

MEDIA RELEASE

15TH May 2014

**NEW HOME FOR OLDEST PADDLE BOAT
IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

To co-incide with her 130th birthday, the PW Mayflower is on her way to a new home at the Mannum Dock Museum at Mannum in South Australia.

The Mayflower is the oldest paddle boat in South Australia and will take pride of place in the heritage fleet at Mannum alongside the grand old lady PS Marion her younger associate at the ripe old age of 114 years.

“It is exciting times for Mannum to now have a second heritage vessel in their fleet to strengthen the town’s origins as the birthplace of the paddle steamer”, said Mayor Dave Burgess, Mid Murray Council.

“How fitting to welcome this historic vessel in her milestone anniversary year to the Mid Murray Council district. She will certainly offer many stories with her intriguing and colourful past and will become one of the premier heritage attractions in the Murray Lakes and Coorong region”.

With the generous donation from Robert O’Callaghan and Pam O’Donnell, the Mannum Dock Museum has been able to both purchase the vessel and will restore it back to its former glory of the 1913 era.

Robert O’Callaghan said, “Pam and I are thrilled to offer assistance to the Mannum Dock Museum Board and the Mid Murray Council to continue to preserve South Australia’s rich river heritage through the PW Mayflower”.

“We have always had a passion for wooden boats and a long association with the Mannum Dock Museum through Rockford Wines and the Steam Powered Dinners on the PS Marion”.

“Preservation of Murray River heritage vessels is crucial to retain our nation’s living maritime heritage and the Mannum Dock Museum is testimony to keeping our river history alive”.

“Pam and I look forward to when the Mayflower is launched again for public cruises in Mannum in the years to come”.

Mayor Dave Burgess expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Mid Murray Council to Robert O'Callaghan and Pam O'Donnell for their tremendous donation to purchase the Mayflower.

"We are astounded as a Council to have received this exceptional donation to provide yet another major river attraction for our community and visitors to enjoy".

Rob Bowring Chairman of the Mannum Dock Museum Board is overwhelmed with the offer from Robert and Pam to secure the Mayflower and is looking forward to again reigniting the Mannum Dock as a working boat restoration yard to bring the Mayflower back to life.

"We know the work involved with the restoration of a heritage vessel as the 20th Anniversary of the recommissioning of the PS Marion is celebrated in November this year".

Rob Bowring further said, "We hope to attract new volunteers who just like getting their hands dirty but working towards bringing vessels back to their former glory as we did with the Marion".

"The Mannum Dock Museum Board is so grateful to Robert and Pam and look forward to working with them on this new and exciting project for the complex".

The PW Mayflower was built in Moama on the Murray River in NSW in 1884 opposite Echuca by Wilson & Burkett for Daniel Alexander and was fitted with a steam engine.

Daniel Alexander, a West Indian Negro and his Australian wife operated the boat as a bottle-oh boat. Known as 'Black Alex', a legendary figure in Murray River history, he was an impressive figure and many stories have detailed his impeccable strength while he claimed to be the greatest swearer and talker on the river.

The vessel was taken over by his bankers and eventually sold to Billy 'Pirate' Wilson' and in 1900 sold to the Creager fishing family of Renmark.

Harry and August Creager lived on and fished from the vessel for a number of years and built the top cabin after August's marriage in 1913.

Many owners followed until 1956, when well known Murray River Captain, Alby Pointon from Mildura purchased the vessel and converted to a passenger cruising showboat. In 1968, the Mayflower was again sold to another stream of owners until 1984 when the current owner Dr Brice and Ruth Douglas purchased the vessel.

"Being diesel powered, the Mayflower will provide a myriad of opportunities for the Mannum Dock Museum Board offering a vessel that utilises minimum crew requirements, and we can just turn the key to provide regular cruises", said Rob Bowring.

The PW Mayflower will undergo an 18 month to two year restoration process and the Mannum Dock Museum welcomes any new volunteers to assist on the project.

For further information contact Jenny Callander at the Mannum Dock Museum on 85692733 or museum@psmarion.com or visit www.psmarion.com

For further media information or interviews contact Deb Alexander, Tourism Manager at the Mid Murray Council on 0414857738 or postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au.