



MEDIA RELEASE

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Marion joins a mecca of maritime birthday milestones

Built in 1897, the Marion has moved along the Darling and Murray Rivers for many years commencing her life as a 'hawking vessel' or floating department store with renowned retailers Wm Bowring & Co in Wentworth.

The Marion will celebrate her 120th Birthday with two milestone cruises this year taking 28 passengers back to her origins in Wentworth in October. She has taken on many guises during her river career transforming from a hawking vessel, to a cargo vessel with a few passengers and finally as a full passenger vessel.

Chairman of the Mannum Dock Museum Rob Bowring OAM reflects on his association over the past 20 years with the grand old lady of the river and his family's association with this heritage listed iconic vessel.

"My Great Grandfather William Bowring purchased the Marion as a barge in 1900 after his hawking vessel, the 'PS Emily Jane' burnt to the waterline. The insurance money established one of the most recognized trading vessels on the Darling".

"The Marion was one of the first vessels to run passenger cruises and in 1934, Murray Shipping Company launched the first of many Summer cruises out of Morgan and in 1940 the rear deck cargo deck was converted to a dining room".

"The Marion's first trip up the Darling was in October 1900 and with the cruise departing in October this year, what better places to celebrate the Marion's milestone celebrations where her life began in Wentworth and took on new horizons in Morgan with passenger travel in the 1930's.

This 13 day and 12 night trip from Mannum to Wentworth departing on October 24th will capture some of the most breathtaking scenery along the riverscape across two States including the amazing Big Bend Cliffs at Swan Reach, Chowilla Station

travelling through Locks 1 to 10, stopovers along the way and riverside campfires.

The Marion will join her sister ship, the "PS Ruby" for her 110th Birthday in Wentworth on the weekend of the 4th and 5th November and will then depart on the 9th November to return to Morgan for the PS Canally's 110th Birthday and the Marion official celebrations at the Morgan Living Weekend on the 18th and 19th November. No doubt, when a maritime river milestone is on, it is certain a flotilla of boats will join this mecca of maritime birthday celebrations.

The Marion came to Mannum in 1963 ending her cruising life. She became a static Museum in the Randell Dry Dock as a memorial to the river trade for over 30 years. In 1994, she was recommissioned after a 4 year restoration and is now supported by over 100 volunteers.

Mannum has a rich history of world firsts and as the birthplace of the first paddle steamer on the Murray in 1953, the golden years of steam travel lives on through the PS Marion said Mayor Dave Burgess, Mid Murray Council.

"The PS Marion is one of our region's icons and provides a living history opportunity for visitors to experience and understand the early ingenuity that connected our river highway across the Murray Darling Basin".

"We are extremely fortunate to have a living icon in our Council backyard showcasing maritime history and I commend the many volunteers who have dedicated many hours over the past 25 years to keep her alive".

The PS Marion is one of the last operational, original, heritage, steam driven, wood fired overnight passenger carrying sidewheel paddle steamers in the world and cruises 12 times a year with a dedicated volunteer crew.

These milestone cruises include accommodation, all meals, off boat excursions and bus transfers and can be booked through the Mannum Dock Museum on 85692733, museum@psmarion.com and for further information visit www.psmarion.com.

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For further information contact Deb Alexander, Executive Officer Mannum Dock Museum on 0414857738.