

REPORT BACK ON PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE PRESERVATION OF THE WRECK OF THE SAS PIETERMARITZBURG

Venue

The meeting was held at the Simon's Town Museum on the 30th July 2012 under the auspices of the Simon's Town Historical Society and the Simon's Town Civic Association.

Attendance

35 people attended the meeting. A list of those attending together with a list of online supporters is attached. Email addresses of all signatories (where supplied) may be viewed if required. Attendees included members of the recreational diving community, SA Navy and general public.

Purpose

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Simon's Town Historical Society who explained that the meeting had been called to discuss reports regarding the alleged salvaging of metal from the wreck of the SAS Pietermaritzburg and the possible steps that could be taken to prevent any further stripping of the ship.

Background

The ship has a special place in history as it saw duty as a convoy escort in the North Atlantic, was the leading ship in the D-Day invasion of Europe and was also one of three Allied ships to first enter Singapore harbour at the end of the Pacific war. After the war she served proudly under the flag of the South African Navy. The Ship was laid to rest with naval honours at a ceremony held at Millers Point on 12th November 1994. She forms an artificial reef off Miller's Point and by all accounts has attracted a variety of sea life and is now a favourite diving spot for recreational divers.

As a result of this history many people are in favour of the wreck being protected.

Protection

The Chairman then introduced Mr Jonathan Sharfman, Manager of the Marine Archaeology Unit of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) who explained that under normal circumstances a wreck must have been under water for at least 60 years before it could be declared a national Heritage Site but that considering the history of the ship and with sufficient motivation from the public it was highly likely that an application for a provisional protection order would be favourably received by SAHRA.

A general discussion then took place with input from the various interested parties after which the following resolution was proposed by Sir Rupert Bromley:

It is agreed that urgent action should be taken to protect the wreck of the SAS Pietermaritzburg from any further removal of items or material of any kind, such protection to be provided by the authority of SAHRA or any other such Authority legally empowered to take such action.

This resolution was unanimously approved by the meeting.

Conclusion

Mr Sharfman undertook to consult with the SA Navy, SAN Parks and Marine Coastal Management as a priority to seek a form of immediate protection whilst the chairman of the Historical Society undertook to complete the necessary application forms for submission to SAHRA to obtain a provisional Heritage protection order. As the ship has broken up due to storm action it was proposed that an application be submitted for the protection of the wreck site including the wreck itself.

Mr Sharfman advised that he would brief the SAPS on the matter and that any suspect activity at the wreck site could be reported to them or directly to himself.

The chairman thanked all for their attendance and offers of photographic and other assistance.

The meeting was closed at 18h15.

Eric Mawhinney

Chairman

Simon's Town Historical Society.