



# WAVE



Number 190

**“the ship comes first”**

September 2025

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



**Polly Woodside April 6.2017**

Photo: Neil Thomas

## **Contents:-**

Page 2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting.

Pages 4 and 5 Bosun's Ship Report

Pages 7 and 8 The 'Titanic's Sister Ship, The 'Britannic

Page 3 Chairman's Report for 2024.1

Page 6 Site Manager's Report.

**PWVA Committee:**

**Chairman & Wave Editor:** Neil Thomas, [thomclan1@dodo.com.au](mailto:thomclan1@dodo.com.au), 9802 4608, 0402 037 800.

**Vice Chairman:** Mark Thomas,

**Hon. Secretary:** Michael Porter, 0409 596 342

**Hon. Treasurer:** Don Knowles, [donkey@optusnet.com.au](mailto:donkey@optusnet.com.au), 9877 1854

**Committee Members:** Roger Wilson, 9376 6429, Jeff Melancon, 0477 067 767, Wayne Bette

**DISCLAIMER:** Statements, opinions & comments made by contributors to this journal are not necessarily those of the PWVA Committee and/or its members.

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE POLLY WOODSIDE VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION**  
**HELD AT 'BOAT-BUILDER'S YARD' ON SATURDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025.**

**Present:** Neil Thomas, Anne Thomas, Mark Thomas, Don Knowles, Derek Moor, Mike Ridley, Wayne Bette, Dennis Robertson.

**Meeting opened:** 10:40am.

**Apologies:** Eve Park, Richard Barber, Jeff Melcancon (Bosun), Campbell McCullough, Michael Porter, Roger Wilson, Peter Frost, George Corcoran, Eric Pool.

**Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting:** were discussed and accepted on the motion of Derek Moor, seconded by Mike Ridley – Carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Attached. Presented by Don Knowles, Treasurer.

Income during 2024: - \$260.82. Expenditure: \$397.24.

Higher expenditure due to postage and meeting expenses.

Balance at 31/12/2024: \$8,040.47

Moved Don Knowles and seconded Wayne Bette that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Carried.

**Election of Committee:** All positions being declared vacant – the following election took place: -

**President:** Neil Thomas, moved Dennis Robertson, Seconded Wayne Bette. Carried

**Vice President:** Mark Thomas, explained details of future plans for working on the ship, and was elected on the motion of Wayne Bette, seconded Derek Moor Carried unanimously.

**Secretary:** Michael Porter, moved Neil Thomas, seconded Derek Moor. Carried

**Treasurer:** Don Knowles, Neil Thomas moved, seconded Derek Moor. Carried.

**Ordinary Committee Members:** Jeff Melcancon as Bosun. Roger Wilson, and Wayne Bette  
Mike Ridley moved, seconded Neil Thomas. Carried.

**Presidents Report:** read to the meeting and attached for your perusal.

**Bosun's Report:** read to the meeting and attached for your perusal.

**Site Manager's Report:** was read to meeting and attached for your perusal.

**General Business:** - **Closure of PWVA** was discussed and dismissed'

The following points were discussed and agreed upon: -

1. To increase membership of the PWVA and recreate benefits for the members.
2. A meeting is to be held with the Trust incorporating a proper agenda to discuss the ship and her future. Out of this meeting a new 'Ship's Committee', should be formed with long- and short-term goals on which actual long- and short-term plans can be made.
3. This committee needs to be formed, with a Project Manager and permanent (part time) maintenance person would be of great benefit for the ship – as has been in the past.
4. To investigate organised working parties – not under National Trust supervision.
5. Mark to organise groups through R.S.L., and Legacy, for work parties.

**Polly Woodside badly requires another restoration i.e. skilled workers and lots of money.**

**Meeting closed:** 12:20pm.

## **Chairman's Report for 2024:-, Achieved 510 Hrs worked on Polly Woodside in 2024**

**Derek Moor has been acknowledged by the Nat Trust for 25 years volunteering.**

### **Congratulations Derek**

Our Tuesday Gang of volunteers consists of Nat Trust new recruits Colin, Drew, and Lauren-Jane (at Uni) but they are not our members yet. Jeff is back when ashore and me. Campbell, from Bendigo, hopes to be back with us after his trip in Europe, and Mike Ridley is coming down whenever he can. Roger Wilson is coming when able. We miss Mark but he has stated that he cannot work with NTAV.

### **The Deckhouse: -**

Deckhouse starboard cabin door has been renewed and painted, after being kicked in by vandals. The galleys' fittings have gone rotten caused by the roof leaking and will have to be renewed. The deckhouse main cabin is the only part open to the school groups, and we await the opportunity to commence all the work that must be done through the whole deckhouse. Fittings for the port and starboard cabins, galley, and crew's quarters do need tender loving care, and the mystery deepens as three of the cabin door lintels, that Campbell restore, have disappeared and will require remaking.

### **The Ship: -**

Decks & scuppers have been cleaned, & the rubbish cleared from under fo'c'sle head, but she still requires painting inside and out.

With the poop awning replaced with its new patch the water entry into the officers' quarters seems to be fixed (we hope), and after a week or so of rain, the aft accommodation remained dry.

We have started overhauling the poop deck fittings, and then they are to be cleaned and re-oiled.

Jeff is preparing a replacement base for the starboard side poop steps, as the deck planks are showing signs of 'worse for wear', and the forrard gangway landing steps deck base. Another job!

Fo'c'sle had water leaking into the paint lockers, and down into the lower fo'c'sle. Consequently, the fo'c'sle deck's caulking was tamped down, and new bitumen installed. Pump in lower fo'c'sle has been reconnected, and the space bucketed out. Now dry?

The ship has black mould in the deck house, and the poop deck's 2<sup>nd</sup> mate's cabin (locked up due to security reasons), and also the fo'c'sle paint lockers. Professional cleaners are required to prepare the ship, after the deck leaks are resealed, so we can then paint her.

Unfortunately, she doesn't look any better, with the officers' quarters now looking tatty, as well as the lights broken chimneys etc. that require attention! We have been assured that they have been ordered!

With the boat falls blocks overhauled we are making ready to move the first boat to be overhauled.

### **The Site: -**

The dock side workshop bench has been cleared in preparation for the ongoing ships' blocks to be repaired, repainted, and some renewed. Is our production line in operation? Henry Ford beware!

National Trust's maintenance gang (Myron, Craig and Tim) were coming down to work on the site, but now we only have Craig coming down every second Tuesday to give us a hand.

The site has been cleaned and tidied, with lots of miscellaneous rubbish cleared, so it doesn't look too bad.

We were being used for zooming practice by a Mudlark, which had a nest on the port side of the fore-course yard. Now seagulls are nesting behind the power box on shore and the pin rail on board.

The National Trust have told us they are broke and haven't any money to spend on Polly, it could appear there will be no celebrations in 2030 for her 175<sup>th</sup> birthday or in 2055 for her 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

---

**As we are unable to hold our meetings at Polly Woodside BBY will be our new venue**

## Bosun's Ship Report

Polly Woodside 2025

G'day Crew,

Over the last year we have seen many ups and downs onboard Polly. We continue to fight the battle against the ship's deterioration as best we can with a small crew and a shoestring budget. The ship is still in a declining state with no major renovation/restoration projects happening at the moment. The ship could do with- a thorough hull inspection/dry docking (then repairs as necessary and a fresh lick of paint). The deck has numerous spots with will need repair. Patch work will get us a long way but I believe we (the Trust) need to start thinking of a long term plan for the future (really for the whole ship!). The rigging is still as it has been since professional work halted (2019? I think). On deck- housings, fittings, gear, pin rails, get some attention but not enough, partially due to weather or school groups onboard on Tuesdays (our only day for maintenance 9am to 3pm). The forward deck house roof is staying dry with the canvas tarp but again we need to come up with a long-term solution. The ship's boats are exposed and in a rough state but a plan and action is hopefully just around the bend. The mooring lines are looking tired and although they are sure to have a decent bit of life left in them, we again should look at a succession plan for replacing them. The fair leads for the mooring lines all require attention as well as showing corrosion where they are in contact with the lines, we have applied chafing gear for a temporary fix. Canvas has a finite life and ours is not far from its end, we need to look at a plan to replace the boat canvas covers as well as the hatch covers, particularly the forward and after covers where crew and visitors enter/exit below decks. Speaking of below decks, not much has changed in the last few years, the ships watertight integrity looks good, and the bilges are mostly dry. The forward bilge at the pump usually has some water as does midships near the mainmast and up in the bow, forward of the collision bulkhead, I believe this is all from rainwater ingress. I will note the continued spots of rust on the inside of the hull, below the waterline back aft of the mizzen mast continue to show an increase of the white crystallised corrosion. I wonder what the plate thickness is in those areas... Anyway, enough gloom and doom, let's talk about some successes.

The maintenance crew from the National Trust are continuing to come to Polly every other Tuesday even though with the Trusts new CEO and a bit of shake ups and a reduction in hours, we still get some assistance from Myron, Craig and Tim. Craig usually comes most often and has taken a keen interest in the ship and has also taken the responsibility of getting us supplies for bigger projects like the ships boat movement.

Additionally it's that time again to change out our anodes. This year the Trust has purchased the anodes but decided to not pay for installation and instead go with the Trust maintenance team and our volunteers. This will be the maintenance teams first go, it's not rocket science but that stern one can be a little tricky as our volunteers already know.

We've also had an increase in volunteers. Colin and Drew show up most Tuesdays and turn their hands to any and all projects. One of the biggest projects we have on the go now is the ship's blocks. Colin has stepped up to repair and rebuild many of the damaged and destroyed blocks of the ship's rig while the rest of us paint and reassemble and hopefully one day when the rig is ready to go back up, she can be completely dressed and fitted with her gear. The ship's boats are our next big project. The plan is to get the "double ender "which is on the starboard side and hanging on the falls a few inches above the water, over to the port side dock so she can get a complete overhaul. We have a plan for the move and some gear (strops and rope) have been ordered. Hopefully she will be on the dock by December. The success of this project will have several knock-on projects. Refurbishment of the boat deck, boat cradles and davits. Additionally,

once the “double ender” is complete, we’ll repeat the procedure for the captain’s gig on port side and finish off with new canvas coverings.

We have a potential increase in effort on the horizon. A prior volunteer (insert name here) who lives in Queensland has offered to come visit Polly and do an assessment and then make a proposal to the Trust. He’s stated that he comes to Melbourne a couple of times a year for a few weeks each time and can organise labor and materials for work on the ship from top to bottom at minimal to no cost. He currently operates a tall ship in Queensland. Watch this space.

I must also mention that we’ve recently been joined by several new volunteers who came for an orientation a few weeks ago and I believe several have shown a keen interest in staying onboard, let’s hope this is an increasing trend!

I’d also like to say thanks to the folks who keep this going, our site manager, Kathleen and her several 2ICs and the facilitators. I’d like to thank Neil, who has stuck with Polly through thick and thin (I recon you deserve a medal for your efforts), you truly are the glue that holds this association together (in my humble opinion). I’d like to thank all current and past volunteers; everyone has given a little piece of their heart and soul and sweat and blood into our lovely ship. I’d also like to thank a few special crews who for several different reasons are unable to come down Polly and their presence is definitely missed-Don, Mark and my favourite old sailor Roger, I hope to see them onboard again. I’m sure there are many others to mention but I’m sure you all think this “report “ has gone on long enough...

In closing, I’d like to end with a few thoughts for discussion:

1- I hope this isn’t the end for the PWVA, I think we need to discuss a plan to invigorate membership and potential benefits of membership. I don’t know the solution but think it’s worth keeping alive. If I’m alone in this thought it’s ok, I recon then we end it with proper Irish wake... hopefully this isn’t the case.

2- I think the ship needs some proper planning and organisation. We and the Trust should have a meeting with a proper agenda to discuss the ship and her future. Out of this meeting I believe a new “ships committee “ should be created with long and short term goals on which actual long and short term plans can be made.

3- I believe Polly is in need of a complete 2nd restoration, maybe 75% vs 100%, but still a lot of work, manpower, skills, proper planning and oversight and of course, money. This is where a proper committee, project manager and permanent (part time) maintenance person would be of great benefit for the ship.

There are two plaques onboard the ship which I always look at when I see them, words passed down from sailors over the years which I feel breathe a little honest life into the ship. The first is in the forward deck house and says “growl you may, but go you must”, this is from an old sea shanty and simply means you can complain if you want but you will turn too and do your job-sailor! The next line of that shanty states “if you growl to loud, your head he’ll bust” ... don’t worry, those days are long gone. The second plaque is on the forward face of the boat deck, just aft of the main mast and states “the ship comes first”. Years ago this had a couple of meanings, ship owners wanted their investment and cargo to be number 1, the crew were second. The crew wanted to have a ship in good shape as this was their home and protector from the dangers at sea. I think we can all see how fitting a phrase it is for our ship and how important it is to keep this little piece of history alive!

Respectfully  
Jeff  
Bosun

## Polly Woodside 24/25 Report

### National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Polly Woodside overall had a operationally successful year, with profit seen on most months (from an operational perspective only), albeit minimal, profit is encouraging.

We can thank our exceptional education programs for this, as we saw an increase of around 15% in education numbers from 2024 to 2025 which amazing.

An increase in usage of the site for filming and special events has also contributed.

Here is a list of achievements for the financial year, contributed by staff and volunteers.

Note I have not included volunteer completed maintenance as have assumed that is being reported by Jeff.

- Hosted the Cast Announcement for Tarzan the Musical
- Filming for social media content and parking spaces provided for a production
- Excess broken lighting in the tween deck capped and made safe and hanging GPO in the workshop fixed
- Ongoing maintenance and servicing of the following – Pest Control, Fire safety, First Aid Kits, Air Conditioning and Air Filtration System, Water Filter, Sanitary Waste Collection and Air Fresheners, Test & Tag, Backflow Testing and Sliding Doors.
- Attended the Boat Show as part of the MMV stand
- Said goodbye to one staff member but welcomed 2 more
- Welcomed 3 new volunteers – Colin, Laura and Drew
- Welcomed people back to Polly over the Summer School Holidays – we had school holiday program providers bring groups in on excursions, which was a lot of fun for all involved and has resulted in more bookings for this coming spring holidays.
- Education programs had to be adjusted to suit new curriculum changes, which included training for staff
- Sold plans to a ship modeler – who then went on to build an incredibly model of Polly Woodside
- A new comprehensive POS system was implemented organization wide, including Polly, that combines retail, ticketing and memberships and provides us with better data management too.
- Hosted a Glee Club singing sea shanty's for an Open Day which turned out to be our most successful open day to date.
- Better Impact was implemented and launched, new lanyards provided for staff and volunteers for onsite recognition

Kathleen Toohey

Site Manager

## The Titanic's Sister Ship, the Britannic, Sank in 1916.

### For the First Time, Divers Have Recovered Artifacts from Its Wreck



**The luxury liner was requisitioned as a hospital ship during World War I. Thirty people died after the vessel struck a German naval mine and sank off the coast of Greece**

Deep-sea divers retrieve artifacts from the wreckage of the *Britannic*, which rests nearly 400 feet below sea level. Greek Ministry of Culture

In the early 20th century, the British White Star Line set out to make the largest and most luxurious ocean liners the world had ever seen. Between 1909 and 1914, the shipping line built a trio of upscale vessels: the *Olympic*, the *Titanic* and the *Britannic*.

Within a decade of the *Olympic*'s maiden voyage in June 1911, two of the three sister vessels had met tragic ends: the *Titanic*, which famously sank after striking an iceberg in April 1912, and the lesser-known *Britannic*, which sank in November 1916 after hitting a naval mine in the Aegean Sea during World War I.

#### **Did you know? The long, strange journey of the *Titanic*'s dead**

Rescuers recovered the remains of only 337 of the roughly 1,500 men, women and children who died in the *Titanic* disaster. Some of the bodies were buried at sea, while others were brought back to land.

This week, Greece's Ministry of Culture announced that deep-sea divers have recovered artifacts from the wreck of the *Britannic* for the very first time. The finds include the ship's bell, a pair of binoculars and a navigation lamp.

In May, an 11-member team embarked on a weeklong expedition to the wreck site, which rests at a depth of nearly 400 feet, the Associated Press reports. The highly skilled group of divers used

closed-circuit rebreather equipment to safely survey the ship. “Conditions at the wreck site were particularly challenging due to currents, depth and low visibility,” the ministry says in a statement, per a translation by Agence France-Presse.

The *Britannic* was one of three luxury passenger liners built by the White Star Line in the early 20th century, along with the *Titanic* and the *Olympic*. Greek Ministry of Culture

British historian Simon Mills, who purchased the wreck in 1996, organized the recovery operation. Artifacts raised from the depths include both practical objects and luxury items, like silver-plated trays used in first class, ceramic tiles from a Turkish bath, and a porcelain sink from the ship’s second-class cabins.

The items are currently undergoing conservation in Athens. Afterward, they will be prominently displayed at the National Museum of Underwater Antiquities, which is slated to open in Greece’s largest port city, Piraeus, in 2026.

Unlike the *Titanic* and the *Olympic*, the *Britannic* was never actually deployed as a luxury cruise liner. Instead, the vessel was requisitioned in 1915, operating as the largest hospital ship in the world for almost a year. As Mills explains in an interview with Bloomsbury:

By the time the *Britannic*’s keel was being laid, the *Titanic* was still several months from completion, and the *Olympic* had been in commercial service for almost six months, but the building and operational experience gained by observing the earlier vessels meant that even at this early stage, there would have been countless improvements incorporated into the *Britannic*’s designs.

These safety measures weren’t enough to save the ship from the disaster. While traveling toward the Greek island of Lemnos, the *Britannic* hit a German naval mine and sank off the island of Kea on November 21, 1916. Of the 1,066 people on board, 30 lost their lives.

“*Britannic* was the largest vessel to sink during the Great War, [but] there was no catastrophic loss of life, unlike with the *Lusitania*, and no deliberate targeting of a hospital ship was evident,” notes the Western Front Association on its website. “As a result, the story of the *Britannic* is now largely forgotten.”

The *Titanic*’s sinking has long held immense cultural fascination. Last year, coal from the shipwreck sold for £1,500, while the controversial floating board from James Cameron’s 1997 film *Titanic* fetched \$718,750 at auction.

The *Olympic*, the White Star Line’s lead ship, sailed for 24 years before its retirement in 1935. It served as a troopship during World War I, then returned to passenger service after the war.