



**Number 154**

**“the ship comes first”**

**Sept 2016**

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

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**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.

## **BREAKING NEWS**

On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September Our Manager, Ben Pocok, emailed the Tuesday volunteers, asking them to come to ‘Polly’ for a special announcement, and to show volunteer strength.

By 9:30 am we had the Minister for Planning Richard Wynne, National Trust’s Board Chairwoman Kristin Stegley, our new C.E.O. Simon Ambrose, with Paul Roser, who were also accompanied by a number of other Trust’s representatives. To add to the mystery, a Channel 9 media party arrived and we all went on board ship where I was asked to give a brief narrative about ‘Polly Woodside’ and the volunteers.

The Minister for Planning Richard Wynne, then announced that ‘Polly Woodside’ was to be given a Grant of \$500,000 for necessary works to be done on the ship. Votes of thanks were given by the Trust’s Chairwoman, and the C.E.O.

After an interview was given to the media party, the volunteers were videoed working on the rigging in the hold’s work area.

This was shown on the Channel 9 Saturday night 6pm news on 24<sup>th</sup> September.

Great news and good publicity for us.



**RICHARD WYNNE, MINISTER FOR PLANNING; NEIL; SIMON AMBROSE CEO; PAUL ROSER**



**RICHARD WYNNE; SIMON AMBROSE, KRISTIN STEGLEY; NEIL; PAUL ROSER**

## **Chairman's Chat**

Our new Manager Ben Pocock has set a precedent in sending out an email to the Tuesday volunteers, which is gratefully acknowledged, and I have concluded with some of my own fill-in notes:-

“Hello Volunteer Team,

It's been a pleasure working with you all more and more lately and I am impressed by the amount of conservation work you are achieving on the Ship.

Because I typically only see you on Tuesdays, I have built up a few notices to capture at once in this email.

- This coming **Tuesday (16 August)** the new National Trust CEO will be visiting Polly Woodside. It will be only his second day on the job, so while he's still green we've booked him to see what we're all up to at Polly. Around **11.00am** we'll all stop for a cuppa so that he can meet you. All welcome, even if only to stop in for a social visit.

If you'd like to know more about Simon Ambrose, here's a bio:

<http://www.domain.com.au/news/new-national-trust-of-victoria-ceo-simon-ambrose-details-his-vision-20160706-gpzoyg/>

- We have welcomed a few more volunteers into the team so keep an eye out for these new capable hands on Tuesdays: Ash Green, Damien Betts, Wayne Betts and D'Arcy Wells. Also Todd Gardener who joined couple of months ago.
- Yesterday I was warmly welcomed into the Polly Woodside Volunteers Association General Meeting and gave an update of how we are running at the moment. It was a pleasure to finally meet the 'off-site' volunteers from the Association and to discuss opportunities going forward.
- Sam Tait has continued to pop in every month or so and is working with me to sort out our formal maintenance schedule. I'll share this with you once we have it running smoothly.
- Mast rigging overhaul works continue under Ferdi's guidance. Happy birthday for last week Ferdi – we look forward to having you back on deck one year older!
- If there are small tools and supplies that are holding up work progress, please make Ferdi aware. We will happily go and purchase these lower-cost items to enable work while we have this great momentum.
- Recently Shara and Justin got stuck into tidying up the kitchen and adjacent storage areas to create cleaner, safer spaces for us. Please maintain these areas by keeping things in their homes and removing rubbish straight away. I've appreciated walking into a cleaner kitchen bench during the last couple of months and thank everybody for keeping it that way.
- I am working with Wal Stuart who many of you met last Tuesday, to revise our safety procedures and work out what safety equipment we need to install on-site, particularly for the Man-overboard scenario. Wal and I are working towards a



“champagne outcome on a lemonade budget” so watch out for changes in this space soon.

- I am going to review the volunteering procedures we have at Polly Woodside, to see how we can increase capacity by extending the number of days we have volunteers on site. There are a few implications around this so please bear with me as I work through getting it right.
- Thank you to those who took care of splicing the rope for the Gaol last week. It has been installed on the Gallows to the delight of some of our guides, and I have attached some pics of it in situ.”

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Thanks Ben, you have saved me quite a lot of writing – so here some notes to bring everyone right up to date.

Meeting our new CEO last month was very promising. He filled in how he hopes to get things moving, listened to our suggestions, and came up with ideas for Polly. Wow!

Many thanks Ben for inviting Simon Ambrose down so early into his induction to the National Trust. (Pictures 3 and 4).

With our new volunteers, Roger Wilson is delighted in having two seamen amongst them, Wayne and Damien Bette, who are uncle and nephew. Wayne is one of the old school of seamen, while Damien is currently employed, working on oil rig tenders. Both are soaking up the details that Roger is telling them. So he now has two seamen working with him on the ratlines.

Ash Green, D’Arcy Wells and Todd Gardener are fitting in very well – keen and nothing is too much trouble.

As all who attended the General Meeting know, Ben gave a great presentation – even filling in for Ferdie, who unfortunately was a late apology.

The big plus for us is Ben looking into getting our Thursdays back as this will double our working time on Polly.

You will recall the two tool displays of Arthur Woodley’s that were leaning against the workshop walls? Well, they are mounted on the walls now! One between the kitchen and toilet (Picture 1), with the other opposite the kitchen above the new home for the lockers (Picture 2).

Sound the trumpets, and beat the drums – Betty Cromb is celebrating her 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday, on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September. ‘*Many happy returns of **your** day*’ from all the Polly Woodside Volunteers Association members with our warmest regards and congratulations.



**SIMON AND FERDIE**

### **Betty Cromb's 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration**

Betty Cromb celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday at Pelicans Landing in Williamstown on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September in the Function Room on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, overlooking Gem Pier and the 'Castlemaine'.

Betty an 'Honorary Life Member' of the PWVA and having been a member since 1979, was our Head Gardener. From the early days of 'Polly', until our industrial dark ages, Betty's pride and joy were our gardens, and it was mainly thanks to her that we had grounds to be proud of. Holiday time was also special for her when she and Madge her sister, would board one of the many at that time, cargo passenger-ships (usually taking 12 passengers) which called at Melbourne, and be on a cruise for as long as a month away, returning invigorated and ready for the next one.

There were 90 people attending the festivities with quite a few maritime people present, as well as a number of PWVAers, including Betty and her sister Madge, Margaret Connor, Cathy and Derek Moore, Di and Lindsay Rex, Glen Stuart, Ken Shewan, and Anne and me.

The 'Polly Woodside' proudly sailed the icing on the cake.

Happy Birthday Betty.

Neil Thomas.

## **NEWS FROM THE PUMP HOUSE**

Owen and Miles, from Engineering Heritage Victoria and I are continuing to go to the Pump House every month or two.

Recent actions have included the attempted sealing (using bitumen paint), of the flap valves, inside the large water discharge pipes from the main pumps. We are trying to stop/minimise backflow of water from the river during very high tides and heavy rains.

New anodes have been placed in each of the two sumps, to reduce corrosion on the exterior of the large cast iron inlet pipes that fed water from the drydock into the centrifugal pumps .

Painting continues, including the large discharge pipes and pump casings, plus the engine columns - a gradual process!

Thanks to PWVA members for their interest and encouragement,

Kind regards,

Derek Moore

## **A History of Lifeboats.**

This article appeared in 'Wave' in September 1984 – written by Jack Davey.

Lifeboats have a long history. In 1812, a Bostonian named Joseph Francis built an unsinkable boat using cork-filled buoyancy chambers. Seven years later, he won a prize from the Massachusetts Mechanics Institute for a rowboat incorporating these features. Francis moved to New York to seek backers and buyers for his unsinkable boats and, in 1828, he received contracts to build them for the frigate 'SANTEE' and the ship of the line 'ALABAMA'.

In 1837, Francis staged an unforgettable demonstration of his latest model lifeboat before a maritime audience in New York. In addition to the cork flotation compartments bow and stern, this stoutly built wooden boat had copper air chambers along the sides under the thwarts. It was also equipped with looped lifelines attached to the sides so that people could onto them if there was not enough room in the boat. (These looped lifelines are known to modern seaman as grablines.)

To prove its prowess the boat was launched upside down – it instantly righted itself. Later, a line was fixed to the boat and it was hauled aloft to the yardarm of the brig 'MADISON'. It was then dropped end on into the water, sinking up to 2 feet (610 mm) before again righting itself.

Further demonstrations in Philadelphia made Francis' future secure and orders for his revolutionary craft began to pour in from all over Europe as well as the United States. In 1840, all U.S. men-o'-war were required to carry Francis' lifeboats. Tales of daring rescues

in them accumulated. In one instance, a lifeboat was sent in heavy weather from the New York packet RHONE to save the crew of the British barque 'BOLINDA'. The sea was so rough that the lifeboat had a hole smashed in its bottom as it was being lowered into the water – yet it was rowed more than a mile (1.6 Km) to fulfil its lifesaving mission.

Francis continued to experiment. He concluded that he could build a lifeboat from iron sheets and, after 4 years, he had perfected a process for doing so. This was in 1845 and, over the next few years, these lifeboats were subjected to many tests. Word soon spread on their durability and by 1848 both American and British were carrying them. Formal government recognition of the worth of this invention came when the Congress passed the Steamboat Law of 1852, requiring every passenger vessel to carry at least one of these lifeboats. Joseph Francis, 1801 – 1893, shipbuilder, is quoted as the father of the U.S. Lifesaving Service.

(The types of boats carried certainly varied on many ships. The book 'China Tea Clippers', has 3 pages on boats, lifeboats, etc., together with a full page layout of drawings of the following: lifeboat, gig, quarter boat, jolly boat, launch and long boat. (The latter, of naval origin, was one of the largest boats, carvel built, between 30 and 40 feet long (9 to 12 m) and mainly used for transporting stores and for other heavy work.) All of these might on occasion be used for saving life.

A deck plan of the famous tea-clipper 'CUTTY SARK', built in 1869 shows she carried 4 boats – 2 lifeboats, 1 jolly boat and, on the deckhouse for'ard, the captain's gig. As another example, the steel four-masted barque ROSS SHIRE, built in 1891, carried 2 lifeboats aft and a cutter and gig for'ard (see deck plan in 'Last of the Windjammers' by Basil Lubbock).

Many accounts of shipwrecks over the years specifically mention the use of 'lifeboats' in saving life:

- 1853 – 'EARL OF CHARLEMONT' built Canada 1849, 839 tons. An undamaged lifeboat used to ferry survivors ashore.
- 1857 – ss 'CHAMPION' sunk by the sail and steam vessel 'LADYBIRD'. 'LADYBIRD' swung out her lifeboats and rescued 10 survivors. 'LADYBIRD' built 1851 Scotland, 420 tons.
- 1859 – 'ADMELLA'. Striking a reef, the ADMELLA' broke into 3 sections. The funnel crashed down on one of the lifeboats and a seaman drowned trying to retrieve a lifeboat floating nearby overturned. 'ADMELLA', 500 tons, was built in Glasgow in 1857.
- 1859 – 'Ship 'SAPPHIRE', 749 tons, Liverpool owners. The lifeboat and pinnacle got clear of this wreck.
- 1872 – 'QUEEN OF THE EAST', 1275 tons. Struck Middleton Reef. Lifeboat with seven men and longboat with fifteen men reached the mainland.
- 1875 – 'GOTHENBURG', 3-masted steamer, built 1854, 501 tons. 14 men clinging to the rigging of the wreck later succeeded in getting a lifeboat away.
- 1876 – 'GELTWOOD', iron barque, 1056 tons, built Harrington, England, 1876. Lost on maiden voyage, no survivors. Wreckage scattered ashore included two smashed lifeboats and one whaleboat.
- 1876 – Barque 'ALBERT WILLIAM' stood by the vessel 'DANDENONG', lifeboats were crushed in rescue attempts.

- 1877 – ‘QUEEN OF THE SOUTH’, built England 1864, 376 tons. Damaged in heavy weather off Tasmania. The Master decided to cut away the mainmast which, as it fell, smashed the lifeboat, gig, and standard compass.
- 1880 – ‘ERIC THE RED’, Built Maine, USA, 1871. A swamped lifeboat with three survivors was picked by the ss ‘DAWN’. The ‘DAWN’ launched her own lifeboats, picking up more survivors.
- 1889 – ‘MALLSGATE’, iron barque, built 1877. Wrecked on Middleton Reef, the lifeboat and pinnace reached Australia with survivors.
- 1900 – ‘BRETAGNE’, French 3-master, 1567 tons. Abandoned at sea with severe storm damage. The Captain ordered the crew to provision the lifeboats. ‘BRETAGNE’s crew lowered the lifeboats and made their way to the British 3-master ‘MAXWELL’, which was standing by.
- 1911 – ‘THELA’, 4-masted barque of Hamburg, aground on Staten Island. Huge seas tore away the lifeboats.
- 1912 – ‘CRICCIETH CASTLE’, British 3-masted sailing ship. After rounding cape Horn she developed a serious leak and it was decided to abandon ship. The ‘CRICCIETH CASTLE’ possessed 3 boats, including a 26ft.(8m) lifeboat.

Finally, there is the well known story of the ship ‘LOCH ARD’ (1693 tons, built 1873) which was wrecked near Port Campbell, Victoria on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1878. Evidence given by ‘LOCH ARD’ survivor Tom Pearce at the subsequent inquiry in Melbourne included these words: ‘When the ship struck I heard the Captain give orders to have the boats cleared away and the port lifeboat made ready for the ladies, but I do not think the passengers could have got into them. Myself and five others were trying to release a lifeboat. I cut the after gripe and kicked out the chock while Smith cut the for’ard gripe. Just then a sea came aboard and washed us all away.’

‘LOCH ARD’ is history now. Pearce was fortunate – clinging to an upturned lifeboat he was washed ashore in what is now Loch Ard Gorge. He and a passenger, Eva Carmichael, were the only survivors of some 35 crew and 17 passengers. No line drawings of ‘LOCH ARD’ show her rigging and deck layout, with her lifeboats clearly defined, both aft, as was the case on many sailing ships.

The overall story which I have outlined above shows the important role that lifeboats have played in the past in the saving of lives at sea.