



Number 147

“the ship comes first”

Dec 2014

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

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Chairman's Chat

Things are pretty quiet down at Polly at present. Only 5 Polly volunteers are getting down to the ship on the Tuesdays. Regular members are Peter Allen, Richard Barber, Don Knowles, John Maxwell, me. with Trevor Dove from BMT. It would be great if our numbers could swell, so we are looking forward to seeing you.

Some interesting work is taking place with some challenges. The port side for'r'd bollard has been removed with great difficulty, in order to replace its timber base. Tor certainly made sure it was there to stay by encasing both timber and bolts in bitumen. Now it is re-installed, we hope it last as long as the last one.

My son Mark is coming to Polly to help with the design and the making of our 'Volunteer Plaques Memorial'. The working design places the plaques on a background resembling a ship's deck, and to be surrounded by a capstan shaped frame. When completed it will be mounted in the Interpretive Centre. There have been many ideas considered and rejected since last Christmas until Mark came up with this new approach. Members at the Christmas lunch were impressed, so hopefully members at the AGM will be also

Friday 14th November, was an interesting night at Seaworks, with the launching of Oswald Brett's new book 'Ships and the Sea – The Art and Life of Oswald Brett'. He grew up in Depression-era Sydney, and took to the seas, serving aboard the 'Queen Elizabeth' during World War II, and encountered many adventures abroad. He shared the podium with Richard Linton, swapping stories and interviewing each other.

It was unfortunate that there was no 'Wave' in September, due to circumstances beyond our control, but unfortunately no articles are being received. Incidentally, John has been the Editor of 'Wave' for more than 10 years now, December 2003 being his first edition, and I am sure you will agree with me that he is one of the best of the many editors we have enjoyed. Many thanks John! Any shipping news would be welcome from you all - John would like to be awashed with anecdotes, stories short and tall, and serious stuff.

The Christmas Party had 21 members attending, and thoroughly enjoyed the pre-lunch get-together, raffle and Santa, with lunch over at BBY.

We finished up for the year on Tuesday 16th Dec. at Polly with a BBQ and drinks provided for us by BMT and National Trust. Our return will be on Tuesday 13th January 2015.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish you all a very Merry (not too merry!) Christmas and a wonderful New Year for 2015.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the Annual General Meeting at Polly on 7th February 2015.

Work on the Ship

Work carried on site this year has been necessary routine maintenance but not of the nature to be inspiring. The ship's boat has been scraped and sanded inside and out, spot primed, under coated and finished with a gleaming gloss white topcoat. The canvas cover has been repaired by Roger Wilson and all that remains to be done is to get it back on board.

The stairs leading to the fore peak and the quarterdeck - both port and starboard sides have been taken to the workshop, sanded and oiled and replaced in turn.

Volunteers from the ANZ Bank (groups from approximately 6 to 20) have been on site on four occasions and painted the deckhouse, hatch coamings, bulwarks and scuppers as well as the ship sides in the 'tweendeck. One group removed the port side mizzen fife rail, cleaned and painted the plinth, replaced and oiled the fife rail, coiled the lines all in the few hours that they were on site. A great effort for people from an office environment.

The project to display the Memorial plaques of past volunteers is currently underway and will be completed early in the new year.

Works to be tackled next year include replacement of some of the margin boards by outside contractor with volunteers providing some of the labour.

The mizzen gaff, fore t'gallant, rat lines, many blocks of the running rigging as well as the painting of the lifeboat and of the hull are all in need of attention but sadly beyond the scope of the dwindling group that attend each Tuesday.

Don Knowles

Pump House Ponderings

Recent months have seen a continuation of usually monthly visits to the Pump House by Engineering Heritage members, Owen & Miles, plus myself. We have continued our conservation and maintenance efforts, including lubrication of the engines, plus some painting of the staircases leading down into the pit and the catwalk around the cylinders of the engines.

The Heritage Recognition ceremony at the Pump House on the morning of the 27th November was most encouraging. It was hosted by Engineers Australia and their special interest group, Engineering Heritage Victoria, plus the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation. Six interpretation panels in the Pump House were unveiled – they provide quite a lot of information about the history of the Dry Dock and the Pump House. They are all visible through the glass walls. A great deal of time was spent off-site researching the material for the panels. I trust you will find them of interest, when you see them.

It was most gratifying that some descendants of the Orr family and the Robison family could attend, in addition to Alan and Bill Brown, sons of Tom Brown, who was the Engineer at the Pump House in the 1950's and later the Manager of Duke's & Orr's Dry Dock until his retirement in 1969.

Thanks to fellow members for your continuing encouragement and interest.

Former Huddart Parker Offices

These offices are located at 464 Collins Street. The booking hall, on the ground floor, is relatively intact and well worth a visit in my opinion. It is currently occupied by a chain bookstore, The Book Grocer, but don't delay your visit, as the building is due for demolition by mid-year.

The ornate columns and ceiling are quite visible, despite some air conditioning ducting - you can still get a sense of the grandeur of the Booking Hall of this former shipping company.

Seaworks evening featuring Oswald Brett & Richard Linton

These two maritime artists were present at Seaworks on the 14th November. The audience heard Richard interview Oswald, who had travelled from his home in New York, before both guests took questions from the floor.

We learn that Oswald developed a passion for drawing sailing ships as a boy in suburban Sydney, visiting Sydney Harbour and its shipping whenever he could do so. His initial inspiration was a John Allcott painting of the "Endeavour" that was on display at his school. Oswald visited John at his Sydney studio and was fortunate that John became his unofficial mentor. Oswald wanted to go to sea on the "Joseph Conrad" in 1935, but his parents would not give their 14 y.o. son permission to do so!

When the “Queen Elizabeth” was fitting out as a troopship in Sydney, Oswald applied to be a seaman on this vessel - he was accepted and remained on board for 4 years, until the end of World War Two. We learnt of some of the operational aspects of life on board this Cunard ship in wartime.

For example, she did not visit Suez when there was a full moon, to reduce the risk of enemy air attack. Also, she was top-heavy because of the anti-aircraft weapons fitted to her upperdecks. Consequently, she did not carry full loads of American troops during the North Atlantic winters.

Oswald settled in New York post-discharge and initially worked as a commercial artist. He honed his maritime art skills at weekends, painting ships for magazines and ultimately switched to this type of art full time. He has painted various subjects, including the tugs of New York Harbour and HMS Pandora. Periodically, he has visited his home country.

Some of Richard Linton’s very detailed paintings are on display at Seaworks. At one time he was on the Polly Woodside’s Museum Committee, but ceased this role when he began volunteering on the “Golden Plover”. At one time, Richard met Alan Villiers when the latter was visiting Melbourne, partly because of a plan Alan had to build a replica of the “Endeavour”.

An interesting evening for anyone with an interest in ships and the sea.

“Sailing Into Melbourne”

This is a free exhibition at the Old Treasury Building, 20 Spring Street, Melbourne. It features “historic nautical stories highlighting the extraordinary past of Melbourne’s famous ports from the 1830’s until now”. Open Sunday to Friday, 10 – 4 pm, until at least the end of January: www.oldtreasurybuilding.org.au

Derek Moore

Seaworks Exhibition

There is an exhibition at Seaworks entitled “American Civil War Comes to Australia on 24th-26th January - the flyer can be downloaded at www.Seaworks.com.au.

Don’t forget the PWVA AGM on 7th February at 10am at the Polly workshop.