



Number 146

“the ship comes first”

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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 the moment, with only about 2 or 3 of us getting down to the ship on a Tuesday. Both Don Knowles and Richard Barber are away overseas at the moment (in the warm weather no doubt), so it has slowed things down a bit.

Sam Tait, our former Ship Committee Chair has left BMT for richer pastures, but she promises she will keep in touch. Many thanks for all the work she put in at Polly, including the Ship's Survey Report, and the Docking Procedure in 2009. Chairing the Ship Committee, being involved with the volunteers on site, and not hesitating to take concerns up to the National Trust.

Best wishes for the future, and we are looking forward to seeing her down at Polly again.

Trevor Dove, our maintenance Supervisor, thought it would be a good idea to test run the ship's pumps. An interesting experience. The first one refused to start, but with a bit of fiddling, and a few bangs on the valve with a timber persuader, it started. The water in the tray disappeared in an instant, and the rest of the pumps were more cooperative, only occasionally requiring a little gentle persuasion.

We are checking out the electrical circuits in the ship at present and are going to submit a report in to the National Trust.

Just a gentle reminder, out of our 80 members – half way through the year - we have 30 financial members, 35 unfinancial members, along with our 14 honorary 'Life Members'. Although, thanks to John Wroe, our finances haven't been better, we could be coming up with some major restoration outlays in the near future.

LONG TIME VOLUNTEER GEORGE HOGBEN passed away on the 28TH APRIL age 92

Of all our Members, it was George who spent countless hours polishing brass with the necessary equipment – mainly brasso and rags. A most dependable volunteer. He was not a noisy person, but was always there, rubbing away at a workbench while the more physical of us were engaged in other multifarious tasks.

Before and during WW2 George worked in the South American meat industry. He was manager of the corned beef department and many of us must have eaten – and enjoyed – parts of his production for Fray Bentos in Uruguay. The meat-works were in a town of that name.

George spoke Spanish fluently and enjoyed translating the occasional Spanish sentence. He outlived his wife Beulah by several years, and remained in his own home.

I count him as a fine friend.

Capt. Ralph McDonell, OAM

Eulogy read at RSL funeral service

We are assembled here today to pay our last tribute to number P/259925 CAPTAIN GEORGE CECIL HOGBEN, known as GEORGE to his friends who served with us in war and has now gone to join the great “ARMY” of those who fell in battle defending our nation. GEORGE came through the ordeal of war. How well he served will be known to his mates, some of whom may be gathered here today. How he then served his fellow man on his return is known by the members of the RSL, his family and friends, who mourn with me the passing of our loyal friend.

War had a very large influence on George’s very being and subsequent life. George was born at home, at Las Palmas in Argentina, only four years after the end of the Great War on 4 Feb 1922. His birth was registered with the British Consulate in Buenos Aires, giving him British Nationality. He was the second child to George Measday Hogben and Aileen May Josephine Fallon, who were destined to meet, solely due to George’s grandmother’s great concern for her own daughter’s safety at a Ladies College in London, because of the German Zeppelin air raids in 1915. So she sent her to stay with relatives in the Argentine to be safe. Without this move, I would not be standing here today. In Oct 1916 George and Aileen married and had a daughter, Aileen Helen Hogben on 17 Aug 1917, as the war continued to rage far away in Europe. Sadly she was killed at the age of 11, and her loss had a significant impact on George and the way he later looked after his daughters.

Then in 1933, at the age of 11, George was sent to St George’s Boarding School in Buenos Aires, as his family had moved to Uruguay four years earlier for work. You could say that, the next five years gave GEORGE a solid grounding in a regimented life. George started work at 16 in 1938 and had his first experience with the Second World War in early September the following year, when a family visit to Montevideo gave him the unique opportunity to observe the German pocket battleship, “**Graf Spee**” after its disastrous encounter with three British warships, made famous by the epic movie “**The Battle of the River Plate**”, which starred Australian actor, Peter Finch as Captain Hans Lansdorf. On the way home, they heard the vivid broadcast of the battleship blowing up, whilst sat having dinner in a roadhouse owned by German colonialists. With Nazi Germany pushing aside all opposition in Europe, pressure was mounting from German communities living in

South America, with “Hitler Youth” in brown uniforms and jack boots visiting from Europe **to spy**, whilst purporting to be “walking around the world” to raise funds for the cause.

With a growing German threat within South America, on 15 August 1941, aged just 19. George boarded the “Andulucia Star” as a British volunteer, along with 80 others, for the perilous journey to Liverpool. Ironically German volunteers from the South American communities were doing exactly the same, but sailing to Germany. On the ship he was trained and manned an anti-aircraft machine gun during the voyage. Reaching England safely, he enlisted at the Euston Road Recruiting Office on **3 Oct 1941**, joined the Royal Armoured Corps and was sent to the 61st Training Regiment at Tidworth with 14 other South American volunteers.

Seven months after he enlisted, despite his low level of education, he was sent to Sandhurst for officer training, graduating 6 months later on 22 Jan 43, as a 2nd Lieutenant and posted back to the Royal Armoured Corps. He wrote in his life story “Life in the Army was quite good, once one learned the Rules”. At this time George was give permission to wear the letters B.L.A.V. as a shoulder flash on his uniform. It stood for British Latin American Volunteer. One day, whilst waiting for a bus, he was approached by an older man wearing the uniform of the “Auxiliary Fire Service”, who pointed to George’s BLAV flash and said “I was one of those in WW1, but we wore the letters in a diamond shape placed on our left breast pocket”.

Incredibly, it was then discovered that this man not only came from a small village close to where George had been born, but that he had also played cricket against George’s own father. The vagaries of war!

After tank training, he sailed to Mombasa where he joined the 3rd East African Armoured Car Regiment, which was part of an occupying force of captured territories previously held by the Vichy French. He underwent 3 months further training on French colonized Madagascar, before continuing duties in Mombasa. He then saw service in Nairobi in Kenya and Somalia. In Nov 1944 he was sent as part of a reinforcement force to Columbo in Ceylon, where he joined the 1st East African Reconnaissance Regiment, which was held in the Bengal province of Central India in preparation for the invasion of Southern Burma, Thailand and Malaya.

During this time, GEORGE remembers seeing a routine order banning the use of *hand grenades* “for fishing” *in the local river. Before the invasion could commence, the war ended suddenly on 14 August 45. In George’s life story, he recalled hearing “some big bomb had been dropped on Japan and the war was over”*. However GEORGE continued to served in India until Apr 1946, due to the growing independence movement and the high probability of fighting riots. Then his unit left Bombay to return to Kenya and after some days when he boarded another ship bound for England, where he served another 4 months before boarding a ship to Uruguay on 22 March 1947. After 5 years and 5 months service, he was discharged with the rank of Captain on 20 Jun 1947.

GEORGE didn’t return to the Vestey’s meatworks at Frey bentos in Uruguay, but instead took up a post at the meatworks at the docks in Buenos Aires. This allowed him to attended frequent parties and dances held for Returned Volunteers. At one of these events he was approached by a young woman, who said “you are George Hogben and you owe me some money”. She was the sister of a friend from George’s form at St George’s College and her name was Pamela Robinson. With both having been British Latin American volunteers and with frequent parties to attend, this line became the start of a relationship that lasted for over 60 years, with them marrying on 14 July 1950.

Which, as an eternal optimist, demonstrates to all gathered here today, that at rare times, some good things can come out of the horrors of war.

For her dedicated wartime service, George was awarded the decorations on display here today, which includes the 1939-45 War Medal and the Defence Medal.

Pump House Ponderings

Conservation efforts continue in the Pump House, with two members from Engineering Heritage Victoria, Owen Peake and Miles Pierce, plus myself periodically having access.

Tasks such as cleaning, lubrication of the engines and very recently some repainting of the checkerplate and walkway around the engines' Low Pressure cylinders, has been accomplished.

A new, more powerful electric pump has been installed in the West sump. This pump worked well when we were present on Tuesday 24th June, when significant water ingress occurred because of the very high River level, when flooding affected the Southbank precinct.

An alarm system for the electric sump pumps, with battery backup, is being finalised. This will alert the Department of Business and Innovation officer of future power / pump failures, who can then organise remedial action. This development is encouraging.

Thank you to PWVA members for your continuing interest and support.

Derek Moore

Bicentennial of the death of Matthew Flinders

Being involved in a nautical /historical organisation you are probably aware that this year marks the bicentennial of the death of Matthew Flinders.

To recognise this important event the Royal Society of Victoria is hosting The Royal Society Matthew Flinders Memorial Lecture, to be delivered by Flinders expert Dr Gillian Dooley here at the RSV Hall at 8 La Trobe Street , Melbourne 3000 at 7pm on Thursday 28th August.

Please contact the Royal Society if you wish to attend.

Thank you

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