



WAVE



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“the ship comes first”

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



Captain Ralph McDonnell on the bridge of the *Empress of Australia*, Webb Dock, 1984.

THANKS RALPH - Our Chairman of the past 13 years has decided to stand down but will stay on the PWVA Committee as Vice-Chairman. In this edition of Wave we take the opportunity to thank Ralph for his inestimable service to the Polly and the PWVA.

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.**

MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING PWVA CHAIRMAN

At the AGM, I, the Chairman and Neil Thomas, the Vice-Chairman, in effect swapped places on the PWVA Committee, for the main reason that Neil is still active and I am unable to do much at all. Neil has been a PWVA member for years longer than I; my involvement began in 1990, whereas Neil was involved as early as the time when POLLY was being cleaned out from her role as a coal hulk, in the 1970s.

Neil has retained clear recollections of just about all the people who have volunteered their time and effort in restoring and maintaining the ship. In recent years he has been and still is a member of the P.W. Ship Committee, and he frequently acts as the PWSC Minute Secretary. Amongst his resources at home he maintains up-to-date lists of current members of PWVA. He also has attended a course for the testing and certification of electric tools, for POLLY and the Vic branch of the National Trust. (The tools' certification is an annual task.)

Relations between Neil and myself were, apparently and without my noticing it at the time, somewhat strained during the time of the re-stowing of the ballast blocks on what became known as the Orlop Deck – the platforms of steel and timber. That was a period of hard labour for the then workforce, chief among whom were Frank Jupp, David Haddon, Bruce Sterry, several others and Neil. The job took a year and a half, and included lifting most of the blocks twice or more - each. It was monotonous, dusty yakka. Everyone within earshot including Neil was restrained whenever my poor sense of humour voiced itself. That 1995-1996 job is a tribute to all its participants. Its main purpose was to provide instant access to all interior parts of the hull plating.

This leads me on to the present-day matter of the hull. The Ship Committee is considering the long-term solution the hull problems. The crucial area is, of course, the underwater section, which must be kept watertight. Its exterior can only be seen when POLLY is in the drydock. To renew the plating with riveted steel

would be very expensive (if riveters still exist!). And in any case, to have the ship in drydock for months will cost a lot. We do not yet have the answer - or the funds.

Meantime, the most imminent developments include the completion of rebuilding of No.4 Shed and the start of reconstruction of No. 2 Shed including its lengthening and the insertion of the interpretation section.

Let's hope it is not too long until we have a workshop and amenities

- And please be as courteous to Neil as you have all been to myself.

Ralph McDonell

MESSAGE FROM THE INCOMING PWVA CHAIRMAN

As you can see from the list above, I am your new Chairman, as Ralph and I swapped positions at the AGM.

It was Ralph's decision as he felt his participation in the PWVA was now limited. However we know we cannot afford to lose his knowledge or expertise, and greatly look forward to receiving his ongoing support. Maybe I can get him to take over this job again!

The AGM was an excellent meeting and a great social success, however unfortunately our numbers are dropping off. We look forward to more attendees next year.

We had a stall in the Wooden Boat Festival at Docklands on the 20/21 February, with Roger Wilson sewing up one of his sea-bags, which brought forth a lot of questions from passers-by. Roger along with Don Knowles, John Maxwell, and Graeme Cooper, handed out lots of pamphlets, talked a lot, and were great ambassadors. But unfortunately no new volunteers as yet.

Polly is afloat again in her new dock, with her leaks from the high water pressure cleaning of the hull repaired - thanks to Don Knowles, Roger Wilson, John Maxwell and Graeme Cooper of course.

The Deck-house roof leak, which has been a frustration over the years (since it was built), having been re-caulked 3 times and still leaking - has finally been defeated, by the efforts of the Tuesday team (see above). It was a big job stretching canvas over the roof and then painting it.

The Pump-House is still a major problem, as Plenary are claiming ownership of it - not the National Trust as it was promised (can you imagine Derek Moore's frustration?). If the National Trust does not have managerial rights and control of the Pump-House, then the PWVA will not be working on it. Where to from here?

No 4 Shed is partially rebuilt, and on completion, is to be leased out by the National Trust.

No 2 Shed is to be rebuilt on completion of No 4 Shed. However the plans for it are sketchy. It seems 60% of it will be an 'Interpretive Centre', and we will get 100 m² (approx.) for a workshop (compare this with the Shed 'Alma Doepel' has - large enough to house all her masts and spars as well as bins to stow all her top-hamper). Who says I'm jealous?

However there is light at the end of the tunnel. This is an Election Year, and the State Government is pushing (finally) to have the project finished by October.

Neil Thomas

2010 PWVA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The PWVA AGM was held on Saturday 6th of February at the Mission to Seafarers. There were 27 attendees, down on previous years unfortunately, but given the restricted range of activities on the Polly site, hardly surprising.

Two committee members were up for re-election - the Chairman and Treasurer. Ralph McDonell decided to stand down as Chairman since due to circumstances he feels that he no longer has sufficient week to week contact with the Volunteers' activities but he has remained on the committee as Vice-Chairman. Neil Thomas was elected as the new Chairman. John Wroe will remain as Treasurer.

Ralph McDonell's report as retiring Chairman

"This is a very short report, due to certain factors, of which my person involvement or more relevantly absence from the workforce.

I start with sincere thanks to you all for your continuing support for the PWVA and all that we stand for. Especial thanks must go to John Wroe and Neil Thomas who in their individual ways keep us informed by way of WAVE and correspondence. Then there are the PWVA committee members to be thanked, so too the regular attendees each Tuesday and Thursday aboard ship and whom I regret my inability to accompany.

Because I am remote from the volunteer workforce, I must - like several of our members - rely on news on the correspondence and/or secondhand accounts of what or what is not going on.

While we all wait with bated breath, so to speak, as to what No. 2 Shed will look like and how we will fit into the whole picture. We are fed little information.

Looking back through the year, we have advanced with the state of the ship's exterior and the fact that she has been guaranteed a safe home in the successfully restored drydock. The interior is another matter, for the 'tween deck is crammed

with gear of all sorts. From the National Trust HQ flows an insufficiency of information about Polly. I have just read the latest Trust News and found it a well produced and interesting document. But I don't recall any plans for Polly in it. I understand that there are a couple of million dollars allocated, possibly already handed over. The interest alone would be most welcome and we wonder why it is taking so long for further results to emerge.

In the pipeline are the completion of No. 4 Shed, the re-erection of No.2 and decisions on work to be carried out on Polly's hull.

On a personal note, I realise that the time is well past for me to step aside as Chairman. I wish to thank everyone who has supported us over the years and I do not intend to withdraw from involvement altogether.

Thank you all - RALPH MCDONELL.

Thank you Ralph!

Many of us who attended the AGM realised afterwards that we missed an opportunity to thank Ralph fully for his outstanding contribution to the PWVA, the ship and the Museum.

After a long career at sea starting as an apprentice on Liberty ships and ending as a Captain in the Bass Strait ferry service, Ralph made his last trip in 1987 and soon after retiring, he started to contribute his maritime expertise and organizational skills to the restoration and ongoing maintenance of the Polly Woodside.

He became Chairman of the PWVA in 1997 and was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2001 for "service to the preservation of maritime history through restoration of historic vessels and as an author". During his years as Chairman he has tirelessly worked to promote the PWVA and the welfare of the ship and museum often (perhaps mostly) under adverse circumstances.

We will greatly miss Ralph's stature and presence (and good humour) as Chairman but are delighted that he is to stay on as Vice-Chairman.

We wish Ralph all the very best for the future.

PWVA Committee & Members

REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST

Work has started on the foundations for Shed 2 Visitor Centre - the site has been marked out and crushed rock laid and compacted by Contexx the building contractors.

Discussions have begun afresh with the Melbourne Convention Centre about signage for the Pump House and the Trust has provided advice on suitable approaches to signage which is still an area to be resolved.

Further refinement of the plans for the Visitor Centre have been taking place with Tandem our architects.

This week members of the National Trust and Ship Committee attended the Australian Maritime Museum Conference in Warrnambool. Sam Tait, Chair of the Ship Committee presented a paper on the Duke and Orr Dry dock and the docking of the Polly Woodside last year. What was striking was the very strong interest nationally in the Polly Woodside by major and minor museums alike. Key points from the conference included the issues maritime museums in general face in engaging younger volunteers, the challenge of engaging audiences and the new internet tools available that enable small institutions to interact with a new audience.

Cheers,
Martin

Martin Green

Learning & Interpretation Manager

NEWS FROM THE SHIP

The mizzen topmast is ready to be lifted into position but unfortunately the only suitable crane has left the site so the timing (although not the topmast) is back in the air. The larger leaks in the hull have been sealed with concrete patches and the smaller leaks have sealed themselves with the aid of Yarra River silt. The main deck has become very dry and is ready for a liberal dose of salt water when a suitable pump is available. The roof of the crews' quarters has been sealed, the skylights have been replaced and the inside is to be painted.

It seems that there is currently no Fire Point at the Polly and the thought of fighting a fire with a leaky half inch garden hose until the Fire Service turns up may cause a few sleepless nights.

PUMP HOUSE PONDERINGS - DEREK MOORE

The New Year has not yet seen the resolution of outstanding challenges in the Pump House. The enclosure still leaks when it is raining. The upper (ground) level is unpleasant to work in during the summer - it is very hot and airless, due to the sealed nature of the enclosure.

The seal on the inspection plate of the East steam pump water inlet is leaking, despite the continuing efforts of Graeme and a number of the volunteers. The possibility of flooding due to the increasing corrosion in some of the other pipework is discouraging.

It is most disappointing that no organisation, including the National Trust, seem willing to undertake a Conservation Management Plan to help plan the Pump House's future. Such a CMP would need to address corrosion management and water ingress. When you consider that engineers in ancient Rome were able to overcome significant drainage and structural problems to build the Coliseum and that modern engineers are able to build oil and gas rigs and fix them to the bed of the North Sea, there must be a solution to the corrosion issues in the Pump House.

One wonders if there is a hidden agenda whereby the Pump Room is allowed, through executive inaction, to deteriorate further and ultimately flood so that it is put "off limits" to visitors when "Polly" ultimately reopens to the public?

An encouraging event occurred on 16th February, when two descendants of George Sampson Duke, a founder of the Dry Dock, visited the precinct and had the opportunity to go on board "Polly" and briefly see inside the Pump House. John and Bill Halliday both enjoyed their visit and would like to come again in the future. John was a Board member of the Duke's & Orr's Dry Dock Company and recalled when the dry dock closed and its operations transferred to the Wagglen floating dock.

Australian Maritime Museum's Council Annual Conference - Ann Gibson

"Responding to Change"

This year's conference was held in the idyllic setting of Proudfoot's Boathouse on the Hopkins River in Warrnambool. Four National trust Staff were present as well as Sam Tait, Chair of the Ship Committee, who gave an excellent presentation on 'The Duke's & Orr's Dock Precinct - A new home for Polly Woodside'. Sam spoke briefly of the dock's history, the 2009 rejuvenation which has allowed the ship to

Several speakers covered the topics of changing audiences and expectations as well as rapidly Web 2 -Blog, Twitter etc - was an eye opener for many of those present who are only just coming to grips with Web 1- email & internet.

be dry docked for the first time in 35 years and the physical restrictions which make impossible the moving of Polly Woodside to another location.



S

A little bit of the Mystery



The Polly Woodside collection includes a small bottle with a model of the Cornish lugger 'Mystery'. The original of this tiny craft made the voyage from England to Australia in 1857/58.

In June 2009, a replica, built in Cornwall and known as the *Spirit of Mystery*, visited Port Phillip Bay. Returning to the UK the lugger was rolled by a wave turn off

Kangaroo Island and her clinker dinghy was lost. Some 6 months later and 500 km away the dinghy was found on a King Island beach.

The replica seems to have been as lucky a vessel as the original!

WHERE IS MELBOURNE'S MARITIME MUSEUM?

We have previously noted that Melbourne is perhaps the only major maritime city in the developed world which does not have a maritime museum. All other Australian state capitals with a significant commercial shipping industry have their own maritime museums not to mention other state-funded museums and institutions dedicated to a variety of activities as esoteric as the Stockman's Hall of Fame (central Qld) and the Axemen's Hall of Fame (northern Tas).

We hear much about how Melbourne hosts the largest container port in the country and about our rich maritime heritage etc. etc.... and one can't help wondering why, if our shipping industry is so important it is not recognised by a State Government-funded maritime museum.

It is particularly galling to see huge amounts of money splashed around on poorly managed projects such as the Myki ticketing fiasco when for a tiny fraction of the money wasted on Myki, a maritime museum which would be a major tourist attraction could be established either at Williamstown or Docklands. Whether the new museum is at Docklands (e.g. Shed 5 across the river from Polly) or at Williamstown or both is less important than getting something going.

A state election is around the corner and it might be a good time for PWVA members and friends to write to their local Member with a copy to Mr. Brumby, Mr. Ballieu and Robert Doyle.

Editor

Liz Alger

Liz has had a fall from a horse resulting in a stay in hospital while cracked ribs, collar bone and vertebrae are attended to. We wish Liz all the best and a speedy recovery.

PWVA 2010 SUBS

The annual subscription of \$20 is due at the start of each calendar year. Please forward your subscription made payable to PWVA to John Wroe, 38 Addison Street, Elwood, Victoria 3184. Any queries contact me on 9531 5626 or at jacwroe@bigpond.net.au