



# WAVE



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**"the ship comes first"**

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



## **Polly Woodside – The Early Days?**

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**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.

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**Please Note:- As we cannot hold our Annual General Meeting at Polly Woodside, a new venue must be found – ANY IDEAS?**

Our Tuesday Gang of volunteers consists of our new recruits Colin, Drew, and Lauren-Jane though not members yet, and me. Campbell can also come back after a 2-hour trip from Bendigo, and Mike Ridley is getting down whenever he can. Roger Wilson is also coming when able. Jeff is back, getting us organized.

We really miss Mark.

***Derek Moor has been acknowledged by the Nat Trust for 25 years volunteering.***

***Congratulations Derek!***

**The Deckhouse: -**

The deckhouse main cabin is the only part open to the school groups, and we await the opportunity to commence all the work that has be done through the whole deckhouse.

All the fittings for the port and starboard cabins, galley, and crew's quarters, require tender loving care.

The mystery deepens for three of the cabin door lintels that Campbell restored and having disappeared, will have to be remade.

**The Ship: -**

Decks & scuppers cleaned, and the rubbish removed from under the fo'c'sle head, but she still requires painting inside and out.

Jeff is preparing a replacement base for the starboard side poop steps as the deck planks are showing signs of the 'worse for wear'.

The fo'c'sle had water leaking into the Paint Lockers, and down into the lower fo'c'sle, as a result, the fo'c'sle deck's caulking was tamped down, and new bitumen installed.

Pump in lower fo'c'sle has been reconnected, and the space bucketed out.

As the ship has black mould in the deck house, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate's cabin is locked up due to security reasons, as well the fo'c'sle paint lockers, and the deck house. Professional cleaners are required to prepare the ship, after the deck leaks are resealed, so we can then paint her.

Unfortunately, she doesn't look any better, with the officers' quarters now looking tatty, as well as the broken light fittings that require attention! We have been assured that they have been ordered!

**The Site: -**

The dock side workshop bench and shelving have been cleared in preparation for the ongoing ships' blocks to be repaired and renovated. Is our production line in operation?

National Trust's maintenance gang was coming down to work on the site, but we now only have Craig coming down every second Tuesday to help.

The site has been cleaned and tidied, with lots of miscellaneous rubbish cleared, and as a result it doesn't look too bad.

Being informed by the National Trust that they are broke and haven't any money to spend on Polly, it would appear there will be no celebrations in 2030 for her 175<sup>th</sup> birthday or in 2055 for her 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The following are Ship's Reports over the years – thoughts, but not to be!

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**This was the report on Polly Woodside in 2012.**

## **The way ahead – 2012**

*by Samantha Tait, Chair of the Polly Woodside Ship Committee*

This year has been an eventful one for the ship, with a high focus on the ship's forced docking in order to assist the pump house repairs.

### *THE PUMPHOUSE*

As many of you will be aware, unfortunately the repairs to the pump house weren't 100% successful, which has sent the State Government back to the 'drawing board'. The conversations I have had recently with the Director of Strategic Projects leaves me with the impression that they are serious about addressing the leaks, and more importantly, consider the refurbishment of the pumphouse to an appropriate level. We all know that this isn't a small undertaking, so we will endeavour to assist where possible.

### *THE 2012 DOCKING*

In order to relieve the water pressure in the pumphouse, the dock had to be drained, forcing either the move of the ship into the river or docking the ship. After considering the advice of the PWSC, the National Trust decided to dock the ship and take advantage of the opportunity for a look at the hull and to tidy up some of the hull paint. The ship ended up being docked much longer than originally anticipated due to complications in the pumphouse, but on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December we saw her safely afloat again.

There were two technical highlights of this docking, which benefited from some of the lessons learnt from the previous docking, namely.

1. The use of extendable, lightweight props for the side shorting: these are the same sort as those used in the building industry and proved to be much easier and safer to handle than the traditional timber shoring; and
2. ***The use of a well-tested product commonly used in the marine industry called Plastic Steel Putty (made by Devcon). It is commonly used to repair cracks in propeller blades. We used it very successfully to repair the deteriorated areas of the hull plate prior to refloating which prevented the large majority of leaks. Only three very minor leaks came about once we did refloat, and all of those have since stopped of their own accord. I***
3. ***certainly don't want to see any more concrete patches after the success of this trial!***



**Polly showing off her new side shoring**

#### **MOVING FORWARD**

Earlier in the year, the National Trust decided to change the site management arrangements with the goal of increasing effectiveness and providing the right support structure. Sean De Courcy is now the appointed National Trust manager. Sean is largely responsible for the success of the Old Melbourne Gaol and with the start of the new Night Watch Experience; I believe we are already starting to see some of his magic at work. Sean is highly focused and a welcome addition to the site

After some months of discussion, the National Trust has recognised their need for a more professional approach to the maintenance and restoration of the ship. As a consequence, these two new arrangements are in place:

1. Sean Johnston has been appointed to be the on-site Technical Manager on a part-time basis, attending to organise and support the volunteers on Tuesdays and Thursdays; and
2. With my support, my company has been appointed to draw up a professional Asset Management Plan, using a professional software tool that will allow us to manage the ongoing maintenance and raise, plan and develop ad-hoc activities such as replacing the margin boards.

These are two important steps forward in allowing us to manage the ship professionally and present to the National Trust a mature plan in order to establish a firm budget.

Since my involvement with the ship in 2004, I think this is one of the most positive steps we've made, and I hope to see the continued support of the PWVA as we tackle 2013 and some of the significant tasks we have ahead.

# POLLY STILL SHIPSHAPE 130 YEARS ON

Fascinating story of Belfast-built barque that's still attracting thousands to its decks

**29 October 2015 Sunday Life**

**By James Barlett**

WORKHORSE: The Polly Woodside, or Rona, as it was called then, just before it was saved by the National Trust of Australia.

THE Titanic might be the most famous ship to come out of Belfast 's shipyards, but there's another vessel that made its maiden voyage from Queen's Island some 25 years before that — and she's still welcoming thousands onboard today.

The Polly Woodside was completed in 1885 at a cost of £14,000 by Frank Workman and William Clark, two pioneers who left Harland and Wolff to set up a "wee yard" nearby at the ripe old ages of 24 and 19 respectively.

A three-masted, iron-hulled barque, the Polly was designed to be an efficient, globe-trotting workhorse. During her career she rounded Cape Horn eight times (including two winter passages) and racked up 1.5 million miles before dropping anchor on the other side of the globe in Melbourne, Australia.

The Polly isn't glamorous like the Titanic or her White Star sisters, but she does have a few stories to tell — including a brush with Hollywood stars.

Sunday Life was lucky enough to get a personal tour of the vessel as she underwent renovations recently.

Back in 1885, owner William Woodside was planning to name his new ship after his wife, Marian, but because of her non-stop chatter he chose her parrot-inspired nickname, Polly, instead.

What Marian thought isn't known, though the silver inscribed posy holder she received on the November 7 launch day is now in the dockside museum.

The colourful museum is loosely based around crew memories, and especially the diary of George Andrews, a carpenter on a 1904 journey from New Zealand to Glasgow.

A video shows a recreation of that journey — in which two men died — and you learn that ships could be gone for weeks, months, or even years, and had to rely on maps, a compass, a sextant and the knowledge of the captain and his navigator. Often a ship was never seen again.

Tours at the museum are led by a guide dressed in scuffed boots, a chunky sweater, overalls and a cap. You're first led through a tunnel that seems to rock, much like conditions would have been on the Polly.

Leaving the tunnel you see a huge map of the many ports the vessel visited, and the museum itself is a treasure chest of the age of sail, including crew photographs, letters, and carvings as well as flags, ropes, lanterns, boat models, a sailmaker's sample book and the vital tools and equipment (some of which gave us phrases like "fair and square" and "spinning a yarn").

The Polly was sold and renamed the Rona in 1904 and spent the second half of her life as a stripped-down, non-sailing coal lighter working on the other side of the world.

When it was realised, she was the last of her kind, the National Trust of Australia controversially bought the abandoned virtual wreck for a cent in 1968. After 60,000 hours of work by staff and many volunteers, most of whom were former sailors, the ship was restored and opened to the public in 1978 as the renamed Polly Woodside.

Sunday Life recently had the chance to step on to the gangplank and get on board. Aside from modern lifebelts and some handrails (health and safety at work), almost everything is either original or restored.

The blueprints were lost in the Belfast Blitz, and during the original restoration the wooden masts, the rigging, the decks and the figurehead had to be reimagined, though the lower masts and the hull are all original. Particularly memorable are the cramped wooden bunks, which were hot, meaning that when one crew member was on watch, another was asleep in his bunk.

There was also the tiny crew galley with its black stove and, below decks, the more impressive poop deck quarters of the officers and the captain.

There was a more countryside-type kitchen for them, a saloon with a fireplace, a mess room, the navigator's cabin and more.

There were only eight deaths during the Polly's lifetime, though one of those came on the maiden voyage when Able Seaman Hugh Davidson (20), from Island Magee, was listed "drowned at sea". Just over a year later, 16-year-old ship's boy Thomas McNeilly, from Londonderry, took his first and only voyage (he was washed overboard on the return journey from South America).

And in 1890 Belfast-born Ordinary Seaman Robert Young (19) fell to his death from the upper topsail.

"Most sailors didn't even learn how to swim," said the guide. "They knew it was better to go quickly, rather than slowly die of hypothermia."

Back out on deck there were the tall masts, ship's wheel, barrels for bathing and storage, buckets for bailing and countless strands of ropes and rigging stretched, coiled and knotted in every possible way.

Climbing up a short ladder at the bow we came to the ship's bell, which was rung to tell the helmsman where to go and when. Too often the weather made it impossible to simply signal or shout instructions.

"You're standing where Hugh Jackman did," said my guide, explaining that the Polly was once a pirate ship when it was temporarily rechristened the Jolly Roger and Jackman and 14-year-old Levi Miller gave interviews and posed for photographs to promote the movie Pan.

We take a moment to look out at the Melbourne skyline, but then we hear a creak of wood from the Polly and the wind whips the rigging.

It's hard to imagine what that first crew — all from Northern Ireland, save for the cook — were thinking when they left Belfast Lough bound for South America via Cape Horn, but at that moment at least, we were taken back in time.



### **THE GALLEY STOVE by Arthur E. Woodley.**

Most of you will now be aware that a coal-fired stove has been acquired for the POLLY WOODSIDE'S galley. A genuine article, so close to Polly's original stove that it doesn't matter.

How we came by it is worth recording in W.A.V.E.

I had, for months, been making inquiries about a suitable stove, with contacts at such places as H.M.A.S. CERBERUS, Naval Depot, Crib Point, old farm properties on French Island, etc., without success.

One day I remarked to my friend, Chris Ammitzboll, of Hastings, ( the chap who made up the draw-knife display in the "chippy's" shop) about a stove. He said: "I know a bloke who has one. I'll make inquiries". He promptly did so with the gentleman concerned, Gus Kuhle, of Merricks North, who is the proprietor of a folk type museum at that place.

Chris discussed the matter with Gus and brought back to me a sketch and dimensions of the stove. Indications were, that if it was in reasonable condition it would be suitable.

I then suggested to our Chairman that he write a letter to Gus, requesting either a donation of the stove, or to put a price on it. Proof that our Chairman writes persuasive letters showed up in the fact that Gus offered to donate the stove provided it was suitable for our purpose and would definitely be used.

Then it was back to me again, with a request to view the stove and if suitable, accept it on behalf of POLLY WOODSIDE and have it brought to my place.

The following Saturday morning I confidently hitched the trailer to my car and with fingers crossed, set off to Gus's place. Introducing myself to Gus, he took me to the shed where the stove was stored. As to suitability there was no question. It was in good order, although several minor parts were missing as it had at some time, been converted to oil firing. Within an hour this prize acquisition was in my yard. The stove, incidentally, had come from the old Hastings Bakery, and Gus had wisely acquired it for preservation.

Several days later Harold and Tor (Lin) came down in the truck to take in some Crib Point sea air – not to mention some of Margaret's tucker – and returned with the stove to Polly. Meanwhile it transpired that a friend of my brother in Geelong is an employee at the IXL Stove & Appliance Co., Geelong. (Our stove is an IXL No. 6). So what began with an inquiry of the IXL Co., as to the possibility of obtaining the necessary parts for the stove, turned into a generous offer by the IXL Co. not only to supply the parts needed, but to completely refurbish the stove to near new condition, gratis, if delivered to their factory in Geelong.

The stove, now fully restored, is a valuable and essential item of equipment which will considerably enhance the restoration of Polly, and, as my daughter Shirleen suggests, we will soon be able to have a regular volunteer cook, cooking "Liverpool Pantiles" on the galley and flogging them off to visitors at 25c a pop. (Has anyone got the recipe?).

Incidentally the stove is a 1924/26 vintage, of a heavy commercial type and many were used by the Army.

It is perhaps hard to believe, but the advertisement placed in the Trust "Newsletter" and another country circulated newspaper appealing for such a stove, met with a negative response. Did someone say that solid fuel stoves were coming back into fashion?

## **A Historic Boat, Stuck Above Niagara Falls Since 1918, Finally Breaks Free**

For 100 years, the Iron Scow was lodged in the same place in the "powerful upper rapids" above the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. On Halloween weekend last year, it shifted for the first time, but the vessel's joyride didn't last long; it is now lodged in a new location some 160 feet downriver.

In 1918, a barge-like vessel broke free from its tugboat and got lodged in the shallow rapids above Niagara Falls. The two men on board were rescued, but the boat remained stuck in the same spot for more than a century, until this Halloween, when gusty winds and strong rains pushed the wreck further downriver.

The iron scow, as the vessel is known, has been eaten away by rust over the years, which may explain why it finally shifted. "It could have been the way the wind came down the river," David Adames, CEO of Niagara Parks, which sits on the Canadian side of Niagara River, said "if it came down at a high enough gust, at that point in time, it might have hit the side of the rusted structure and it was enough to move it".

But the scow did not stay free for long. It has now come to a stop around 164 feet downstream, Niagara Parks said, and appears to have flipped on its side and spun around. "It could be stuck there for days," says Jim Hill, the parks' senior manager of Heritage, "or it could be stuck there for years."

The scow is a unique relic of what Niagara Parks deems "one of the most dramatic rescue efforts in the history of the Niagara River."

On August 6, 1918, the scow was taking part in a dredging operation around a mile away from Horseshoe Falls, as the Canadian section of the natural landmark is known. Suddenly, the boat separated from its tug and began heading towards the falls. Two quick-thinking men on board, Gustav Lofberg and James Harris, opened the scow's bottom dumping doors, which flooded its compartments and slowed it down. Eventually, the boat ground to a halt on a rocky area less than 2,000 feet from the edge of the falls.

But the ordeal was far from over. Lofberg and Harris were now stranded amid the "torturous rapids," as Niagara Parks puts it, and authorities from both the United States and Canada began implementing a plan to bring them to safety. The U.S. Coast Guard shot a lifeline from a nearby powerhouse to the scow, and a canvas sling was suspended from the ropes. By nightfall, authorities were inching the sling closer to the men—when it suddenly stopped, caught up in a tangle in the lines.

In the early hours of the morning, a brave WWI veteran named William "Red" Hill Sr. volunteered to travel over the rapids in the sling and untangle the ropes. It took him two tries—it was too dark to see properly during the first attempt, but he was ultimately successful. Later that morning, Lofberg and Harris were safely brought to shore.

Niagara Parks staff are now monitoring the scow, and officials may add cameras to a decommissioned power plant so they can keep a closer watch on it. "With the river current and more wind, it could move again and it could go to the Falls," Adames says—and if that happens, authorities will have to be notified so they can properly protect tourists. A tumble down the Falls is also likely to spell the end of the scow's decades-long stint in Niagara; either the boat will get stuck in rock formations below the water, or it will drift downriver, where it will have to be removed due to safety concerns.

But for now, Adames, says, "it's looking like the vessel will stay in its new location for the "foreseeable future," lodged once again amid Niagara's swirling waters.