the on-going support of Sorrento Steam. (Not without serious opposition from some members it must be said, but that's another story for another Steamlines). Unfortunately, Brian didn't live to see the fruit of his endeavours - he died in January 2008 after a short illness and I took over. As Dick says, "I copped the implementation". And the rest, they say, is history. On-going.

Tony Lewis
December 2021.

The COVID Years in pics 2020/2021

Engineering



The "new" GS pump arrives and inspected May 2020



Red line marks significant corrosion on inlet port



The fix -aluminium bronze welding to cast iron May 2021



Refurbished GS pump approaching installation July 2021
Note new stainless steel piston rods .



Partly installed, pipework yet to be attached, Oct 2021



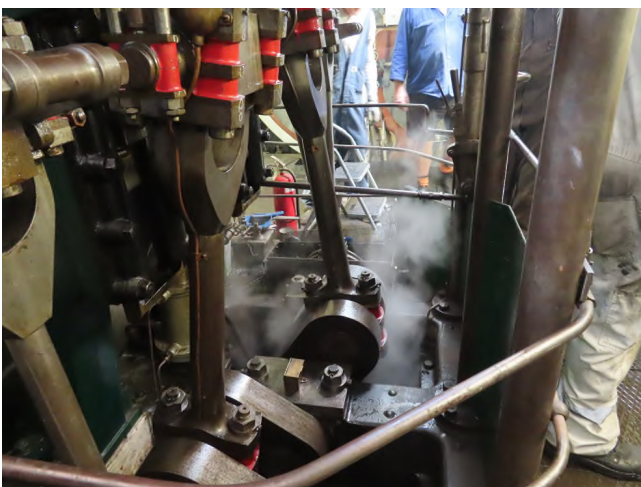
Dave inserting piston into GS pump Nov 2021



Tim inside boiler, Dec 2021



Retainers and nuts replaced and tightened, Dec 2021



Turning engine, Feb 2020



Fuel jets adjusted to minimize smoke, Feb 2020



Alex and Derek cleaning lower boiler, Jan 2021



Looking inside the boiler after cleaning



Bruce and Wally refitting old switchboard frame, May 2021



The original switchboard before reinstallation, for show only



Richard working on safety valve on top of boiler, March 2021



Some of Dave's turning handiwork, May 2021

Workshop and woodworking



Quarter master Ron sorting the engineering shed, Jan 2021



Ian refurbishing block of anchor davit Nov 2021



Jim cutting gaskets for GS pump, Nov 2021



John making sliding door for galley dumb waiter, Dec 2021



Bruce and John making door for additional toilet, Jan 2021



Ian and Ken cutting exhaust pipe space for generator, July 2021



Sabastian and Alex sealing galley portholes, July 2021



Gerald and Wally cutting trim for aft compartment

Deck and galley



Aft passenger compartment seating completed, Dec 2020



Steering engine cover and generator hatch cover completed



Cutting and preparing galley flooring March 2020



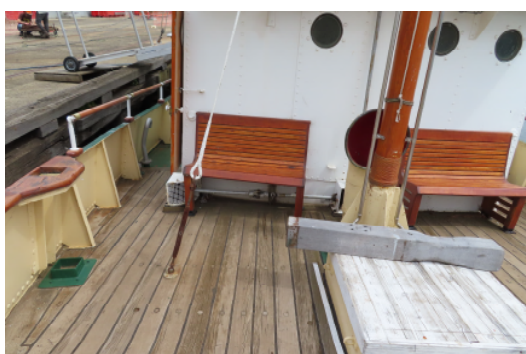
Galley as at October 2021



AMSA required safety rails, Nov 2020



Howard painting ER hatch covers, Nov 2021



Forward seating under wheelhouse, Feb 2021



Anti flap battens on passenger awnings June 2021

People and events



Wattle volunteers, April 2021, in between COVID lockdowns



Part of the Deloitte's community volunteer group, Nov 2021



The Wattle waiters for the second Prisoner reunion, Feb 2020



Wattle volunteers having lunch, April 2021



Wood turners club admiring Wattle woodwork, 2020



Working model of Wattle in RAN working colours by John Gaylor, Dec 2020

Administration



Office bearers at 2020 AGM, Dec 2020



Richard and Tony establishing the size of something, Dec 2020



Hal updating the training manuals, Jan 2021



Gerald looking on as Howard gives a valve lecture, June 2021

Someone from the Wattle?

A yokel farmer and his wife won \$5 million in the National Lottery and when he asked her what she would like to do first with all the money she said that she had seen an advert on TV for a `Round-the-World` cruise and thought that would be a great idea, it being the first time they could leave the farm in their foreman's hands.

They immediately booked passage on PO's first sailing and away they went to taste life afloat for themselves.

Their first full day at sea they sat in the `First Class` dining room having their first `formal` dinner of their lives. He had on his best Wellies and new braces, she a Little Black Dior outfit. As he got himself comfortable, braces down, trousers open and silk scarf on the chair back, the `Old Man` made his entrance and stood incredulously watching the antics. Upon taking his own seat he called his steward and asked whom that fellow was. The steward brought him up to speed telling him about his lottery win etc etc. The `Old Man` pondered for a while and the instructed the steward to ask the Farmer and his Good Lady if he would like to join him at his table the following evening.

The steward dutifully conveyed this message to the farmer and his wife. The farmer gave the steward a quizzical look and blurted out.....

" ARE YOU MAD? PAYING ALL THIS MONEY FOR A CRUISE AND THEN END UP HAVING TO EAT WITH THE CREW"

Our Berthing Place

For 2021 the outstanding event was the re launch of the Alma Doepel. Like the Wattle the ship has undergone extensive hull renovations by a team of skilled shipwrights.



Alma Doepel on pontoon Feb 2020



Heavy lift ship relaunch October 2021



In water with Wattle Dec 2021



Yvonneke and Enterprize Feb 2021. Yvonneke departed North Wharf in March.



Wattle alongside North Wharf, Feb 2021