



Number 149

“the ship comes first”

June 2015

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

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Chairman’s Chat

On November 7th 1885 *Polly Woodside* was launched from Slip No.2 at Workman Clark and Co. Ltd. Belfast. This year sees *Polly Woodside* celebrating her 130th birthday.

Things are pretty quiet down at Polly at present. Only 6 Polly volunteers are getting down to the ship on the Tuesdays. Regular members are Peter Allen, Richard Barber, Don Knowles, John Maxwell, Roger Wilson, Simon and Ash his Carer, me, with Trevor Dove or Michelle from BMT.

We have submitted a ‘Volunteer Recruitment Letter’ to Hayley Jenkins – Nat Trust’s Manager for People and Culture. Here’s hoping!

You will recall at the AGM, it was proposed to send a letter to the Nat Trust and BMT re our concerns about current maintenance priorities for Polly, and future developments to enhance and increase public interest for the site. The letter from your Committee was sent to both parties, with the result that a meeting was held at Polly on 26th May. Resulting from this meeting, attended by Tuesday volunteers, Martin Green, Drew Grove and our Manager Steve Richardson (Nat Trust), also Melissa and Trevor from BMT:-

1. Nat Trust is getting a Government grant of \$20,000 towards rigging etc. They applied for \$120,000
2. 1800 hours work from Green Army – Recaulking deck.
3. Set up a work schedule to dress up Polly for her 130th birthday.
4. Crane will to be organised to lift the half pontoon over the dock gate into the dock, & reassemble.

5. Workshop to get a covered outdoor work area.
6. Review of ship's electrics, and hopefully get the ship rewired.
7. Using high pressure water to clean down outer hull and deck
8. Extra time on site to set up work & tools for the next working day.
9. Recruiting of volunteers – see previous paragraph.
- 10 Polly is to be scheduled for re-docking in 2017.
11. Mizzen gaff to be repaired and re-rigged.
12. Replacement tools are being purchased by Nat Trust.

It looks like there could be light at the end of the tunnel.

The deck-house roof has been repaired, and repainted.

Timber upper works are being cleaned and oiled.

We are all looking forward to seeing Polly in all her finery in November, with a promise there will be a party at her to celebrate.

Neil.

Ship Report – Don Knowles

The volunteers that attend the ship on Tuesdays have recently removed rotted margin boards on the port side of the deckhouse and the forward edge of the main hatch. More boards were planned to be removed but due to suitable replacement boards not being readily available a halt has been called on further removals until such timber can be sourced and a skilled shipwright contracted to carry out the work.

Treatment of pin-rails and fife-rails with linseed oil as well as the timber units such as skylight, steering box etc. on the quarter deck has also been undertaken. A large number of belaying pins have also been sanded and re-oiled by Simon and Ash.

A bolt of canvas was purchased by PWVA and this has enabled Roger Wilson to start sewing a new cover for the forward hatch/entry..

Personnel from the ANZ bank that are granted one day of Community Volunteer Leave per year have been coming to Polly and carrying out various tasks including painting and timber oiling. They have also helped in testing the bilge pumps and one of the female volunteers had a lesson in canvas sewing with Roger.

The canvas covering of the deckhouse has been repaired at the after end where it had started to rot and the whole cover repainted.

Volunteer at Polly Woodside

Are you interested in ship restoration? Of course you are – so read on.

An exciting opportunity exists to volunteer for Victoria's only unique maritime heritage sailing vessel which also is the only recipient of 'The World Ship Trust Maritime Heritage Award Medal in recognition of her restoration' in the Southern Hemisphere.

Come and share in the satisfaction of working with a friendly team of Polly Woodside fanatics while meeting people from varied backgrounds with a common interest. No experience necessary as there will always be a job for you.

The Polly Woodside Volunteers look after all on-going maintenance, as well as the continuing restoration of the ship.

Work on the Polly is mainly maintenance at present, ranging from painting, working on ship's boats, deck work, spars and rigging, canvas work (making new hatch-covers) so there are plenty of opportunities to learn many old skills which are rapidly disappearing.

Unfortunately work at present is confined to Tuesdays from 9am to 2pm, but we hope to increase this in the near future.

As Polly celebrates her 130th birthday in November this year, a special effort is being made to give her a bright facelift.

Come and join us and become part of the unique team of Polly Woodside Volunteers

Marion Sargood

Marion Sargood a long-time supporter of the PWVA and widow of Brian who was an active ship's volunteer sadly passed away last month. We extend our condolences to Marion's family and friends.

Heritage Week

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) ran two events for Heritage Week in May.

The Pump House Tour on Saturday 14th May.

Derek Moore organised the Pump House tour, with 30 to 40 people attending and ages ranging from 12 to us seniors. Included in the group were George and Jennifer Duke, members of the dry-dock owner's family.

The tour commenced in the Theatrette at Polly with the showing a film of the last ship *Lake Torrens* being dry-docked prior to its closure. It was really well done commencing with the ship entering the dock, then being centred in the dry-dock, the dock gates closing and the steam pumps commencing operation. As the water level was dropping, the men on the punts are seen scrubbing down the lower hull to remove the marine growth. The measuring sticks then being used to establish the length required of the stays to keep the ship upright while dry-docked, and the stays being placed in position. Then with the dock pumped dry, the dock gates were caulked to seal them.

At the end of the film Derek answered questions, and it was interesting that some of the answers came from the attendees.

The group then ventured to the Pump House where Derek described the layout and operation of the pumps in detail. He then described the amount of work he and the members of Engineering

Heritage had done, from the clearing and cleaning up of the area, and construction of the railings, as well as rectifying the water leaks from the dock and the river – very impressive.

Questions again and we finished after 4pm.

If it is on again next year try and go – it is well worth it.

Directions in Maritime Heritage - Melbourne 2015

Thursday 14th May 6pm – 9pm.

6:00pm Tour of ship.

6:30pm Nibbles / Refreshments in the Gallery.

7:00pm Talks Program commenced.

1. Dick Francis on the nearly completed *Wattle* – told of the restoration of the tug with details of replating her and as they only have a month extension on their site they hope to be able to have her ready to float her to her new berth. Below deck is nearly completed and deckhouse is restored and being refitted
2. The latest addition to Victorian Maritime Centre is the former Port Phillip Pilot Ship *MV Wyuna*, which was donated to the Western Port Oberon Association in 2013. *Wyuna* is said to be Australia's *Britannia*, having been built on the Clyde in 1953 to a classic 20th century design. Served 26 years with the Port Phillip Sea Pilots then operated as a training ship for the Australian Maritime College in Launceston until 2004. She was then sold for possible use for accommodation in the Pilbara, and later sold again for possible conversion to a luxury yacht. After neither venture succeeded, *Wyuna* was generously donated to the Western Port Oberon Association.
3. Peter Harris brought us up to date on *Alma Doepel* impressing us with the work going on, and how the funding for her restoration was being achieved. He then described the rebuilding of the hull, and deck house. Then went on to detail how they were laminating the masts and yards. Could be an idea for the Polly?
4. Michael Womack spoke for *S/V Enterprize* and gave a detailed description of the ship, her activities, maintenance, their volunteers and sailings. He also spoke about behind the scenes activities and her administration.
5. As a BMT representative could not be present, Martin Green of National Trust spoke briefly about Polly, then for a time on museums and work being done to improve attendances, throughout the National Trust properties.
6. Craig Bramich, a Seaworks Director, detailed events and progress of works at Williamstown.
7. Warwick Turner spoke on progress with the Melbourne Heritage Fleet, hopefully to bring *Alma Doepel* and *Enterprize* to be located in Docklands. As workshop areas are essential to be located next to their berths, which has not been considered, more discussions are critical.

The question time that followed after each speaker was enthusiastic, and at times dynamic.

9:00pm Tea and coffee.

9:45pm Closing time announced.

10:00pm Closed.

This night also was well patronised, and professionally presented.

The catering was excellent and good value for money.

How about coming next year??

Great Britain

It is estimated that in excess of a quarter of a million people living in Victoria are the progeny of the migrants who came to the colony as passengers on board the *Great Britain*. She was, in her day, a wondrous ship. Being of iron construction and screw driven, she was the first of her kind – a breakthrough in design and innovation. The accommodation provided for passengers were, by the standards of the time, nothing short of luxurious. The bold design was the brainchild of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who was the Chief Engineer for the Great Western Steamship Company. Launched from her womb, the Great Western Dock in Bristol on 19th July, 1843, this unique vessel must have looked a splendid sight. Her gleaming black hull had a broad white band painted around it with black squares like gunports. At her bow was a gilded figurehead which incorporated the royal coat of arms, whilst above her stern windows were more gilt decorations, including the coat of arms of the City of Bristol. From her six tall masts (named Monday to Saturday for convenience) flew the flags of the U.K., Russia, France, Belgium and the U.S.A. Signal flags and bunting decorated her stays. The launch took place in the presence of Albert, the Prince Consort, who had that day travelled down from London on Brunel's Great Western Railway. After a fitting out period of seventeen months, the mammoth ship which was one third longer of any 'line of battleship' in service, finally left the River Avon and began her trials, which included a trip to London where, after a visit from Queen Victoria, she was thrown open for public inspection.

Built primarily for the lucrative Liverpool – New York run, she departed on her maiden voyage on the 26th June, 1845 and did the crossing in excellent time. In spite of very bad weather, she arrived in New York fourteen days later. She was again visited by dignitaries and open for public inspection.

Great Britain remained on the America run for several years, in which time she underwent many modifications to her screw, funnel and masts, and during that period, ran aground on the coast of Ireland.

The discovery of gold in Victoria caused the owners to transfer her to the Australia run, and she arrived in Hobsons Bay for the first time on the 12th November, 1852. She had brought out a goodly load of cargo on the voyage, but it was the 180 passengers who disembarked in Melbourne that were to set up the pattern for many thousands to follow.

Passage aboard the auxiliary steam clipper ship *Great Britain* was much sought after during the gold fevered years, and because of the cabins and comfort she had to offer, the owners could, and did demand a higher fare than other shipping companies.

Great Britain was a hard worked ship. She did in all 32 round voyages to Australia and as it has been told, brought out many of our ancestors. She was a fast ship in her day and in 1872 made her fastest trip, 54 days Liverpool to Melbourne. But that was also one of her most tragic – one of the

great mysteries of the sea was the disappearance of her commander Captain John Gray: he had been in command for 18 years and was always popular with crew and passengers alike. Whether suicide or foul play we will never know.

The last voyage to Australia ended when the ship returned to Liverpool on 1st February, 1876. By now the old girl was becoming a bit worse for wear and indeed her machinery was so worn after 33 years of continuous use that the owners decided to remove her engine and she became a sailing ship. As a windjammer she was employed taking coal from Wales to Panama and San Francisco, and returning with wheat. On these long hauls, it was necessary to sail round the perilous Cape Horn on both the outward and homeward journey. It was on such a trip that she finally came to grief. For a sailing ship rounding the Horn from East to West is always more of a problem than in the opposite direction, owing to prevailing westerly winds. By the 18th of April, 1886 when the *Great Britain* had reached a point nearly off Cape Horn itself, she began to get into serious difficulties. In spite of the mountainous waves and leaking decks, she struggled and tacked against the wind in a vain effort to get around the Horn. On the 13th of May, with her cargo of coal having shifted, the master, Captain Stap, was forced to run the listing vessel before the gale heading for the Falkland islands. The exhausted crew and the strained storm damaged ship reached the shelter of Port Stanley on May 26th.

The great ship never sailed again. Offered for sale owing to the cost of repairs, she was bought by the Falkland Island Trading Company and used as a store ship for coal and wool for almost 50 years.

In April 1947 just over 104 years since her launch, the grand old lady was towed to nearby Sparrow Cove and scuttled.

We all know the story of her subsequent salvage and the long arduous tow on pontoons back to the City of her birth, Bristol.

And there she is today in the very dock in which she was built, being restored to her former glory.

