



WAVE



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“the ship comes first”

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The Newsletter of the Barque *Polly Woodside* Volunteers Association Inc.

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A happy and healthy Festive Season to our readers

Chairman's Chat

The number of volunteers are growing. There are up to fourteen of us getting around the table on Tuesdays so we could be using two tables soon for lunch. The growing numbers being, Don Knowles, Roger Wilson, Richard Barber, Campbell McCullough coming down by train from Bendigo, John Maxwell, Peter Allen, Todd Gardiner and our newest member D'Arcy Wells. Also Simon with Ash his Carer, who are doing a great job overhauling the sheave blocks, while Ash Green who divides her time between Polly and the Old Melbourne Gaol, week about, as well as Wayne and Damien Bette, who come down whenever sea time allows them.

On Tuesday 20th September, during the school holidays, we were asked to come in specially as the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, would be making an important announcement on-board Polly Woodside at 9am. Also present were senior members of the National Trust Board, Ferdi and Sam Tait. Hopefully there would be some media there capturing the news until 10am. and to illustrate the significant role that volunteers have in restoring the ship we would be present, tools in hand and as grubby as possible to prove there is real work going on in the background of the Minister's announcement, and hopefully it'll get in the press or on the telly!

-- See the article 'The Important Announcement' later in this 'Wave' to find out all about it.

Ferdi Darley, is settling in well - I cannot recall how long it has been since we have had such a variety of different jobs on the go, from sheave blocks to servicing the footropes and stirrups from the foremast yards – with promises of more to come.

Work on the Memorial Plaques board has had to be put aside with a good two-thirds of them fitted due to the new work. However we have received seven new plaques, and hope to fit them soon. A new idea has been suggested by Roger to frame the board with rope containing fancy knots. A very nice touch!

Roger Wilson is doing lots of canvas repair work, and now has a keen apprentice, D'arcy Wells is working with him. Also Brett the seaman, while his uncle Wayne is working on the ratlines

The Gaff still divides the workshop/mess room, but the fittings have nearly all been fitted. Once completed, and after a paint touch-up it will finally be moved out onto the dock, ready to be hauled aloft.

Ben Pocock, our new Manager, being very keen, is coming down to Polly every Tuesday when we are on site, and we hope to get him into overalls soon.

Neil

Recent Tasks Underway on site

Most of the work being done by volunteers currently is part of the major overhaul made possible by the grant from the Victorian State Government.

Stripping and cleaning the wire cable standing rigging is still an ongoing process in the temporary work area above the ballast on board the ship. The cables have been found to be in excellent condition due to the workmanship and materials used by those who carried out the restoration of Polly.

Current practice is to paint the cable with Riggers Tar, a mixture of enamel paint, Stockholm Tar, linseed oil and varnish. The cable is then 'parceled with hessian, tarred again and then served with cord before being finished with another coat of tar. This varies from the original only in that the former method used white lead and tallow direct on the cable.

A survey of the condition of lower masts was undertaken which required the volunteers to expose the section of each mast located at the footing at the keel and at deck level. This involved the partial removal of the cement mortar at the lower end and a number of timber wedges at deck level in order to expose the metal sections for detection of signs of corrosion.

The canvas mast boots that protected the timber wedges were rotted for two or three centimetres where they were in contact with the deck and dirt and algae which had retained moisture. However above this lower section the canvas was in perfect condition and we feel that one of them should be put on display to illustrate the skill of the sailmaker in canvas sewing.

Timber ratlines from the mizzen mast have been removed, painted and are being replaced. These have also been found to be in excellent condition.

Blocks from running rigging from each of the masts are also being overhauled and painted.

A canvas safety sheet is being made. This will be erected above deck level to prevent any

fittings or tools that may be inadvertently dropped to be caught before doing damage to the deck and/or personnel.

Corporate volunteers from Exxon Mobil recently visited and sanded and oiled sections of the pinrails.

The amount of work that has been done over the past few months has been considerable due to increased size of the core group of volunteers having risen to approximately sixteen.

Don Knowles

The Important Announcement

On Tuesday 20th September, during the school holidays, the volunteers were asked to come in specially as the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, would be making an important announcement on-board Polly Woodside at 9am. Other dignitaries attending were the Chairlady, Kristin Stegley and senior members of the National Trust Board, C.E.O Simon Ambrose, Paul Roser, Ferdi and Sam Tait with a GTV9 crew consisting of a reporter and a cameraman arriving later.

After speeches by various members, and a tour around the ship, Richard Wynne the Minister for Planning announced that the State Government were giving a grant to Polly of \$500,000 for restoration and maintenance work on masts, spars and rigging. This would involve bringing down all the yards, top-masts, t'gallant masts, and all the standing and running rigging. Lower masts also to be removed, and tested to confirm they are still sound. A crane would be used to remove those masts, and yards, which cannot be safely brought down manually, while the crane would be located on the east side of the dry-dock, with its boom extended over our shed to remove and lower onto a truck these components to be transported to another location to be restored (there is no area near Polly where this work could be done), then returned to be reinstalled.

I was interviewed by the TV crew, who then filmed us serving the rigging in our hold workspace. When shown at the end of the 6pm news that night – we got a glimpse of what they recorded. On request, GTV9 sent us a DVD of their complete film plus a copy of what was shown on the 6pm news.

Stop press:- It was decided, on recommendation by Ferdie, that some of the lower mast's deck wedges only should be removed, as well as small areas of the concrete holding the lower masts in position on the keelson. This would enable ultrasonic readings to be taken for determining the thickness of the metal, to ascertain whether the lower masts would have to be removed. It was obvious from the start that Tor did not intend any works in these areas to be repeated. The deck wedges were individually shaped, painted, and then hammered into place using the wet paint as a lubricant. After removing the canvas boot from each mast carefully (when you consider that each boot has been on for nearly 40 years, and Tor made each one individually, we have an awesome example to live up to), we were fortunate with the mizzen mast (Richard Barber, Peter Allen, Tod Gardiner) as it was possible to stand on the aft accommodation deck and hammer most of the wedges out (though I am sure Peter Allen would not agree – swinging a sledge hammer upwards at an awkward angle made him a possible chiropractor's patient). However we needed a 9 metre tall man for the fore and main masts, so it was a case of levering some out (D'arcy on the

foremast), and drill and chisel out 4 on the mainmast (Don, Tod myself and Beau, my grandson). As for the concrete around the bases of the masts at the keelson (Ferdie and his son Rupert would agree (and they were using electric jackhammers) that the concrete was as hard, if not harder than steel. Now to make up new wedges.

News From the Pump House

The periodic working bees at the Pump House have continued. Tasks have included the monitoring of water levels in some of the pipework, to determine degrees of water ingress. Further cleaning and painting has occurred, including portions of the cast engine columns. The engine flywheel cover has been unbolted and some initial cleaning done, prior to further cleaning and repainting in the New Year. We are waiting on the replacement of the defunct electric sump pump in the West Sump.

A surprise visitor on the 29th November was Shaunagh Darroch, niece of the early PWVA volunteer Vin Darroch, who researched the books "Polly Woodside (Rona)" and "On the Coast". Shaunagh was attending a conference at the Convention Centre and was pleased to be able to visit the Pump House during a break. She mentioned that she enjoyed attending a number of PWVA functions, in the past, with her late uncle.

Derek Moore

Ralph McDonell

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Ralph McDonell.

Ralph was for many years closely involved with the Polly Woodside including a lengthy period as Chairman.

Ralph will live on in our memories.

Here is Ralph's biography compiled by his family.

Ralph John Francis McDonell
25 March 1928 - 6 October 2016



- Ralph's English parents migrated to Australia in 1923 on the Soldier Settler Scheme
- They settled in Kerang, Victoria, where Ralph & his older sister Elisabeth were born
- When Ralph was 3 years old the family returned to England
- Ralph attended Twyford School for his primary schooling
- When Ralph was 10 years old the family moved to Onich, a small village in Scotland on the shores of Loch Linnhe
- For his secondary schooling Ralph boarded at Christ's Hospital School, in Horsham West Sussex, England
- In 1946, when 17 years old he went straight from school to sea, as Apprentice to Cunard White Star shipping company in Liverpool, England
- He obtained his Master Foreign Going Certificate in 1955 while at Cunard
- During his 12 years with Cunard (1946-1957), he sailed on 13 ships all over the world, including to Australia
- In the 1950s Ralph met Mary on one of his visits to Melbourne
- In 1956 Mary travelled to England and in September that year they were married in Bournemouth
- In 1957 Mary and Ralph returned to Australia & settled in Melbourne
- Ralph joined the Australian National Line (ANL) in 1958

- He was promoted to Chief Officer in 1962 and then to Master in 1968
- During his career Ralph sailed on 45 ships. 19 of these ships were ANL ships, the best known of which were the Tasmanian ferries Empress of Australia and Abel Tasman
- He retired in 1987 after 41 years at sea
- During his active retirement Ralph pursued a “second career” in his various pursuits as a volunteer and with his hobbies
- Ralph had a passion for working with timber particularly Huon Pine from Tasmania and was well known for his hand woodcarvings
- He was an active member of F.R.O.G.S. (Friends of Gulf Station), a National Trust property at Yarra Glen
- He was active in the Christ’s Hospital Old Blues Association Branch in Melbourne
- Ralph held a part-time role teaching chart work and meteorology for the 2nd Mate’s Certificate course at RMIT
- Ralph had a great passion for history, particularly maritime history and writing.
- He was Chairman and Life Member of the Polly Woodside Volunteers Association
- He was Founding member, President & Life Member of the Alma Doepel Supporters Club.
- Ralph captured the history of the Alma in the book he authored “Alma Doepel – history of a schooner still active”
- He continued to demonstrate his passion for writing and was Honorary Editor of the Company of Master Mariners of Australia
- He also authored two other maritime history books:
 - 1 - Build a Fleet Lose A Fleet - Australian Commonwealth Line history (1914-1927)
 - 2 - Australian Salvors in World War 2 - history of the Government Marine Salvage Board (1942-1946)
- In 2001 Ralph was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) “for service to the preservation of Australia’s maritime history particularly through the restoration of historic vessels and as an author”.