



WAVE



Number 135

“the ship comes first”

Sept 2011

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



Those were the days! A group of happy volunteers in 1997. Many faces will be familiar.

How things have changed !

PWVA Committee:

Chairman: Neil Thomas, thomclan@optusnet.com.au, 9802 4608

Vice-Chairman: Capt. Ralph McDonell, ralphmcd@bigpond.com.au, 9807 5646

Hon.Secretary: Jenny Hunter. 9690 3669

Hon Treasurer and Wave Editor: John Wroe, jacwroe@bigpond.net.au, 9531 5626

Other Committee Members: Don Knowles, 9877 1584; Neville Keown, 9877 9234;
Roger Wilson

DISCLAIMER: Please be aware that statements, opinions & comments made by contributors to this journal are not necessarily those of the PWVA Committee and/or its Members.

Editors Note – John Wroe

My apologies for the brevity of this edition of Wave. Neil is overseas at present & therefore there is no Chairman's Message this time. The only articles I have received are from Don & Derek. So to help in bringing our members up to date on developments (or lack thereof) I have cobbled together a few of my observations.

I have no idea how the Polly Woodside and revamped Shed 2 (Interpretation Centre) is performing in terms of numbers and cashflow but it would be interesting to see the figures so that they may be compared with the old Maritime Museum which in my recollection was breaking even or making a modest profit when it was unceremoniously closed in 2006. I am still of the opinion that a fully-fledged maritime museum would have been more attractive to the public.

The lack of communication between the Trust's senior management and the PWVA continues. Meetings have been sought with the CEO & he has been invited to write an article for the Wave to present the Trust's point of view but we have had no response.

Several attempts have been made to display the volunteers' bronze memorial plaques either in Shed 2 (interpretation centre) or on the ship. All have been rejected by the Trust management who appear to have no appreciation of the invaluable contribution made by volunteers over the past 30-odd years.

Given the perplexing decisions made by Trust management such as the retrenchment of the Maintenance Co-ordinator one has to have misgivings about how essential maintenance schedules are to be carried out on the Polly.

Congratulations to long-time volunteer and Polly supporter Betty Cromb who celebrated her 90th birthday recently.

News from the Ship & Site – Don Knowles

Current works underway include:-

Top rail and bulwarks above and below the pinrails along the maindeck being chipped, sanded and painted to be followed by the pinrails being re-oiled. The scuppers, hatch coamings and the deckhouse coamings will then be done as there is much rust needing to be removed. Handrails with Turkshead dressing to the fore and quarter decks where rust was marring their appearance are also being attended to. Painting of the lower sections of the standing rigging is also continuing. Sarah and Seamus have completed a one day course that will allow them to go aloft to carry out much needed tasks.

The boat for the playground has been finished and is awaiting arrival of a crane on site for placement along with the signal mast, Gellibrand light etc.

Construction of the fence along the Convention Centre side of the dock has commenced. The volunteers are still being denied use of the machinery in the workshop although we have been advised that this will change as soon as the Trust determines what training is needed and what coverage is provided by their insurers.

News from the Library/ Ship Research Service

The Genealogical Society of Victoria has generously donated space in the widely-circulated "*Ancestor*" magazine in which we have placed an advert for our ship research service. Enquiries have been trickling in at the rate of one or two per week & we are closing in on \$3,000 income in the last few years. It may not sound much but the proceeds go to the Polly Woodside account and the outgoings are zero. Unfortunately, I doubt that our maritime research facility will continue for much longer. Circumstances are about to change and working in the remote and increasingly morgue-like Tasma Terrace is not good for the soul. Some hard decisions will have to be made on the ships' photo collection and the Lloyd's Registers, not to mention the 3,000-odd maritime library books.

Pump House Ponderings by Derek Moore

On the afternoon of Friday 8th July, I arrived at the Pump House to undertake a periodic check of the interior, including the new East sump pump, to find, to my dismay, the well of the Pump Room being pumped out by contract plumbers using a large portable pump. It was particularly distressing to learn that the flooding had been very rapid, unlike previous occasions during the last 12 months. It had only occurred early that morning!

Prior to the pumpout commencing, the water level had risen higher than the catwalk around the Low Pressure cylinders of the steam engines – the highest I have ever seen it.

Pumping out had commenced around noon and initially made significant headway, but the level was dropping more slowly as the afternoon progressed – water was obviously still coming in!

At 3pm, pumping ceased, at the direction of Major Projects. The contract plumbers returned on the morning of Monday 11th July, with a larger salvage pump. They advised me that the water had built up to catwalk level, prior to the pumpout that they undertook.

When I arrived on site, from one of my workplaces at 2pm, the plumbers had completed the pumpout and were investigating the lower level of the Pump Room for signs of significant water ingress – they could not find any! After they packed up and left, I undertook some cleanup of the silt and lubrication of the motionwork of the steam engines, where possible.

The next day I returned in the afternoon, after again getting approval to go into the Pump House. With fellow volunteer John's help we were able to borrow the portable electric pump from "Polly" and take it to the Pump House where it was very useful in removing the flood water that had been trapped in the crankbed of the engines. I was then able to add oil to the bearing oil boxes on the crankshaft and spray lubricant on the newly exposed metalwork.

I was hoping to go back the following Monday, 18th July, but was advised by Major Projects that this was not possible - I was later informed that I first had to complete a "Safe Work Method Statement" and check that the National Trust would cover me for Indemnity Insurance and Workcover Compliance, prior to completing Plenary site induction requirements.

To my great disappointment, I was advised on 15th August that the National Trust would not cover me for the above insurance, etc. as the Pump House is now out of their jurisdiction, as it had been handed over to Major Projects. Consequently, I cannot now enter the Pump House as a National Trust volunteer.

Who is going to perform routine "housekeeping" and maintenance tasks such as checking the performance of the electric sump pump, lubrication and cleaning? The Pump House is part of Duke & Orr's Dry Dock. Therefore, it is logical that the National Trust should be involved in its care and interpretation. It is more than disappointing that at an executive level, the Trust appears to have turned its back on a most significant item of maritime, social history & industrial heritage in Melbourne's greater CBD. The Trust dishonours the efforts of volunteers, past and present, who have helped care for the Pump House for more than 30 years.

Hopefully sanity can prevail and a tripartite solution, involving Plenary, Major Projects and the Trust can come into being, as soon as possible, to allow the Pump House to continue to be preserved and displayed, so that it can be appreciated by visitors to the precinct.

Pam Hogben

On behalf of Dad, George Hogben, I wanted to pass on the sad news that Mum (Pam Hogben) passed away at 4.30am on Friday 2 September 2011.

Sheila Beaton for George Hogben, Unit 2, 10 Levuka St. Seaford, Vic 3198, phone 9785 1146