



# WAVILET



Number ...

“the ship comes first”

Apr 2008

The Newsletter of the Barque Polly Woodside Volunteers Association Inc.

## **THERE IS TO BE NO NEW MARITIME MUSEUM AT THE POLLY WOODSIDE SITE**

On March 25th, the PWVA committee and ship volunteers were given the staggering news by the National Trust C.E.O. that building of the new Melbourne Maritime Museum is not going to proceed.

The Trust has elected instead to use the three million dollars which had been allocated to the new museum to refurbish the Polly and to fit-out a re-erected Shed 2 as a visitor centre, retail outlet, workshop and “interpretative centre” dedicated to Polly. Two additional frames (“trusses”) are to be erected, but for reasons which have not been adequately explained are not to be roofed or clad.

On a positive note it is understood that substantial funds have been offered by Major Projects Victoria for refurbishment of the dry-dock which will enable vital work to be carried out on Polly.

It appears that the Trust has decided it cannot afford to have a refurbished ship and dry-dock and a new maritime museum and so after some 30-odd years there will no longer be a Melbourne Maritime Museum at the Polly site.

In our view, the museum building that was planned for the site was unnecessarily extravagant when an additional (and more affordable) cargo shed-style building would have been more in keeping with the site’s history. However, there is no evidence that this option was considered and our view was not sought.

Since the Polly and the museum site (not to mention Como, Rippon Lea etc.) are essentially assets of the people of Victoria, it is not unreasonable that the State Government should be providing both capital and ongoing funding to support a maritime museum on site. After all they subsidise every other museum in Melbourne. How vigorously was this and other funding options pursued?

It remains to be seen whether a refurbished ship and Shed 2 will be sufficient to attract the crowds when there was a golden opportunity to have in addition a new museum dedicated to the history of the river, docks, wharves and shipping of Port Melbourne.

Presumably most of the museum collection will remain in storage. The library, photo collection and lovingly restored Lloyd’s Registers are to be moved to Tasma.

It seems that the thousands of hours of work of dedicated museum and library volunteers were not considered when the decision was made nor was the PWVA consulted or advised until after the event. The experience and expertise of the volunteers who have been the backbone of the workforce at the museum and ship were disregarded when this far-reaching decision was made. What does this tell us about the attitude of the Trust management towards the volunteers?

Those members who attended the AGM in February will recall that there was a unanimous decision to write letters to the parliamentarians to complain about the lack of progress with the museum and dry-dock and this was to be included in the March edition of "Wave". The letter was not included since we were under the impression that the new museum and dry-dock programmes were on track. Now that the new museum is not to be built, members may wish to register their opinions by writing to the Board and C.E.O of the Trust and perhaps to their MP's, although this would have been far more effective if we had been given the opportunity before the decision was made not to proceed with the museum.

This decision will leave Melbourne as the only maritime city in the developed world without a maritime museum. Sooner or later the State Government will wake up to this and proceed with a development at Williamstown but who knows how long that will take.

Over the past 7 years or so the museum and library have been moved 4 times and 6 site managers have come and gone. Those of us who have been directly involved may be forgiven for wondering if this latest proposed incarnation will be any more permanent than the previous ones.

The Committee believes that the decision not to proceed with the new museum is short-sighted and will ultimately be to the detriment of the site as a whole. We are endeavouring to reverse this decision and we seek the support of the members to achieve this goal.

PWVA Committee

## **Attachment 1**

### **DRAFT LETTER TO THE C.E.O. AND BOARD OF THE NATIONAL TRUST AND M.P.'S**

“As Polly Woodside Volunteers Association member(s) I/we wish to voice our objection to the proposal by the National Trust not to proceed with a new maritime museum on the Polly Woodside site.

There has been a maritime museum on site since the 1970's and there is a substantial and valuable collection of historical maritime artefacts which will now have to remain in storage off-site. Furthermore, a 3,000 book library, comprehensive collection of Lloyd's Registers of Shipping and a collection of 40,000 ships photos are now to be relocated off-site and out of context.

As part of the development of the new Melbourne Conference Centre, the Melbourne Maritime Museum was required to close for a period of around two years on the understanding that a new museum would be built in time for the opening of the Conference Centre in early 2009.

Substantial funding has been budgeted by the Plenary Group for the construction of new museum but the National Trust has elected to use these funds on refurbishment of the Polly Woodside and a fit-out of a modestly sized cargo shed (shed 2) which is to house a small visitor centre, retail outlet, workshop and “interpretative” centre dedicated to the Polly Woodside.

Many thousands of hours of work by volunteers in building up the museum collection, library and photo collection were apparently disregarded when the decision was made not to proceed with the museum and the opinion of the volunteers group was not sought before the decision was made.

This decision has left Melbourne as the only maritime city in the developed world without a maritime museum.

We understand that in the fullness of time the maritime precinct at Williamstown is likely to be developed to include a maritime museum. However, the Yarra River and Docklands area has its own rich heritage of maritime activity dating back to the 1830's and a small museum dedicated to the history of this important area should be maintained on the Polly Woodside site.

As members of the Polly Woodside Volunteers Association we urge the National Trust to rethink its decision to not re-establish a museum on site and seek your support in reversing this decision.”

## Attachment 2



NATIONAL TRUST of Australia (Victoria)

### MEMORANDUM

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**To:** PWVA Members  
**From:** Tanya Williams  
**Date:** 10 April 2008  
**Subject:** **Redevelopment of the Polly Woodside & Dry Dock site**

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After detailed consideration, the National Trust has decided to forego plans to build a new structure to house the Maritime Museum near *Polly Woodside*.

The Board sees the organisations priority as the restoration and development of existing cultural heritage. As a result, Martin Purslow CEO has renegotiated the agreement with developers Plenary Group.

The outcome of these negotiations is as follows:

- Commitment of over \$3 million from Plenary to be allocated for the site development at the discretion of the Trust.
- Extensive additional works to the heritage buildings and landscape been amounting to in excess of a further \$2million
- Shed 2 will be refurbished and modernised to house a well equipped visitor centre that includes retail and reception area, interpretation gallery, staff office and workshop facility. Collection storage and Research service will now be located off-site
- *Polly Woodside* to undergo extensive restoration.

The interpretation of the site will now focus more specifically on the *Polly Woodside* and associated dock area. Facilities will be developed to provide an interactive experience supported by audio visual, static displays and dynamic public programs.

The site will be rebranded to reflect this new direction.

Additional works at the site include a proposed refurbishment of the Duke and Orr's dry dock to allow *Polly* to undergo maintenance insitu. The Trust has been working together with the State on this proposal and has secured a verbal commitment from Major Projects Victoria for in excess of \$10million to carry out these significant works. Final specification is yet to be agreed.

The dry dock pumphouse has also been preserved and will be housed in a new enclosure funded by the Plenary Group.

The overall outcome of the negotiations provides not only a realistic focus for the interpretation but importantly a level of funding and infrastructure necessary for the long term sustainability of the site and the *Polly Woodside*.

For further information on the redevelopment please contact Tanya Williams, Heritage Development Manager, on PH: 03 96569802.

# A TRIBUTE TO A WORLD CLASS SQUARE-RIGGED SAILOR AND CAPE HORNER, TOR LINDQVIST



In this age of air travel, Tor Lindqvist – sailing-ship seaman and sail-maker – was probably the last practical and practising seaman with the knowledge, physical strength and ability to rig a sailing ship. His monument, the barque POLLY WOODSIDE, lies in Melbourne’s old, wooden dry-dock, No seaman in Australia could have been more highly respected than was Tor. He has died, aged 86.

He sailed as an AB on his first big sailing ship, the PASSAT, from 1938 to 1940. His next and last such vessel was the LAWHILL which traded between Australia/NZ and Cape Town until 1946. In her he was one of two sail-makers, key men for the safety of the ship. Sewing his largest sail, of 3,500 square feet and weighing three quarters of a ton when complete, was but one of the multifarious jobs in which he excelled.

Born in Finland, he and the LAWHILL’s whole crew became “enemy aliens” in WW2 after Russia sided with the Allies. But the crew agreed to stay in that ship until war’s end, under the South African flag. She rounded Cape Horn four times in those years. LAWHILL had almost four times the capacity for cargo as the POLLY WOODSIDE.

POLLY was an abandoned coal hulk which was saved from the ship-breakers by a determined, inspired group of volunteers, led by Captain Gerry Heyen with Tor as Foreman Rigger. Tor it was who led the refurbishing team of professional merchant seamen and people from all walks of life. His chief wire splicer was a young woman, his offsider a seaman working in Bass Strait ketches. His helpers included doctors, an architect, printers, a seaman-writer and men and women from many backgrounds. He loved them all, and they him.

There is not one item of POLLY WOODSIDE that Tor could not name or know how to maintain it. When the 123-year old ship, the property of the National Trust, is again open to the public, people will once again appreciate the huge contribution that Tor has made to Melbourne’s historic maritime showpiece.

PWVA Committee



## EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The PWVA Committee invites all members to attend an **Extraordinary General Meeting** at the Mission to Seafarers at 717 Flinders Street, Melway Reference 2E J8 on **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May**. The meeting will commence at **11am**.

The purpose of the EGM is to enable members to air their views on the decision by the National Trust not to build the new Melbourne Maritime Museum as previously promised and to move the library and photo collection off-site to Tasma Terrace. The C.E.O. and site manager have been invited to the meeting to explain the changes.

Included with this notice is a “Wavelet” which outlines the proposed changes at the Polly Woodside site together with a memo from the Trust.

**Please take this opportunity to “have your say” at this critical time in the history of the PWVA.**

PWVA Committee

*Drinks will be available in the courtyard afterward.*

**Getting there** – *there is no parking at the Mission although there is paid parking nearby. Tram Nos. 48 & 70 travel down Flinders St. – alight at Stop D5.*