

# TOROA TALES

The Newsletter of the  
Toroa Preservation Society Inc.  
[steamferrytoroa.com](http://steamferrytoroa.com)



ISSUE NO. 46

DECEMBER 2021

**Welcome • Not the AGM • Subscriptions due • Volunteers needed • New yard entry • Forklift & St Lazarus • Timber • Gift of tools • AUT project • Bios • Restoration • Acknowledgements • Sub form**

**W**elcome to *Toroa Tales* No.46. Yet again, again, progress has been disrupted somewhat by Covid19 and resultant lockdowns – more than a third of the time since the last *Toroa Tales* has been under Level 3 or 4. Under Auckland lockdown conditions, no physical work on *Toroa* has happened until recently, apart from the occasional inspection and setting covers and supports to right. However, some matters have been progressed away from the ferry, while others were done before Delta restricted all.

#### **AGM 2021, NOT THE NOTICE OF**

Normally at this time of year we would be holding the Annual General Meeting of the Toroa Preservation Society. This year no date will be set for this until we have some certainty of the meeting's being able to proceed.

#### **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 2021-22**

Annual membership subscriptions are now due – please see the form at the end of this newsletter – and as usual donations made with the subscriptions will be gratefully received. The subscriptions cover many of the running costs of the Society and donations significantly advance the restoration.

#### **VOLUNTEERS BACK**

At Level 3 Step 2 we've been able to return to the restoration yard, the volunteers working the usual Wednesdays and following the rules. Morning tea and lunch are al fresco, and masks are worn in enclosed spaces. The next move to red traffic light won't much change how we need to operate.

Monday and Tuesday can also be volunteer days, to attend to engine oiling and cleaning, and any other matters. Lockdown for humans was a free-for-all for noxious plants in and around the site—some extra hands would be very welcome for a concerted weeding effort. Email [crew@steamferrytoroa.com](mailto:crew@steamferrytoroa.com) or phone 027 474 5726 or 021 162 5641 to join in this or any of the multifarious volunteer activities.

#### **NEW NEIGHBOURS AT SELWOOD RD**

Urban Quarry Ltd, suppliers of aggregate and fill, have replaced Downers in the yard north of the *Toroa*. The layout is now quite different, and it is important for safety to follow the access rules and be alert.

#### **NEW ENTRY TO TOROA YARD**

**If visiting during working hours, please park on the road if possible. Otherwise use the usual first gate in Selwood Rd then turn immediately left to follow the fence-line to the *Toroa* gate. Be aware of moving heavy machinery and trucks.**

#### **ST LAZARUS AND THE FORKLIFT**

Our forklift, donated soon after *Toroa's* arrival at Selwood Rd, has done sterling work – essential work – ever since. It is now beyond economic repair. Peter McCurdy made a successful application to the St Lazarus Charitable Trust for financial assistance towards its replacement, and we are grateful to the St Lazarus Trust for this second grant from them – much of our work would be more difficult or even impossible without a functioning forklift. Now that we can go shopping, the search is on for a low-hours two-tonner with 4.7 m hoist at a reasonable price. The old machine has been sold but won't be taken away until Covid rules allow.

## TIMBER

The *Toroa* was built of heart kauri, the steel skeleton aside (or inside) – keel, posts and aprons, planking, decks, cabins, furniture. Only the rudder posts and the outer beltings were of some other timber: ironwood, meaning any of the harder Australian eucalypti. In the restoration the significant timbers will be again in heart kauri, all heartwood from long-dead trees, but other timbers of compatible strength, durability and workability will be used where the situation suits.

Tony Lyon, our volunteer shipwright and committee member, keeps an eye open for felled trees of suitable species, size and shape when he's out and about. He suggests to the owners that they could donate their timber to be used in the restoration of the *Toroa*, and the response has been generous.

Our thanks to these people:

Malcolm Crow, for the truck load of macrocarpa logs he delivered. The macrocarpa will be used for superstructure and seating repair and renewal;

Diana Annandale, for two large totara logs, and Jeff Smith of Swanson Transport for delivering them. Diana herself planted this tree some decades ago. The timber will be used to replace the hull sheathing that protects the planking from teredo and gribble;

Geoff Windust, for a large and long sawn baulk of macrocarpa, intended for a footbridge but Graeme thought we could make better use of it – replacement carlins in the promenade deck is one possibility;

Jason Davis, Auckland Council Senior Arborist and Donovan Richmond of Treescape for macrocarpa logs from Henderson Park. These are from century-old trees decayed at the base and therefore likely to fall over of their own accord, but with sound timber further up.

The larger logs are too big for our bandsaw mill and will require prior slabbing off with a chainsaw mill, down to 760 mm diameter. We have acquired a bandsaw mill frame, and are seeking a grunty, reliable chainsaw to suit—bar up to 48 inch.



*Some of the macrocarpa logs from Malcolm Crow*

*Swanson Transport unload the second of the totara logs from Diana Annandale*





*Donovan Richmond of Treescape and Tony Lyon of the TPS inspect an 18-m trunk for potential ferry timber. Unsound at the butt and solid towards the crown, it provided four 3-m logs, and fifteen short logs came from other trees.*



Tony Lyon and Mike Walls are building a housing to cover the bandsaw mill to enable it to be stored in dry and secure condition on the outdoor railway, thus freeing space in the main workshop.

And thanks to Kevin Harvey of The Shelter Station who donated a large heavy-duty tarpaulin which now covers the main timber stack.



**DONATION OF POWER TOOLS BY BUNNINGS**

As a result of an approach by Mike Walls, Bunnings Warehouse Westgate have donated a comprehensive kit of cordless power tools towards the *Toroa* restoration: drill, angle-grinder, circular saw, chainsaw. In the more awkward corners of the 40-m hull and yard, cordless tools are a boon -- not having to run leads saves much time and care.

*Mike Walls unpacks Ryobi cordless power tools donated by Bunnings Warehouse Westgate, presented by Bunnings Activities Organiser Max Kooyman, at right.*

*Putting faces (or backs) to names, others in the picture are Tony Lyon, Peter Henley, Peter McCurdy and Barry Davis.*



## **MEDIA PROJECT WITH AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS**

Assistance with publicity material has been sought in the past, often with mixed results. This time, through Gordon Whiteacre's contacts at AUT, a major exercise has been carried out by AUT Digital Communications students, who made the *Toroa* the subject of their final-year capstone project.

We had a scoping meeting with tutors AD Narayan and Justin Matthews at the *Toroa*, then later an immersion presentation and tour for the eleven students: Chase, Ariana, Jeanie, Kennedy, Amy, Summer, Kate, Oliver, Nirvika, Matthew, Annaliese and Damin. We were impressed by their skills and energy, and by their enthusiasm for the project which had hitherto been unknown to some of them.

The students went off to develop their proposals for video production, social media development & graphic design, and website development, then a few days later we were in Level 4, with AUT going to virtual tuition and the teams unable to get together, and unable to return to the *Toroa* for further discussion and filming. This severely hampered the whole process—despite this some very good work was created by the three teams. And it gave the committee a great impetus to assemble all our historical and current video and still images.

Unfortunately the Covid-truncated project could not get to the planned second and third drafts and there is work yet to be done on the various components before going live. We enjoyed working with the teams and hope that some will return to the project when things have become more settled. We would also very much like to continue combined projects with AUT students in the future.

Our thanks again to AUT and the Digital Communications staff and students, and we wish the all the students well in their new careers.



*AUT Digital Communication students, with Robert Brown and Peter McCurdy, in the fore void of the Toroa, at the start of their final year capstone project*

## **THE PEOPLE OF THE TOROA: VOLUNTEER PROFILES**

Gordon Whiteacre writes:

As a recent volunteer I wanted to know more about the great team I work alongside each Wednesday. I also considered that those reading the newsletters might want to learn something about the people involved in the *Toroa* Preservation Society, as well as the technical details of the restoration. Through short interviews and chats I picked my way into the stories of why and how each volunteer became involved with the great *Toroa*.

These profiles will be presented over several issues of *Toroa Tales*. The first two, Barry Davis and Mike Walls, are stalwarts who joined the volunteers some time after the *Toroa* was brought ashore at Selwood Rd. They have featured in *Toroa Tales* a few times, not least for the refurbishment of the Ladies Cabin interior, mentioned below, and the engine-room upper bulkheads, and the marathon circumnavigational refurbishment of the outboard tongue and groove sheathing of the main-deck cabins—weeks and weeks of scraping, sanding and painting; Mike also for his creation of souvenirs from original *Toroa* timber, including the albatross of TT45.

## Barry Davis

Born in Auckland, Barry grew up in St Mary's Bay, overlooking the harbour, the Beaumont St working boat area, commercial craft, the slipway, and the ferries moving back and forth across the harbour. In short Barry daily had the Waitemata in his view, his mind and, as a result of constantly watching the harbour, in his blood. Barry's father was a shipwright who worked for Percy Vos Boatbuilder who built the very last Waitemata double-ended ferry, the diesel-powered vehicular ferry *Korea*. Barry's dad built P-class yachts and clinker dinghies for him and his brother in their St Mary's Bay back yard, bending wood with steam to form the ribs.

As the preparations for the new harbour bridge went ahead, the reclamations at Westhaven and along the waterfront leading to the bridge sadly put paid to Barry and his family's direct view of activity on the harbour. Barry made it a goal to travel on board each and all of the various ferries, knowing they might not last. After the harbour bridge was completed in 1959, the fleet of fifteen ferries was reduced to only four remaining operational. The two Australian-built vehicular ferries were sent to Tasmania, one sinking on the way; the other is still there and afloat. Barry remembers spending many days in those times wandering along the Beaumont St waterfront, the yards and slipways, and the wharves where the remaining ferries were moored, sometimes sneaking on board to explore. He was always interested in the repairs being done on various scows, fishing boats and ferries.

After joining the NZ Customs Service Barry headed off for two years of OE, visiting the UK and Europe, as far as the Bosphorus and the Black Sea. Returning to Auckland and the Customs Service, Barry crewed on a friend's 52-foot launch for four years and furthered his boating experience. [We have heard a few of Barry's stories of his career in Customs—some of us have been urging him to write the book, and are awaiting the Netflix series which is bound to follow. Barry doesn't think it's interesting enough for a book but we believe he is wrong about this.]

When the *Toroa* sank at Birkenhead wharf in 1998, Barry's interest was still there and he went to photograph the sad situation. In 2001 he had heard about the plan to slip *Toroa* out of the harbour at Selwood Rd, and so was there watching and photographing the operation. In those days, as now, he was acting as sales and marketing agent for David Balderston, author of six books on Auckland's ferries, with a seventh under way. David, living overseas, suggested to Barry that he visit the *Toroa* restoration group at Selwood Rd and see if they wanted to buy his books. So at a Christmas barbecue Barry turned up, a bag of David's books under his arm, and met the crew. He joined the TPS and about six years ago became a regular Wednesday volunteer.

In 1977 Barry, a keen surfer, had moved to Piha, and has lived there ever since. These days health issues make surfing a no-go so kayaking has taken over, on interesting waterways all around the country. That is when he is not occupied at the *Toroa*, working alongside his TPS mates. Barry's lifetime of boating interest and his huge maritime library of approximately 4,000 books might explain why when anyone in our lunchroom asks a question about the history of Auckland's boats, ships and ferries, you can bet on his quietly coming up with a comprehensive answer — a mine of information on Auckland's maritime history.



## Mike Walls

Mike lives in Henderson and so when the *Toroa* was hauled out at Selwood Rd he was always aware of the ferry near the motorway. Mike's family had moved to Point Chevalier when he was five years old and his earliest memory of the *Toroa* was as a child, travelling on her to the North Shore to visit his aunt. Those early connections started his fascination with the *Toroa*. One day about six years ago he turned up at the site to find out more. He wanted to help and felt that *Toroa* should definitely be saved.

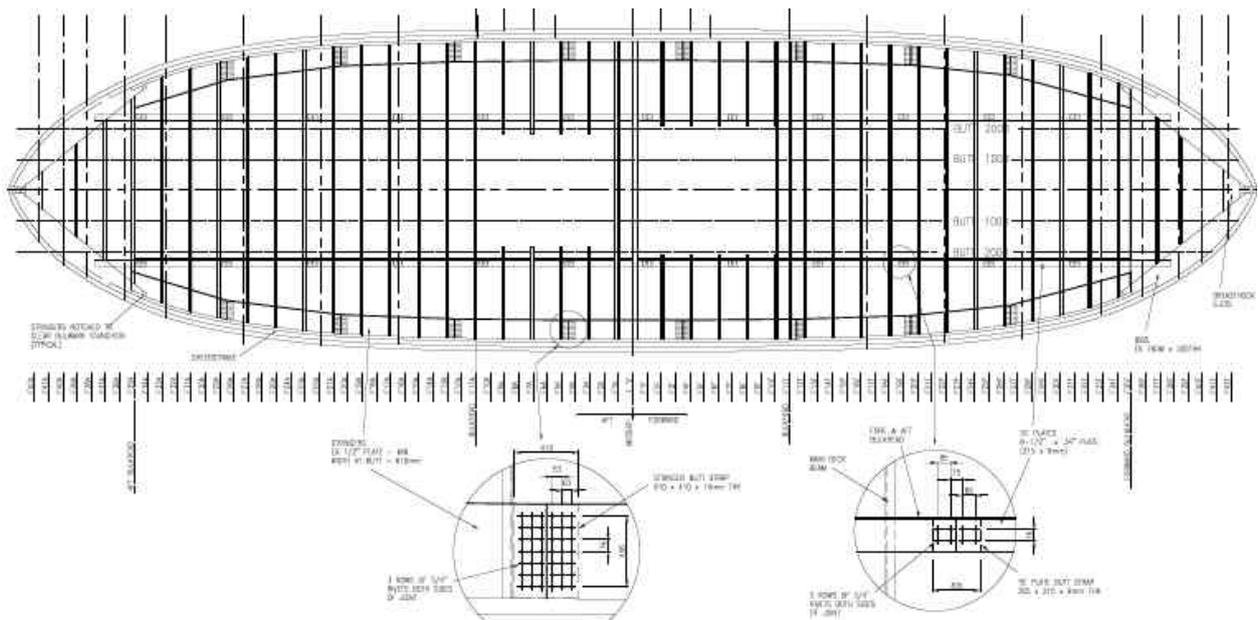
Mike retired from his own business designing and selling shade systems for schools; since then he has more time to help out at the *Toroa*, as well as on his hobbies, including woodworking, sculpture, golf and gardening. Mike enjoys painting and woodwork at the *Toroa*, and is especially good at keeping tools and equipment in good working order and stored properly. He also has a passion for making souvenirs and memorabilia out of old pieces of *Toroa* timber, then selling these to raise funds for the project. Last year Mike sculpted a beautiful toroa – albatross – from *Toroa* kauri to sell via Trade Me. The auction process raised \$5,000 and that year Mike brought in about \$9,000 for our project from various items he had made and from the Trade Me sales of items surplus to the restoration. He is always on the lookout for other ways to help or encourage the team, and recently arranged a donation from Bunnings of a multi cordless tool kit.

When you come to view the *Toroa*, one of the wonderful parts you will see is the Ladies Cabin. This was restored and repainted over a six-month period by Mike and Barry as a display area for interested visitors and as ongoing protection for the woodwork.

## THE RESTORATION

V-butt welding of the frames is now complete, apart from a few joints inaccessible at the moment behind hull supports.

The next major task in the steel framing restoration is the renewal of the stringer plates. These heavy plates—the originals are 2 ft wide and ½ inch thick—run along each gunwale over the deck beams and under the deck planking, and are essential contributors to the longitudinal and torsional strength of the hull.



*Deck framing plan, showing stringer plates and joints.  
The 42-rivet splice-plate joints will be replaced by double-V welded butt joints*

The removal of old plates requires shifting inboard the main-deck scaffolding and awning tie-downs, the removal of covering board and some deck planking, and making sure the bulwarks are removed or at least all the bulwark log fastenings cut. After a cut across the plate at a convenient length, it can be levered out and carefully lowered with chain-blocks in tandem. The photograph shows a corroded plate from the starboard quarter beginning to be lowered. This exercise by Barry Davis, Gordon Whiteacre and Peter Henley trialled the methods for future stringer plate removal.

The cut-outs along the outboard edge of the plate accommodated the original bulwark posts, which extended through covering board and stringer plate and were bolted inside the top strakes of the hull planking. This arrangement was abandoned after collisions with wharves and occasional other vessels smashed the bulwarks and caused unnecessary damage below deck. Later, the bulwark posts were bolted to a heavy log bolted through covering board and stringer plate and did not penetrate the deck.



The rationalising and tidying of the restoration site continues with the indefatigable efforts of Robert Brown. Stored items surplus to or unrelated to the *Toroa* restoration have been passed on or discarded. A large unrelated steam dynamo has gone to the East Coast for a suitable donation, and rusty unsafe scaffolding has been bought by the local scrap-metal merchant. The pile of surplus kauri from the hull continues to grow, which much of it suitable for furniture or other short-length uses. Ideas needed here.

Mike Walls has vastly improved the organisation of tools in the engineering workshop and the main workshop, and converted the surplus to restoration funds via Trade Me. Peter Henley keeps the stairs and walking surfaces safe and the weeds down, as well as painting steelwork as it becomes accessible. Geoff Holmes has tackled the paint and rigging shed, and he and Gordon Whiteacre have fitted rollers to the wheelhouse doors. Both wheelhouses need maintenance painting so help is needed there.

For Survey, all the sheet-glass window panes of the *Toroa*, many of which are missing, will need to be replaced by triplex safety-glass of greater thickness. The front panes of the wheelhouses are required to be no less than 7.4 mm thick. This reglazing won't be carried out until the major restoration work is complete and all elements of the superstructure are back in place.

In the meantime, Gordon Whiteacre is assiduously replacing the missing panes with interim panes of Lexan, to keep the weather out and, in the Smoking Cabin—the after cabin on the main deck, where the windows had been boarded over—to provide light.

#### **RADIO AND THE *TOROA***

In celebration of a century of radio in New Zealand, this newly polycarbonated window in the Smoking Cabin reflects the neighbouring art deco RNZ transmitter building whence 1YA first broadcast on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1935, taking a feed from the new studio in Shortland St, an ornate building by the same architects which



now houses the Gus Fisher Gallery. 1ZB followed 1YA at Selwood Road; now forty-odd stations transmit from here, their electronic devices each occupying one eightieth of the space taken by the original transmission equipment.

This Heritage NZ- and Auckland Council-listed transmitter building is also a museum of radio technological and social history, from enormous glass valves (or vacuum tubes) to a preserved and functional 1960s radio studio with twin Garrard transcription turntables.

In 1930, when station 1YA broadcast from a studio in France St, with aerials on top of the George Court & Son building on Karangahape Rd, a radio receiver was installed aboard the *Toroa* for the entertainment of passengers. There were complaints – the sound interfered with conversation – and the ferry company removed it. Times have changed.

This is an appropriate moment to acknowledge RNZ and their accommodation and assistance of the *Toroa* on RNZ land at Selwood Road. This has been a lifesaver for the historic ferry which, like 1YA and its successors, has been an integral part of Auckland life for a very long time.

**RECENT AND ONGOING SUPPORTERS**

As well as those mentioned above, the TPS would like to thank and acknowledge these supporters and sponsors:

Paul Walbran		Sponsorship of electricity accounts
Daniel Crestanello	RT Equipment	Forklift services and advice; driver training
Dan Rooke	Logan Signs	Signwriting
Paul Hawkins	Aegis Tool Sharpeners	Bandsaw blades
Peter de Jong	Carters Henderson	Plywood cover sheets
Walter Hall	Wellington	Significant donations
Max Kooyman	Bunnings Warehouse Westgate	Cordless tools & accessories

**VOLUNTEER WORK**

Most of these have been mentioned above, but an acknowledgement again of the volunteers involved over the last few months: Barry Davis; Robert Brown; Gordon Whiteacre; Tony Lyon; Mike Walls; Peter McCurdy; Peter Henley; Geoffrey Holmes.

There is plenty of (mostly) interesting work for more volunteers (including now a blitz on the weeds inside and outside the yard). Members and volunteers are the lifeblood of the *Toroa* restoration— for donations, membership and volunteering, go to [steamferrytoroa.com/join](http://steamferrytoroa.com/join) or see the subscription and donation form below.



And, finally, a photo from Robert Brown's *Toroa* archives of stalwart volunteers and committee members from the 1990s at Birkenhead Wharf:

*Standing:*  
*Jim McPhillips; Brian Claney; Howard Monteith; Doris Coppell; Bill Bermingham; David Skinner*  
*Seated:*  
*Jim Arnold; Mike Dimond; Sally Dimond*

This issue of *Toroa Tales* edited by Peter McCurdy  
 Contributors: Robert Brown; Gordon Whiteacre; Peter McCurdy  
[www.steamferrytoroa.com](http://www.steamferrytoroa.com)



## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE TOROA PRESERVATION SOCIETY

### Subscriptions for the current year 2021–2022 are now due

If you have not yet renewed your subscription, or not yet joined the Society, we urge you to do so and continue your support of the restoration of the steam ferry *TOROA*.

The Society's financial year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August – subscriptions received after 1<sup>st</sup> July each year are carried through to the subsequent year. Members are kept up to date on the progress on this massive and interesting project by means of the newsletter *TOROA TALES* and updates on the Society's website [steamferrytoroa.com](http://steamferrytoroa.com). We circulate *Toroa Tales* by email; if you cannot receive email messages a postal copy can be arranged.

Subscriptions and donations can be paid online or deposited directly into our ASB account:

**TOROA Preservation Society Inc.      12 3026 0763595 00**

Please reference your name and 'Subs' and or 'Donation' on your bank deposit form  
Email your membership form to [crew@steamferrytoroa.com](mailto:crew@steamferrytoroa.com)  
**OR** post to the Toroa Preservation Society, P.O. Box 34-205 Birkenhead, Auckland 0746, NZ  
**OR** use the Join/Donate/Volunteer form in the *Toroa* website [steamferrytoroa.com](http://steamferrytoroa.com)

Subscription rates are as follows (please tick which is applicable):

- |  |         |  |         |
|--|---------|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary Membership | \$30.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen Membership     | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership   | \$35.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Junior Membership (at school) | \$15.00 |

I have deposited \$ \_\_\_\_\_, comprising

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ membership subscription and \$ \_\_\_\_\_ donation.

Donations towards the restoration are very welcome with your subscription payment, or at any time. The Toroa Preservation Society Inc. is a Registered Charity. A receipt will be issued for donations over \$5, which may be used for NZ tax rebate purposes.  Tick if a receipt is required for a donation over \$5.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

(This information is for TOROA Preservation Society admin purposes only and will not be disclosed to other parties)

If you are able to take part directly in some aspect of the Society's activities, please indicate area(s) of interest to you:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising, sponsorship, grants | <input type="checkbox"/> Promotion, PR, social media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timber work                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Steel work                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration & accounting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandise sales           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation & research         | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other interests (please specify) |  |