



Official Use
File Ref:
Site Ref:
Grade 1:
Committee Date:

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Cape Town, 8001
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National Heritage Site Nomination Form

This form precedes the submission of the 'Nomination Document' and is designed to assist with the grading of heritage resources in terms Section 3(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, as part of the process of declaration as a National Heritage Site (Section 27). Nominated heritage resources that are of special national significance will be graded as Grade 1 and considered for National Heritage Site status.

Proposed National Heritage Site: WRECK OF S.A.S. PIETERMARITZBURG

Brief Statement of Significance: *(A full statement of significance is required as an attachment)*

HER original name was that of Hannibal's priot; she was adopted by Vivien Leigh of 'Gone with the wind' fame and she led the Allied armaia to the beaches of Normandy on D-Day in June 1944 - under a captain whose name was Nelson.

She was also one of the first Allied ships into Singapore after the Japanese surrender in August 1945. Sold to South Africa after world war II, she was used among other things for training midshipmen, and finally as a dormitory ship.

This, in essence, is the colourful story of the Algerine class fleet minesweeper that started a 50-year career as HMS pelorus and finished it as SAS Pietermaritzburg.

'PMB', as she was fondly known, gave yeoman service in war and peace.

Appropriately, her first post-war captain was one of the best-known 'characters' of the SA Naval Forces, Lt-Cdr (later Captain) Jack Netterberg, SM, DSC.

At the end of her long and distinguished career, concerted efforts were made to save the ship, as a floating museum, but these had to be abandoned in the face of prohibitive costs of restoration.

PMB was ceremoniously sunk in False Bay in November playing a new role - this time on the sea-bed, as a sheltered breeding place for marine life.

Contact Details: 021 7864404 EMAIL MIAWS@CYBERSMART.CO.ZA

Name of Property:

Street Number and Street:

Suburb:

Town: District:

Cadastral Information

Erf/ Farm Number:

Registration Division:

Longitude: E 018° 28.465' (L.S.) E 018° 28.452' (G.W.)

Latitude: S 34° 13.303' (L.S.) S 34° 13.300' (G.W.)

Map Reference: Recording Method:

THE SITE SHOULD ENCOMPASS AN AREA OF CIRCLE 300 METERS IN DIAMETER CENTRED ON LAT AND LONG.

Type of Resource

- Place
- Structure
- Archaeological Site
- Palaeontological Site
- Geological Feature
- Grave

Do moveable objects relating to the site form part of the Nomination?

Serial nomination (Is more than one site being nominated as part of a 'Joint Nomination')

(For serial nominations, complete one form for each site, supply additional details about the information relating to the relation of the sites, and the management and phasing of proposed nomination be attached).

Sphere of Significance	High	Med	Low
International	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provincial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist group or community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What other similar sites may be compared to the site? How does the site compare to these sites?

(Please expand on separate sheet)

N/A

Owner:

N/A

(If state-owned, responsible department and official position of contact)

Postal Address:

Telephone: Fax: Cell:

E-Mail: Web Page:

Contact Person: *(If different from above. Please supply contact details)*

- * Expanded statement of significance; *(Refer specifically to significance criteria listed below)*
- * Motivation for declaration as a National Heritage Site, including potential heritage value, threats and vulnerabilities;
- * Short history of the place;
- * Physical description of the heritage resource;
- * Locality plan (map) and Site Plan;
- * Photographs and plans;
- ** List of moveable objects relating to site that are proposed as part of nomination, or for archaeological or palaeontological site ;list of repositories where these are housed;
- ** Bibliography of documentation relating to the heritage resource;
- ** Statement of current protections and restrictions (e.g. previous national monument; register of immoveable property; conservation area; current zoning; servitudes);
- ** List any heritage organizations consulted and their comments on the proposed nomination.
- *** Site plan (with proposed site boundaries);
- *** Conservation or management plans (send immediately if any exist);
- *** Heritage Agreement (if required).

(Please supply those marked () with this nomination form, as well as any others that are already available. Those marked (**) will be requested when the proposal first goes to SAHRA Council for endorsement (Tentative List of National Heritage Sites). Those marked (***) will be required when the Nomination goes to the following Council Meeting for approval as a National Heritage Site). All information submitted to SAHRA will remain with SAHRA.*

Type of Significance

Indicate with a tick	Comment where appropriate. Indicate sphere of significance: i.e. National, Provincial, Local and degree of significance: i.e. High, Medium or Low.
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1. Historical Value

a. It is important in the community, or pattern of history

- i. Importance in the evolution of cultural landscapes and settlement patterns
- ii. Importance in exhibiting density, richness or diversity of cultural features illustrating the human occupation and evolution of the nation, Province, region or locality.
- iii. Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases that have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, Province, region or community.
- iv. Importance as an example for technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement in a particular period

SEE APP. A

b. It has strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in history

- i. Importance for close associations with individuals, groups or organisations whose life, works or activities have been significant within the history of the nation, Province, region or community.

SEE APP. A

c. It has significance relating to the history of slavery

- i. Importance for a direct link to the history of slavery in South Africa.

2. Aesthetic Value

a. It is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

- i. Importance to a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.
- ii. Importance for its creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.
- iii. Importance for its contribution to the aesthetic values of the setting demonstrated by a landmark quality or having impact on important vistas or otherwise contributing to the identified aesthetic qualities of the cultural environs or the natural landscape within which it is located.
- iv. In the case of an historic precinct, importance for the aesthetic character created by the individual components which collectively form a significant streetscape, townscape or cultural environment.

3. Scientific Value

a. It has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of natural or cultural heritage

- i. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or

benchmark site.

- ii. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the origin of the universe or of the development of the earth.
- iii. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the origin of life; the development of plant or animal species, or the biological or cultural development of hominid or human species.
- iv. Importance for its potential to yield information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of the nation, Province, region or locality.

b. It is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

- i. Importance for its technical innovation or achievement.

4. Social Value

a. It has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

- i. Importance as a place highly valued by a community or cultural group for reasons of social, cultural, religious, spiritual, symbolic, aesthetic or educational associations.
- ii. Importance in contributing to a community's sense of place.

Degrees of Significance

5. Rarity:

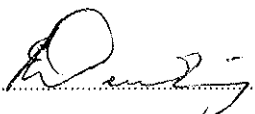
a. It possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of natural or cultural heritage

- i. Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon structures, landscapes or phenomena.
- ii. Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced in, or in danger of being lost from, or of exceptional interest to the nation, Province, region or locality.

6. Representivity:

a. It is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of natural or cultural places or objects

- i. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a range of landscapes or environments, the attributes of which identify it as being characteristic of its class.
- ii. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of human activities (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique) in the environment of the nation, Province, region or locality.

Signature: 

Date: 20-08-2012

SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

APPENDIX A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WRECK OF THE SAS PIETERMARITZBURG

**INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM
NAVAL DIGEST
JOURNAL OF THE NAVAL HERITAGE SOCIETY
No 6 JUNE 2002**

INTRODUCTION

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She was also one of the first Allied ships into Singapore after the Japanese surrender in August 1945. Sold to South Africa after World War II, she was used among other things for training midshipmen, and finally as a dormitory ship.

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'PMB', as she was fondly known, gave yeoman service in war and peace. Appropriately, her first post-war captain was one of the best-known 'characters' of the SA Naval Forces, Lt-Cdr (later Captain) Jack Netterberg, SM, DSC.

At the end of her long and distinguished career, concerted efforts were made to save the ship, as a floating museum, but these had to be abandoned in the face of prohibitive costs of restoration.

PMB was ceremoniously sunk in False Bay in November 1994, to start playing a new role - this time on the sea-bed, as a sheltered breeding place for marine life.

This 6th issue of *Naval Digest* is aimed at honouring and commemorating a ship that became part of naval history - and at saluting the officers and men who served in her, in both the Royal Navy and the South African Navy.

To start with, let us look at the fleet minesweeper's career in the RN, as HMS *Pelorus* ...

The Editor

Chapter 1

HMS PELORUS

- first Allied warship at Normandy on D-Day

HMS *Pelorus* was one of 18 Algerine Class fleet minesweepers built in World War II by the family firm of shipbuilders Lobnitz and Company Limited, at their yard at Renfrew, Scotland, on the River Clyde.

The firm took enormous pride in all the ships they built, and the new class of minesweeper allocated to them was to be no exception.

The launching of a new vessel was always a special occasion for the whole workforce - particularly for the women employees, several of whom were granted the signal honour of christening a ship at the launching ceremony.

The Algerines were the largest and best-equipped minesweepers to be built for the Royal Navy in World War II. In all, 98 were built for service with the RN. Some of these were originally intended for service with the United States Navy or the Royal Canadian Navy, but during construction these were reallocated to the RN.

Ships of this class were more than mere minesweepers. They were also designed and equipped to act as escort vessels and were fitted out with the same armament and sensor equipment as the better-known corvettes.

The Algerines were also at this time the largest warships to be built by Lobnitz, and they became affectionately known as the 'Lobnitz Monsters'.

The particular, and unique, characteristic of a Lobnitz Algerine - and one that was immediately recognisable - was the 'colander' type steel plated hullwork screen fitted on both sides of the minesweeping deck, against which the heavy steel 'kites' and 'otters' were secured.

The reason for the holes - which no Algerine other than the Lobnitz-built were fitted - is not known. Perhaps it was to save steel or lessen the weight, or to allow the sea to run through in heavy weather.

Pelorus was Lobnitz's Job Number 1053. Her keel was laid on October 8, 1942; she was launched on June 18, 1943 and was completed four months later.

With a full-load displacement of 1250 tons, *Pelorus* had an endurance of 6000 miles at 12 knots. Her wartime complement was up to 116 officers and men and her home port was Chatham.

Her armament included a single 4-inch QF gun forward, four single 20mm Oerlikons and four depth-charge throwers, two DC rails and 92 depth-charges.

She carried minesweeping gear for the clearance not only of moored mines (standard Oropesa floats with Kite/Otters), but also magnetic mines (LL electric cable) and acoustic mines (Sound Acoustic Hammer/Fessenden Oscillator).

Although some early Algerine Class ships were equipped with turbines, *Pelorus* and *Rosamund* (later to become HMSAS *Blaeuwfontein*) were fitted with reciprocating engines and two Admiralty three-drum boilers.

In *Pelorus* the engines were silent-running, completely enclosed, pressure-lubricated steam reciprocators which ran for months with the minimum of attention.

A maximum speed of 16.5 knots was achieved and Algerines had sufficient power to sweep for mines in all weather. They had twin screws and rudders for manoeuvrability while sweeping in restricted waters, and were very handy ships.

Pelorus was the fifth ship of this name to be in service with the Royal Navy, the first having been an 18-gun Brig Sloop built in Hampshire and completed in 1808.

Battle honours carried by the name *Pelorus* were: Martinique 1809; Guadalupe 1810; New Zealand 1860-61; South Africa 1899-1900; Normandy 1944 and Atlantic 1945.

The name *Pelorus* in nautical terminology is given to a circular ring on the rim of a compass bowl and carrying two sighting vanes, used for the taking of bearings of celestial objects.

The word comes from the name of Hannibal's pilot, probably a Greek who sided with the Carthaginians and assisted Hannibal to get his troops across to Europe.

Named after a famous dolphin 'pilot' in NZ

HMS *Pelorus* was said to have been named after New Zealand's extraordinary 'channel pilot' in the late 19th century - a dolphin that came to be known around the world as *Pelorus Jack*.

Pelorus Jack escorted every ship that sailed through the French Pass, a narrow passage off the Cook Strait, separating d'Urville Island from the mainland of New Zealand's South Island.

The dolphin's name came from *Pelorus Sound*, of which French Pass forms the westernmost part, offering a short-cut from the waters of the Sound into Tasman Bay.

Pelorus Jack, a 4.5-metre blueish-white fish, distinctly different from the

normal black dolphin, used to meet every ship in these waters. After somersaulting joyfully around the ship, he would then swim a metre or two ahead of it through the narrow, winding passages of French Pass, leaving the vessel only when open water was reached.

The 'sea-pilot' theme was strongly reflected in the badge of the fifth HMS *Pelorus*. This was officially described as 'a pilot fish, red on a field, bendy wavy, white and blue.'

The badge depicted the small creature known as the Pilot Fish, which is known to act as a pilot for sharks seeking food. This badge was approved by the Admiralty on March 13, 1945 - some 18 months after the fifth HMS *Pelorus* was commissioned and brought into service.

The first officer appointed to command HMS *Pelorus* when she came into service in October 1943 was Lt-Commander MLM Taylor, RNVR. He was relieved on December 6, 1943, by Commander George Nelson, DSC, RN, and *Pelorus* then became Senior Officer ship of a new flotilla being formed - the 7th Minesweeping Flotilla, Royal Navy.

A thick black band was painted round the top of the funnel - signifying flotilla leader - and the pennant number, J 291, was painted out.

Having completed a minesweeping workout at the M/S base HMS *Lachimar*, at Granton near Edinburgh, *Pelorus* and her sister ship HMS *Pickle* did a period of rigorous working up as newly-commissioned escort vessels at Tobermory, Isle of Mull, on the west coast of Scotland.

The A/S base was under the command of Commodore Sir Gilbert Stephenson, widely known as 'Monkey' Stephenson, the Terror of Tobermory. Under his eagle eye, every possible aspect of anti-submarine work was tested to the full and every known - and at times unknown - evolution was demanded.

On April 29, 1944, the 7th Minesweeping Flotilla led by HMS *Pelorus* was ordered to anchor off Ryde on the Isle of Wight, and for the next two weeks the ships were prepared for the biggest minesweeping operation yet undertaken.

Pelorus's lead role in 'Overlord'

It was obvious to all on board the sweepers that something was about to happen. The whole area off Spithead and the Isle of Wight was beginning to fill up with every conceivable type of craft, most of them landing craft but also cruisers, destroyers and escort vessels in plenty.

By this time, plans were coming to a head for Operation 'Overlord' - the

Allied invasion of German-occupied France - and for its naval component, code-named 'Neptune'.

As mines posed the greatest threat to the huge armada being assembled for the D-Day invasion, it was planned to establish 10 swept channels from England to France, covering an area from Bristol Channel to Felixstowe on the east coast.

For this task, 29 minesweeping flotillas were assembled, with HMS *Pelorus* selected to be the lead ship of all those that made for the French coast on D-Day.

The plan was for the invasion force, on the day before D-Day, to move to the rendezvous point code-named Area Z - very soon to be nicknamed 'Piccadilly Circus' by the Navy. This was a circular zone eight miles in diameter and 25 miles south of Portsmouth.

From here on the ships would follow one of the 10 swept channels in a southerly direction.

As flotilla leader of the 7th MSF, HMS *Pelorus* was the most-forward ship to sweep a clear path for the invasion armada to the beachhead code-named 'Juno.' As such she became, in effect, the point of a huge arrow that took shape in the English Channel.

For *Pelorus* and the ships of 7th MSF - *Pickle*, *Pincher*, *Plucky*, *Fancy*, *Lennox*, *Recruit* and *Rifleman* - there had been a great deal of preparatory work. On May 3 the flotilla had weighed and left its anchorage to sweep ahead of an assorted collection of landing craft to take part in an invasion exercise - code-named Fabius III.

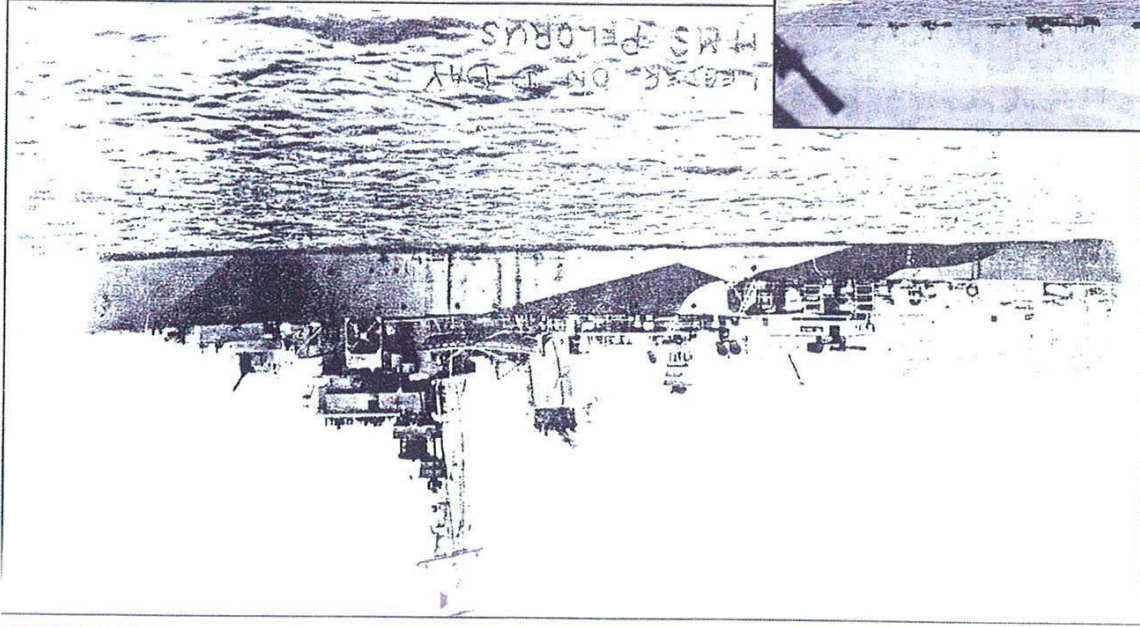
This was a rehearsal landing exercise for Naval Force J, destined for Juno Beach, and for the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, and was held at Bracklesham Bay.

Soon after midnight on May 4 the flotilla went to action stations and the convoy was attacked by German E-boats, which hit and sank two motor launches and damaged an escorting destroyer. The flotilla escaped damage and, their job of sweeping over; they returned to Portsmouth.

For *Pelorus*, being the SO ship, the next few weeks were hectic. Commander Nelson's task was to ensure that all ships of the flotilla were aware of what they had to do.

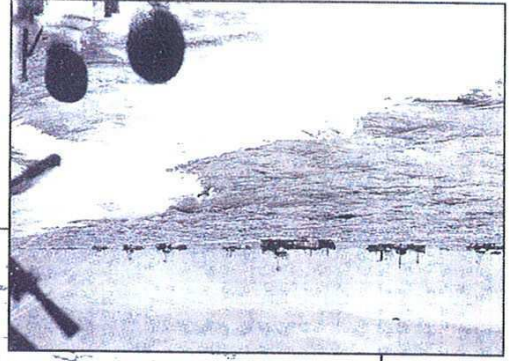
This meant more practice sweeping, particularly at night, and there was little rest for the crews. A difficulty the minesweepers would be facing was the necessity to change over the sweeps - from starboard to port - because of the change in the tide, occurring about 0300.

In the pitch-dark, and without any lights, this change-over was to be carried out by all the ships turning and reversing course - a difficult enough task at any time.



HMS *Pelorus* in her 'war-paint', and with her funnel topped with a thick black band signifying that she is a flotilla leader, prepares for her key role on D-Day.

A small part of the Allied invasion fleet of more than 4000 vessels that *Pelorus* led across the English Channel to the beaches of Normandy on D-Day - June 6, 1944.



A NELSON LED THEM

As the Allied invasion fleet steamed out from Britain on the eve of D-Day, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay flashed to the senior officer of the minesweeper flotilla who was leading the long lane of minesweepers:

"Good luck, drive on."

The minesweeper's signal lamp twinkled, says Reuter's correspondent, Desmond Tighe, and back came the reply:

"Aye, aye, sir, with Nelson in the van."

And it was Nelson, Commander George Nelson, R.N., minesweeper flotilla leader on H.M.S. *Pelorus*, who was leading the invasion.

Straits Gale

Throughout the morning the wind freshened, and at mid-day a north-easterly gale, with gusts of 60 m.p.h., was lashing the Straits of Dover.

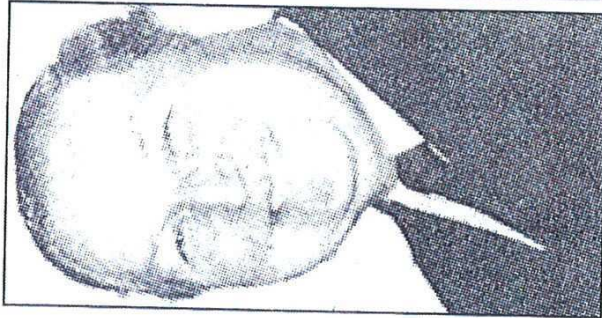
And Heavy Rain

There is heavy rain in Normandy to-day, and visibility is down to zero, said a radio reporter speaking from the beach-head.

LONDON
EVENING STANDARD*
19.6.44.

This was how the London *Evening Standard* reported on *Pelorus*' part in the D-Day landings. Great play was made by newspapers of the fact that the invasion fleet was led by an officer named Nelson - Cdr George Nelson, DSC, RN.

The late Commander Bryan Powell of Cape Town, who as a young officer in an RN destroyer saw HMS *Pelorus* arriving first off the Normandy beaches on D-Day, he later served in the ship, when she became HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg*.



But the confines of a narrow channel, and ensuring that no part of the channel was to be left unswept, made this task one requiring exceptional skill and seamanship on the part of all the ships, particularly the leader - *Pelorus*. When not out sweeping at night, the ships were often subjected to attacks by enemy aircraft. But no ships were reported as being hit.

By May 25 the printed orders for Operation 'Neptune' had been received, and for Commander Nelson in *Pelorus* this meant more work and responsibility.

The 7th MSF was given the task of clearing Channel Number 8 through the German minefield that stretched through the English Channel toward Juno beach and nine other flotillas of fleet sweepers were each given a channel to sweep toward their allotted beaches, also in the British sector.

D-Day

For *Pelorus* and the 7th MSF the drawn-out wait for the big day was a strain, made worse by the postponing of D-Day by 24 hours, to June 6, because of the bad weather.

Finally, the order to 'Go' was given by General Eisenhower and immediately the 10 M/S flotillas left their respective ports to begin the sweep to France.

Petty Officer Cook Colin McCoig, who was serving in *Pelorus* at the time, later wrote this account of the activities of June 5, 1944:

"On the afternoon of June 5 we were lying at anchor not far from our starting point off Spithead. The Captain cleared lower deck and we were told everything - everything, that is, that concerned us. There were to be a dozen or so flotillas of sweepers (of which we were to be the spearhead) sweeping across to France during the night. Each flotilla was to be backed up by two battleships or heavy cruisers.

"The RAF were to bomb the coastal defences during the night with everything they had, stopping just before we arrived offshore. We were to drop anchor about dawn, half a mile from the beach, acting as decoys in case any shore batteries were still alive.

"If necessary we were to be sacrificed, drawing their fire so that the battleships could get them before the troops were landed.

"After we had swept our channel during the night, and had been at anchor off the beach, I had never heard such sweet music as when the cable started rattling, bringing up the anchor at 0730, as we turned for home.

"In our case, as we learned later, the heavy ships were not needed as was

the case farther down the coast.

"That day we swept more lanes back to Spithead, passing every conceivable type of sea transport. Some were even towing rafts with drums of fuel lashed to them.

"What a fantastic planning operation it all was - and what a miracle that it succeeded in spite of such appalling weather - for by this time the weather had taken a real turn for the worse, and the conditions were more like those of January than of June."

Because of his name, and because of the lead role that he and his flotilla were playing in the invasion fleet, Commander George Nelson, in *Pelorus*, hit the newspaper headlines after an exchange of signals for the fleet to start moving across the Channel.

When Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, the naval Commander-in-Chief, steamed out to Spithead in his flagship, he sent a general signal to all the forces in the assembly: 'GOOD LUCK. DRIVE ON'.

HMS *Pelorus* made a prompt replying signal, again in flags at the yardarm and in plain language: 'WITH NELSON IN THE VAN'.

This replying signal was repeated by all the flotilla and attached craft, and was kept flying as the ships formed up and steamed out of the harbour, leading by far the greatest invasion armada in history - a total of 4266 ships and landing craft, in all carrying 130 000 men to the beaches of France.

Later in June 1944, when the directors and staff of Lobnitz & Co Ltd at Renfrew, the builders of HMS *Pelorus*, sent a congratulatory message to Commander Nelson he replied that:

"It is quite true that *Pelorus* led the invasion and arrived first. And stretching our immodesty a little further, we are proud to say that she arrived in exactly the right place, dead on time."

A Capetonian, the late Commander Bryan Powell, recalled seeing HMS *Pelorus* on D-Day from the ship in which he was navigator, HMS *Stevensstone*, a Hunt-class destroyer which was also in the van of the invasion fleet.

Shore batteries had to be silenced

"While the minesweepers were clearing a channel, our task was to go close in and silence two German batteries, an 88 mm and a 105 mm, which had been set up in the village of Courseulles-sur-mer, near Arromanches.

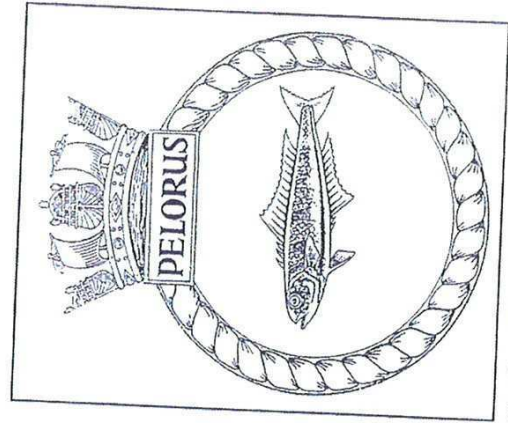
"This we accomplished, about 45 minutes before the first wave of the invasion fleet arrived off the beaches. And when we looked seaward again



Commander George Nelson, DSC, RN, at a briefing before leading the minesweepers that swept channels ahead of the Allied invasion armada on D-Day



Vivien Leigh, the famous British actress who 'adopted' HMS *Pelorus* in World War II and who visited her at Chatham when the ship was transferred from the RN to the SA Naval Forces, in 1947.



The ship's badge of HMS *Pelorus* - a red pilot fish on a blue ground, surmounted by the maritime crown.

after the bombardment, there were at least 1000 ships in sight. The invasion had begun."

Three years later, as an officer in the South African Naval Forces, Cdr Powell was sent to Chatham Naval Dockyard in England to become navigator of one of two Algerine fleet minesweepers acquired from the RN by the SANE.

The sweeper happened to be HMS *Pelorus* - later to have her name changed to HMSAS *Pietemuritzburg*.

Sub-Lieutenant Bob Jackson, RNVR, in HMS *Pickle*, wrote after D-Day:

"As to memories of the actual day, my one treasured memory of our sailing on the afternoon of June 5th was of *Pincher* playing the then popular tune

'We don't know where we're going until we're there' over her loud-hailer.

"Some hours after sailing, the 7th MSF streamed sweeps and got into 'G' formation - six of the flotilla doing the sweeping and *Pickle* and one other following in swept water, being the spare sweepers and ready to take over if one of the others became a casualty.

"Our flotilla navigator, in *Pelorus*, did a great job as we were sweeping across the tidal stream and had to continually alter course to allow for changes in the tide's speed.

"Navigation was aided by a magic box called 'QH' and this enabled very accurate position-finding. We arrived off the Normandy beaches at first light expecting a somewhat hostile reception; we were so near we could see the houses in Port-en-Bessin, but nothing happened.

"Our main problem during the actual assault was avoiding other ships. In fact *Pickle* was rammed by an LCI (landing craft infantry), the only damage being a small hole in my cabin abreast the W/T office. The LCI's forward A/A weapons were rather bent.

"After completing our sweep we altered course to sweep anchorage areas. The remainder of D-Day was rather an anti-climax, as through some mix-up of orders the flotilla left Normandy and sailed back to Spithead, where many of us were able to contact our nearest and dearest to announce our survival.

"This return voyage did not go down well with the powers that be, and we were soon on our way back to Normandy, where a routine developed of 10 days off the beaches and two or three in dear old Pompey, for rest and recreation."

Once the swept channels had been widened, the next task was to sweep the anchorages and enlarge these to allow for the many transports and supply vessels arriving off the beachhead.

At night the ships in the flotilla took their places with other sweepers and formed the 'Trout Line,' a protective line of ships surrounding the anchorages in case of attack by E-boats or the one-man torpedoes.

This meant the crews were often at action stations most nights and minesweeping all day, and so the periodic return to Portsmouth was a welcome relief, which enabled them to have some rest from their arduous and dangerous work.

On July 10 the flotilla suffered its first casualty, when the leader, HMS *Pelorus*, was damaged by a mine exploding close by. The incident happened at 0830 as the flotilla was sweeping in 'G' formation, single Oropesa to port, about 25 miles NW of Cap d'Antifer. The mine exploded under the port side of the stern and the ship lifted and crashed back into the water. Luckily she only sustained minor leaks, but the port engine and screw were damaged.

Apart from a few cases of minor concussion, there were no casualties. *Pelorus* was able to continue to the assault area at 3-4 knots, but was then forced to retire, making for Southend where she arrived on July 13. From there she sailed for the Tyne to undergo repairs.

Meanwhile the leadership of the 7th MSF had been taken over from *Pelorus* by HMS *Recruit*, under which the flotilla continued operations off Normandy until mid-August, when its ships returned to Portsmouth for the last time.

In September 1944 available ships from the flotilla were used as rescue pickets, spread across the North Sea for the gliders being towed across for the Arnhem operation.

Later that month HMS *Pelorus*, now fully repaired, left the Tyne to rejoin the flotilla in the minesweeping operation in the North Sea/Scheldt area.

In addition to the sweeping, *Pelorus* and others of the flotilla were engaged in acting as escorts for landing craft crossing the North Sea to the Scheldt and occasionally carrying out patrols up the East Coast convoy route.

On one occasion *Pelorus* took on several tons of potatoes for the Army in the Netherlands, but after being fully loaded, the trip was cancelled - leaving *Pelorus* with enough spuds to keep the entire flotilla going for several weeks.

Pelorus joins 6th MSF for the Far East

In November/December 1944 it was decided there should be changes in the composition of two flotillas of Algerines - the 6th and the 7th.

The rationale for this was to bring together in each flotilla those ships of similarly-fitted engines. The 7th MSF would henceforth comprise only vessels fitted with geared turbines (those built at Harland and Wolff in Belfast), while the 6th MSF would have ships with reciprocating engines - a mixture of Lobnitz and Canadian-built vessels.

As a result, *Lennox* and *Pelorus* left the 7th to become part of the 6th Minesweeping Flotilla.

For *Pelorus* there was to be another - this time bigger - change. She would no longer be the Senior Officer ship, that role now being the prerogative of HMS *Friendship*. Consequently Commander George Nelson left *Pelorus*, to be relieved by Lt-Commander FJ Bourgat, RN.

The first three months of 1945 were very quiet for the 6th MSF, which was now made up of: *Friendship* (SO), *Gozo*, *Melita*, *Persian*, *Lightfoot*, *Lennox*, *Postillion* and *Pelorus*.

All having been assigned to the British East Indies Fleet, to be based at Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), the ships were prepared for service in the Far East.

At the naval base at Trincomalee, the flotilla joined other units of the East Indies Fleet to prepare to take part in Operation 'Collie' which was planned as a minesweeping operation and an air-and-surface bombardment off Cap Nicobar.

This was to prepare for the landings planned to take place on the north coast of Malaya - the latter under the code-name Operation 'Zipper'. Taking part were the cruiser HMS *Nigeria*, the carriers *Ameer* and *Empress* and the destroyers *Roebuck*, *Esquimo* and *Vigilant*.

The intention was to provoke the remaining Japanese air-power.

Although the flotilla had not performed any operational minesweeping for some time, and both equipment and techniques were a bit rusty, the sweepers accounted for 167 mines between July 5 and 10.

During the sweep the cruisers and destroyers bombarded gun positions and targets of opportunity on the Island of Nancowry. The operation was successfully completed and the 6th MSF returned to Colombo on July 14, 1945.

On August 15, the day officially declared as VJ Day - the end of the war with Japan - the flotilla became part of Force 155 which also included the Algerine 7th MSF (of which *Pelorus* had previously been leader) and the 17th MSF, Royal Indian Navy, made up of Bathurst Class sweepers).

This minesweeping force left Colombo to sweep the Malacca Strait ahead of the Singapore occupation force led by the battleship HMS *Nelson*, wearing the flag of Vice-Admiral HTC Walker, and the cruiser *London*.

On August 30 the sweepers of Force 155 began sweeping at Penang and Sabang, ready for the Allied fleet to occupy these ports as soon as the surrender documents were signed.

(One very useful consequence of the formal surrender was the disclosure by the Japanese of details of minefields off the Malayan and Sumatran coasts as well as in the Malacca Strait and at Singapore - all of which made the task of

the sweepers considerably easier and much less hazardous.

The sweeper force then proceeded to sweep the Singapore occupation force through the Malacca Strait and the Japanese minefield - the first British warships to sail down the Strait since the ill-fated capital ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* had passed through in December 1941.

Ahead of the British and Indian minesweepers was a force of Japanese sweepers which cleared a 55-mile long channel through their own minefields to the north.

In command of the whole of the minesweeping force was Captain RHV Sivewright, who was carried in HMS *Pelorus*.

On September 3, led by the 6th MSF and the RIN *Bengal*, the cruiser HMS *Cleopatra*, carrying Admiral Power, C-in-C British Pacific Fleet, entered the anchorage off Singapore, followed by the cruiser *Styx*, the destroyer *Rotherham* and the 7th MSF.

Thus HMS *Pelorus* and the 6th MSF were the first ships of the Royal Navy to enter the harbour of Singapore since the disastrous evacuation and fall of this vital British base in February 1942.

Telegraphist Billy McGill recalled that a Japanese destroyer was put in front of the leading sweeper (*Pelorus*) as the ships steamed into Singapore. He further remembered "going up on the forecastle and looking at the hated Rising Sun flag just in front of us."

'Business as usual' for the sweepers after VJ

Although the war was now over in the Far East, it was very much 'business as usual' for the minesweepers of the 6th MSF. There were a great many minefields still to be cleared and the flotilla was to remain in the Far East for some months to come.

Transferred to Singapore, the flotilla continued mine clearance around the area and in the Singapore Strait. In December the flotilla relieved the 7th MSF, sweeping off Penang.

In spite of the many difficulties with supplies, urgent signals at a high level ensured that *Pelorus* and her sister ships received the traditional Yuletide fare including a plentiful supply of Christmas puddings.

Early in January, 1946, the flotilla returned to Singapore where *Pelorus* went into the dockyard for repairs and boiler-clean. This was followed, in March, by *Pelorus* and the 6th MSF sweeping off the Tenasserim coast before sailing for Trincomalee, arriving there on March 28.

Their work in the Far East now finished, the bulk of the 6th MSF sailed

home to UK via the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean, entering the English Channel on May 14.

While *Lennox* and *Posillion* were detached to Plymouth, and *Persian* and *Melita* to Portsmouth, *Pelorus* and *Lighthfoot* made for their home-base at Chatham, arriving there on May 15, 1946.

For HMS *Pelorus*, this was to be her last time in the service of the Royal Navy. After paying-off she was placed in reserve at Chatham, to await disposal.

(From an article researched and compiled by Lt-Cdr RMP Carne, RN (Ret), a member of the SAS Pietemartitzburg Preservation Committee, formed in 1992).

Chapter 2

HMS PELORUS BECOMES HMSAS PIETERMARITZBURG

IN 1947 HMS *Pelorus* was sold to South Africa by the British Admiralty, and after refitting she was recommissioned as HMSAS *Pelorus* at Chatham, under the command of Lt-Commander JCF (Jack) Netterberg, DSC.

At an impressive ceremony on the Medway on September 9, 1947, the South African High Commissioner in London, Mr G Heaton Nicholls, accepted the ship on behalf of the Union Government.

The ceremony was also attended by Commodore FJ Dean, OBE, Director of the South African Naval Forces, and by Major-General WHE Poole, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Union Defence Force.

Also there at that time, to say goodbye to the ship when she was handed over to South Africa, was the Oscar-winning actress Vivien Leigh, wife of Sir Laurence Olivier and famous for her role opposite Clark Gable in the film 'Gone With the Wind'.

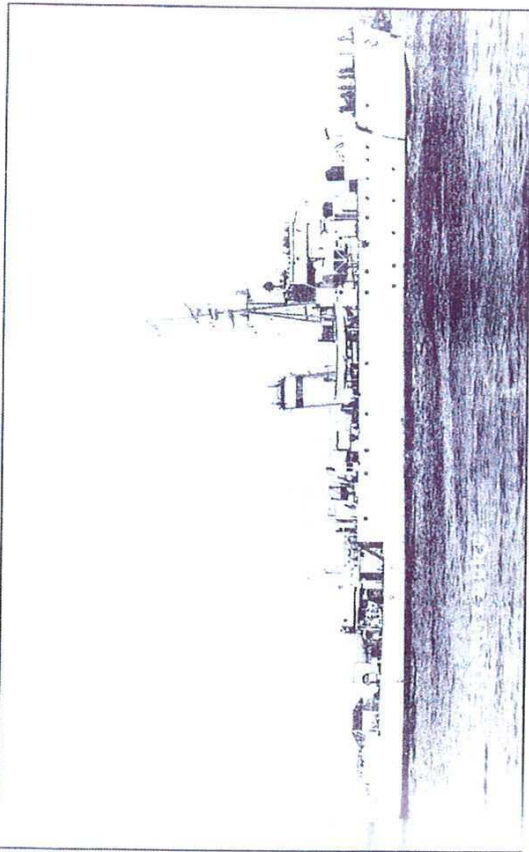
Vivien Leigh had 'adopted' HMS *Pelorus* during World War II, and Commander Peter Bredenkamp, SAN (Ret), has recalled being Quartermaster-of-the-Watch when the 'still very beautiful' actress came on board at Chatham to say farewell to the ship, with its new South African crew.

Another Algerine ocean minesweeper, the Canadian-built HMS *Rosamund*, had been recommissioned under the South African flag at Devonport on September 8 - the day before the ceremony on board *Pelorus*. Placed under the command of Lt-Commander HH Biermann, OBE, this ship was subsequently renamed HMSAS *Bloemfontein*.

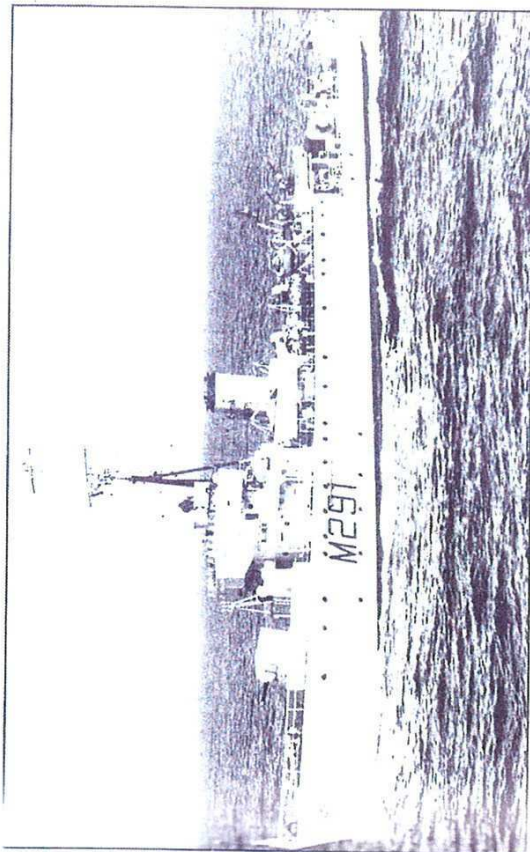
Pelorus retained her name for a short period in British waters before being renamed HMSAS *Maritzburg*. But after representations to the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Smuts, by the City Council of Pietermaritzburg, the name was changed to HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg*.

It was not long before naval personnel came to know the ship simply - and affectionately - as 'PMB'.

After a short period of minesweeping training at HMS *Lochinvar*, Port Edgar, *Pietermaritzburg* sailed for South Africa on November 22, 1947, in company with *Bloemfontein* and another newly-acquired vessel, the Flower Class corvette HMS *Rockrose*, which had been recommissioned as HMSAS



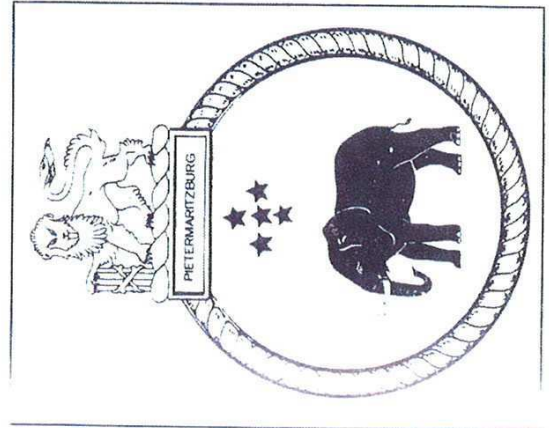
How *Pelorus* looked soon after being transferred to the SA Naval Forces and renamed HMSAS *Maritzburg*. After representations by the City Council of Pietermaritzburg, the ship was renamed HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg*.



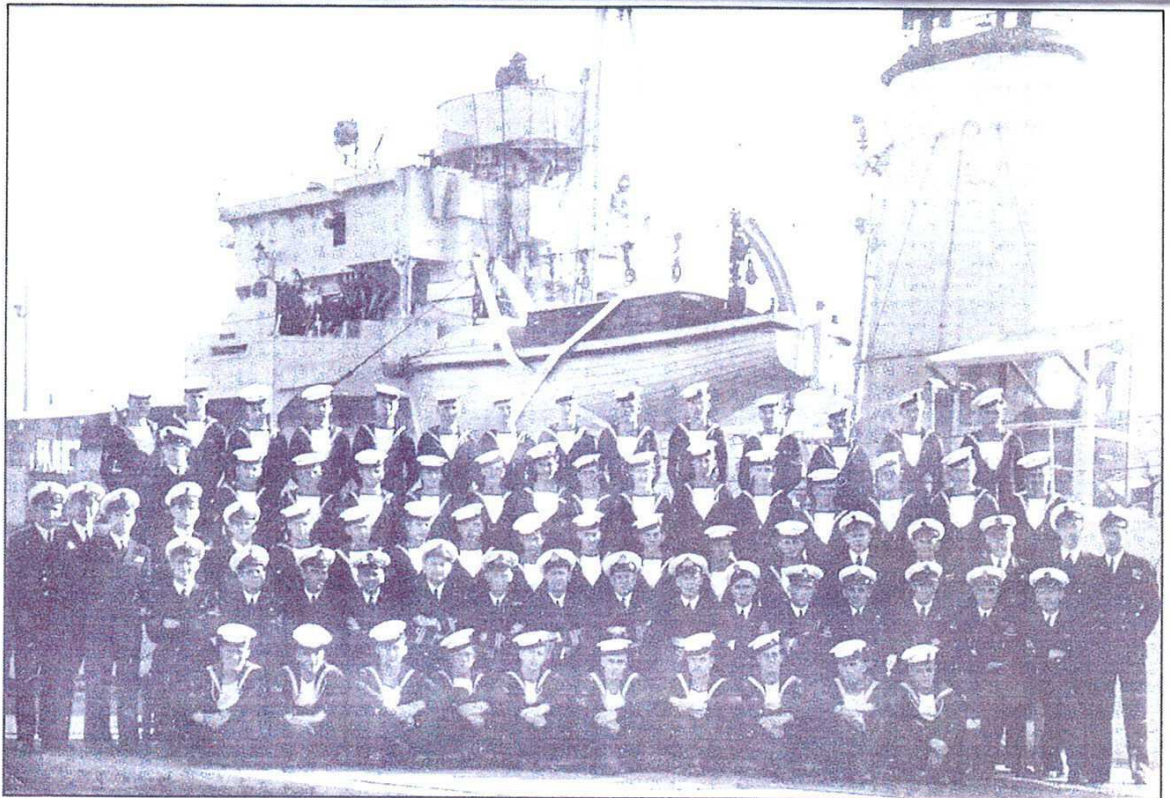
After the final name-switch, this is how HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg* looked in her new livery and with her new pennant number - M 291 - painted on her hull.



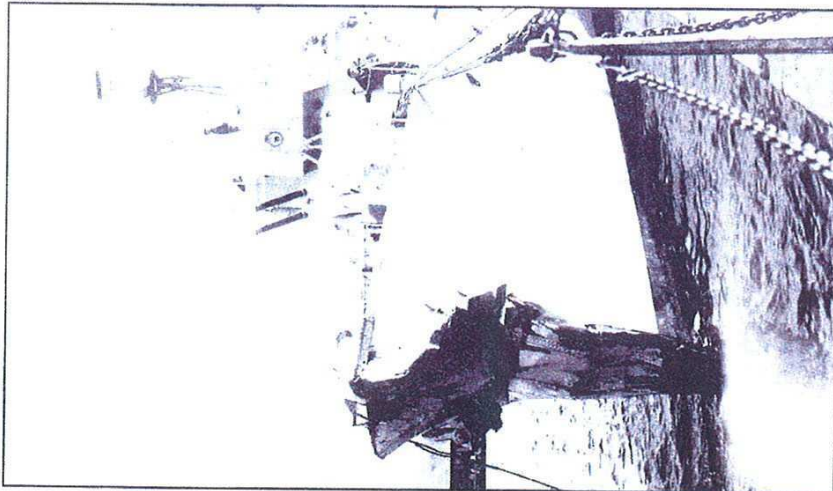
The commissioning ship the *PMB*, as she was fondly known, passes through the Knysna Heads in Cape Town, 1953, to become the largest vessel of the SA Navy to visit the town. Her call was intended to mark the return of Knysna as a port.



The ship's badge - the symbolic elephant of the city of Pietermaritzburg, surmounted by five stars.

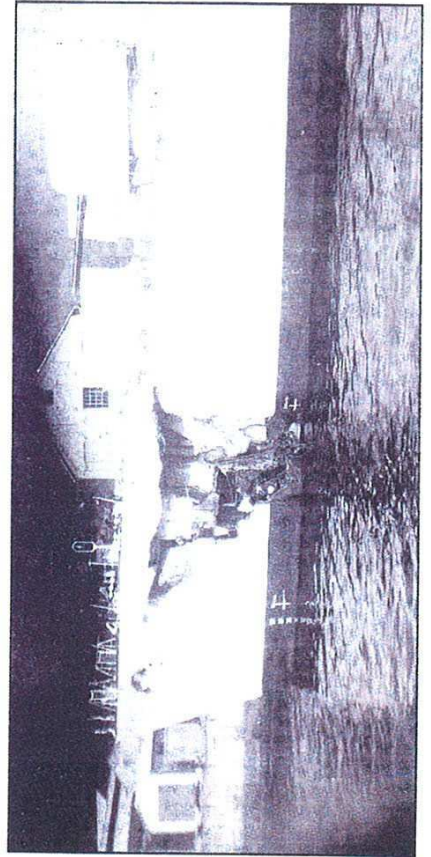


The first South African ship's company, in 1947, of the fleet minesweeper that had made history in World War II. The Commanding Officer, Lt-Cdr JCF (Jack) Netterberg, DSC, of HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg* as the ship was renamed, can be seen at centre in the second row.



PMB's crumpled bows after she had been in collision with the RN frigate HMS Leopard, during the joint exercise 'Capex 63'. The accident, which resulted in the death of one rating in Leopard, occurred south of Cape Point in July 1963. Extensive damage was caused to both ships.

The gaping hole in HMS Leopard's port bow after the collision, for which officers in both ships were held jointly responsible.



Protea, under Lt-Commander JK Mallory.

These were the first vessels acquired by the post-war South African Naval Forces. They arrived in Cape Town on December 24, 1947 - just in time for their ships' companies to celebrate Christmas ashore.

On January 21, 1948, HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg* was officially christened and dedicated at a ceremony at Maydon Wharf, Durban, by the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Mr AE Hirst, and his chaplain.

Mr Hirst presented a bound history of his city to Lt-Cdr Netterberg, who in turn presented the Mayor with a painting of the ship. This was later hung in Pietermaritzburg's City Council Chamber.

The ship's badge was changed from the pilot-fish of *Pelorus* to the symbolic elephant of Pietermaritzburg, surmounted by five stars.

'PMB' is used for training midshipmen

Pietermaritzburg gave good service to the SA Navy in the 1950s. In September 1953, while serving as a midshipmen's training ship, she became the largest SAN vessel to visit Knysna.

Her extremely successful visit, which coincided with Lieutenant Dickin Silberbauer's wedding at Knysna, was also a sad one as it was intended to mark the closing of Knysna as a port. It had been considered symbolic that a warship should be the last ship of any size to enter.

In 1959, in her 16th year, first with the RN and then with the SAN, *PMB* was taken out of service and laid up in reserve.

After a major refit and reconstruction in the SA Naval Dockyard, Simon's Town, the former minesweeper was taken out of reserve and recommissioned in August 1962, under the command of Lt-Commander AS Davis, SAN.

During the refit, *PMB's* influence-sweeping equipment was removed and a structure housing a gunroom and accommodation for midshipmen, with two single 40mm Bofors mounted on top, was constructed aft in place of the original gun platform.

A twin 4-inch Mk19 mounting was also shipped forward in place of the single 4-inch weapon originally carried, and the twin 20mm mountings on the bridge wings were removed.

As modernised, *PMB* carried a complement of eight officers and 73 ratings, with facilities for 10 midshipmen and 50 trainees.

Less than a year after her refit, *Pietermaritzburg* was involved in a collision with the Royal Navy Type 41 frigate HMS *Leopard*, during the exercise 'Capex 63'.

Chapter 3

JACK NETTERBERG

- a legend in his own time

The accident took place about 15 miles south of Cape Point, early on the morning of July 28, 1963, and it resulted in the death of one British rating, in *Leopard*.

Considerable damage was caused to both ships, which managed to return to Simon's Town under their own power for repairs.

In the report of the Controller and Auditor General for 1963-64, the Deputy State Attorney found that there was contributory negligence on the part of officers of both vessels.

In December 1963, SAS *Pietermaritzburg* became involved in an unusual operation. The water-temperature charts of the south and east coasts, which were vital to successful submarine detection, needed considerable updating.

To accomplish this, *Pietermaritzburg* in company with HMS *Jaguar* and the South African frigates *President Kruger*, *President Steyn* and *Transvaal* paid a formal visit to Durban, and while on passage to that port they took a full series of bathythermograph dips.

Spread more than 30 kilometres apart, the squadron covered nearly 150 000 sq km of ocean, and added valuable information to the chart.

While undertaking such tasks, in fair weather and foul, *Pietermaritzburg* continued to perform her most-important function - to instil in young midshipmen and ratings a love and respect for the sea and a desire to serve their country on it.

PMB was paid off into reserve at Simon's Town in July 1964, but she was brought back in June 1968 for use as an accommodation ship for the minesweeping base at Simon's Town - a very different role from the one she was given on June 6, 1944, when she proudly led the D-Day armada of 4000 ships to the beaches of Normandy.

The ageing SAS *Pietermaritzburg* continued to serve as an alongside accommodation ship for the Mine Countermeasures Flotilla at Simon's Town until 1991, when ministerial approval was obtained for her disposal.

HMS *Pelorus*'s first commanding officer, when the ship came under the South African flag at Chatham in 1947, was Lieutenant-Commander JCF (Jack) Netterberg, DSC.

And no more colourful a character could have been chosen to take command of a ship with *Pelorus*'s colourful war record.

Apart from being a seasoned, sail-trained Cape Hornet, and one of South Africa's most able officers in war and peace, Jack Netterberg was a noted hydrographer and ice pilot.

HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg*, as *Pelorus* became in 1947, was but one of 11 ships that he commanded during and after World War II. He retired in 1974 after a distinguished naval career of nearly 50 years.

Jack Netterberg died in November 1992, a few weeks before his 83rd birthday, and Captain CJ Harris, a friend and fellow officer in the SA Naval Forces, wrote this of him in an obituary in the *Weekend Argus*:

Captain John Charles Franklin Netterberg was one of those characterful seamen who succeed in becoming legends in their own lifetime.

Of Swedish descent, much-loved 'Captain Jack' joined the RNVF in East London in 1925. He was duly commissioned and appointed Officer-in-Charge of the local Sea Cadet Corps.

Employed in the harbour on the Buffalo River, Jack soon felt the call of the sea and from 1933 to 1935 he sailed in the Finnish windjammer *Panin*, eventually gaining officer status.

Returning home from his voyagings, he married Miss Jean Tanner in 1937. The couple raised two sons and a daughter: Frank, John and Ingrid Sonjat.

When war broke out, Jack opted for service with the Seaward Defence Force (cradle of the present SA Navy) and was soon appointed in command of the anti-submarine vessel *Southern Isles*, in the Mediterranean theatre.

This was perhaps his finest hour. On one patrol his ship operated continuously for 26 days, of which 17 were spent in the vicinity of Tobruk, where the ship endured 12 air attacks involving 46 near-misses.

Jack Netterberg was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. In part, the citation read: 'For his leadership, courage and ability and the high example

of fearlessness which he set his officers and men in action with enemy aircraft on numerous occasions.

Particular mention is made of the time when *Southern Isles* had to defend a hospital ship being heavily attacked by eight JU-87 bombers.

Jack ranged close to the ship in which convalescent men were being bombed and machine-gunned, and put up a defensive barrage which damaged the attackers, all of which were subsequently shot down by fighters.

In this action, Netterberg sent his coxswain to shelter and took the wheel himself.

His crew adored him, albeit they must have had doubts from time to time when they found their ship being volunteered for all manner of hazardous missions.

In 1946 'Captain Jack' transferred to the Permanent Force, as a Lieutenant-Commander. He was promoted Commander in 1954 and Captain in 1963. In that year he became Commander of the SA Naval Dockyard at Simon's Town and piloted numerous vessels in and out of the basin.

He also qualified as an ice-pilot.

In 1971 he was presented with an inscribed crest of HMS *Scylla*, marking his handling of the 200th Royal Naval ship during the closure of the Suez Canal.

He retired for the first time in 1967 but was immediately recalled and carried on piloting until final retirement in 1974.

On first acquaintance Jack seemed shyly inarticulate. But behind this diffident facade lurked a core of steel. Never one for 'working to the book', he went his own way and did his own thing.

Paperwork was anathema, and a convenient open porthole led to the greatest wastepaper basket in the world.

Two examples of his individualism: 'Captain Jack' decided to turn a blind eye on the official ruling that post-war awards were to take precedence over the World War II medals, and he persisted in proudly heading his array of 11 medals with his DSC.

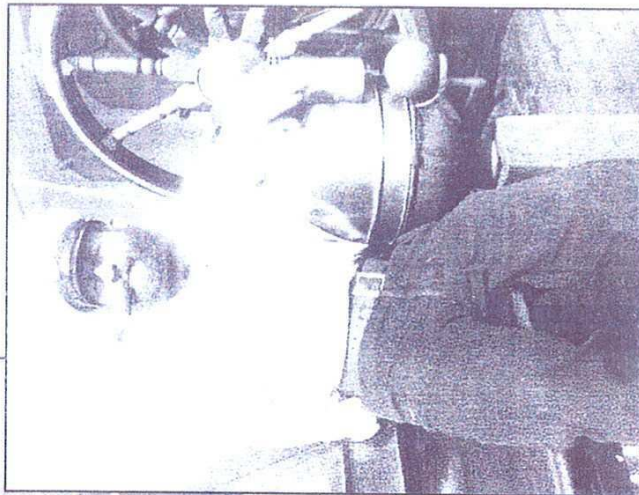
'The oak leaves on his cap never 'wore out'

Similarly, when South Africa broke with tradition by substituting the gold oak leaves adorning the peaks of high-ranking caps with a protea and what appeared to be metal sheaves, the order contained the proviso that original peaks could be retained until due for replacement.

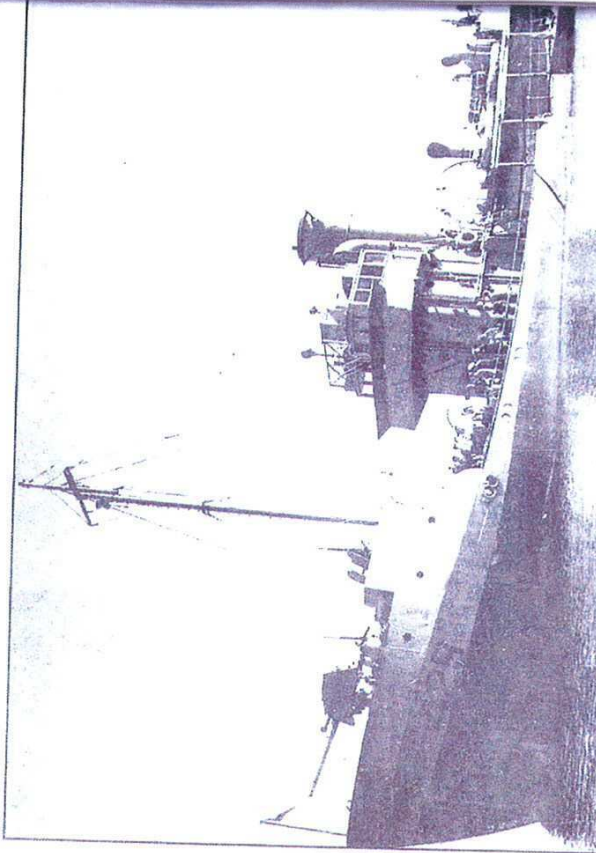
Jack's oak-leaves never wore out. The Royal Navy Attache saw to it that he



Captain JCF Jack Netterberg, SM, DSC, one of the great characters of South Africa's young Navy. In 1917, as a Lieutenant-Commander and as a distinguished war hero, he was appointed in command of HMSAS *Pietronitzbars*, after the Algerine Class fleet minesweeper was sold to SA.



A young and heavily-bearded Jack Netterberg on board the Finnish windjammer *Pami*, in which he rounded the Horn in the 1930s.



The ship HMSAS *Southern Isles*, in which the CO, Lt Jack Netterberg, won the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry, in the Mediterranean. It was also in this little ship that the much-wounded Stoker/PO René Sethre became the only member of SA's wartime Defence Force to win the rarely-awarded Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM).



A street in the SA Naval Dockyard, Simon's Town, has been named in honour of Capt Jack Netterberg. Members of his family visited it in 1999 when they attended the funeral of Jack's widow, Jean. From left: Marijke Anderson, Harry Anderson, Sonja Hatvey, Frank and Michael Netterberg.

received replacements from time to time.

Jack seemed impervious to pain. On one occasion, hopping down a hallway while giving his small daughter a ride on his foot, he slipped and came down heavily on one ankle.

Disdaining medical attention, and due to unberth a ship, he took the ship to sea, duly negotiated the swaying pilot ladder and only then reported to the sick-bay. His broken ankle was encased in plaster for six weeks.

Since Jack had rounded Cape Horn under sail, he was entitled by naval tradition to rest his feet on the wardroom table during formal mess dinners. I had the privilege of witnessing this in HMS *Norfolk* on passage from Simon's Town to Plymouth.

Jack was a man's man, a superb practical seaman and a caring husband and father.

'The future is never revealed ...'

Stories and anecdotes about Jack Netterberg are legion. He never believed in wearing a wrist-watch, for instance, and while he was in command of HMSAS *Pietermaritzburg* he used to do his daily PT in the boiler-room.

Pictures taken in the Antarctic showed that while everyone else was attired in thick parkas, gloves and seaboots, with only eyes and noses exposed to the sub-zero temperature, a scantly-clad 'Captain Jack', the ice-pilot, looked as though he was off to spend the day on Clifton Beach.

While the newly-transferred *PMB* was carrying out a compass-swing at Sheerness her whaler, which had been lowered for exercises, swung heavily onto the ship's side, leaving a large hole in the boat's bow.

Unfazed by this, Lt-Cdr Netterberg, as the ship's CO, spent several days personally repairing the damage.

In his book *If you can hold up your hand, hear me! - or if you can't hear me, wave!.*, Rear-Admiral (JG) DF Silberbauer, SAN (Ret), wrote:

Jack Netterberg, now he is a character. 'The future is never revealed,' says he, examining a spot on his wrist where most people wear a watch but where, to everybody's certain knowledge, a watch has never been.

A great shiphandler, a great sailor and, as far as I can make out, the good Lord forgot to tell him about fear.

It is not too difficult to picture Jack, dressed in shorts only, lying on his back watching Stukas dropping bombs on him, coolly indicating to the Quartermaster to go left or right to avoid danger.

The sailors loved him. I remember when *Transvaal* came to Walvis Bay to accompany *Pretoria*, *Kaapstad* and *Nautilus* to Saldanha. As she hove in

view some malelot spotted who was on *Transvaal's* bridge.

'Three cheers for Jack!' rang out, quite impromptu - just because the blokes were pleased to see him.

To what already appears in his book, Dickin Silberbauer has added, for *Naval Digest*:

A long, long time ago I said there'd never be another Jack.

What was it about him? Was it his obvious fearlessness, his total contempt for 'bull' and bluster?

I remember joining my first ship in the SA Navy, Jan van Riebeeck, in Simon's Town in 1952, and the late Jimmy Green giving me the run-down on the ship's officers. When he came to the First Lieutenant he paused.

'Not like the normal run-of-the-mill RN types you've been used to,' he said - 'but he's a real man's man.'

This took some interesting turns. There was the time Jack asked for a lift as I was on my way to Kenilworth. Well, the car filled up with assorted hangers-on and off we set.

Not long after the start Jack studied his non-existent watch and announced: 'There's just enough time for a quick one; pull in here!' - indicating a convenient pub.

I think that was the longest trip I've ever made, because it's surprising how many pubs there are between Snoekie and Wynberg. Wynberg is where I left my shipmates to their own devices. Sad to say, that pub is no longer in existence; it was one of Jack's favourites.

And then there was his original use of a bath. I wandered in for a shave the morning after we sailed from Snoekie and there was this hairy body squatting next to the cold tap, soaping himself without recourse to hot water, or putting the plug in.

Something to do with lack of mod-cons in sailing ships, I suppose.

Jack entered a period of backwater jobs for a while: the original square peg for a round hole. He was SO Reserve Fleet for a while, and improved the shining hour producing the best snoek braais in the southern hemisphere.

He spent quite a few years as Harbourmaster (at Simon's Town), which was the nearest term a republic could get to QHM (Queen's Harbour Master) or KHM (King's Harbour Master).

It was a period when the RN was despatching frigates to the far and near East and also attempting to do the Beira Blockade. This kept Jack extremely busy.

It was always fun to contemplate the expressions on the various captains' faces when Jack appeared on the scene. He had no time for things like chin-

stays. If the wind blew - I'll rephrase that: when the wind blew - he just got hold of a piece of spunyarn and secured it under his chin, with a neat bow on top of the cap.

He had a good run for the Navy and set up some sort of a record as CD (Commander Dockyard) handling the many comers and goers. He was appreciated for himself and for how he did his job, by the many nationalities who used Simon's Town harbour.

For him, no axe to grind, just a job to do.

Eccentric is not the term: he was just Jack.

Harbourmastering was his last appointment, and at that he excelled. But age takes its wretched toll, and time came for him to retire - a sad time for us as well as for him.

In November 1992 a large number of his shipmates attended his funeral service (held in the historic Dockyard Church at Simon's Town). I only wish that someone could have taped the conversations at the subsequent gathering - with story after story of this unique sailor.

I can only echo my opening remarks: there'll never be another Jack, despite his oft-repeated remark:

'The future is never revealed ...'

Chapter 4

A LONG BUT LOSING BATTLE TO HAVE 'PMB' PRESERVED AS A FLOATING MUSEUM

IN early 1992 a SAS Pietermaritzburg Preservation Committee was formed at Simon's Town, by a group with a keen interest in saving the old ship for historic reasons; also because she could soon become the only Algerine still afloat.

Rear-Admiral EM Kramer had campaigned for the preservation of the *PMB* since 1981, and the committee formed in 1992 took his efforts further by conducting a feasibility study and submitting its report to the then Chief of the Navy, Vice-Admiral RC Simpson-Anderson.

The only other vessel of the Algerine Class still in service at the time was in Thailand, and was reportedly about to be disposed of. Formerly HMS *Minstrel*, this vessel had been transferred to the Royal Thai Navy in 1947 and renamed HTMS *Phosantani*.

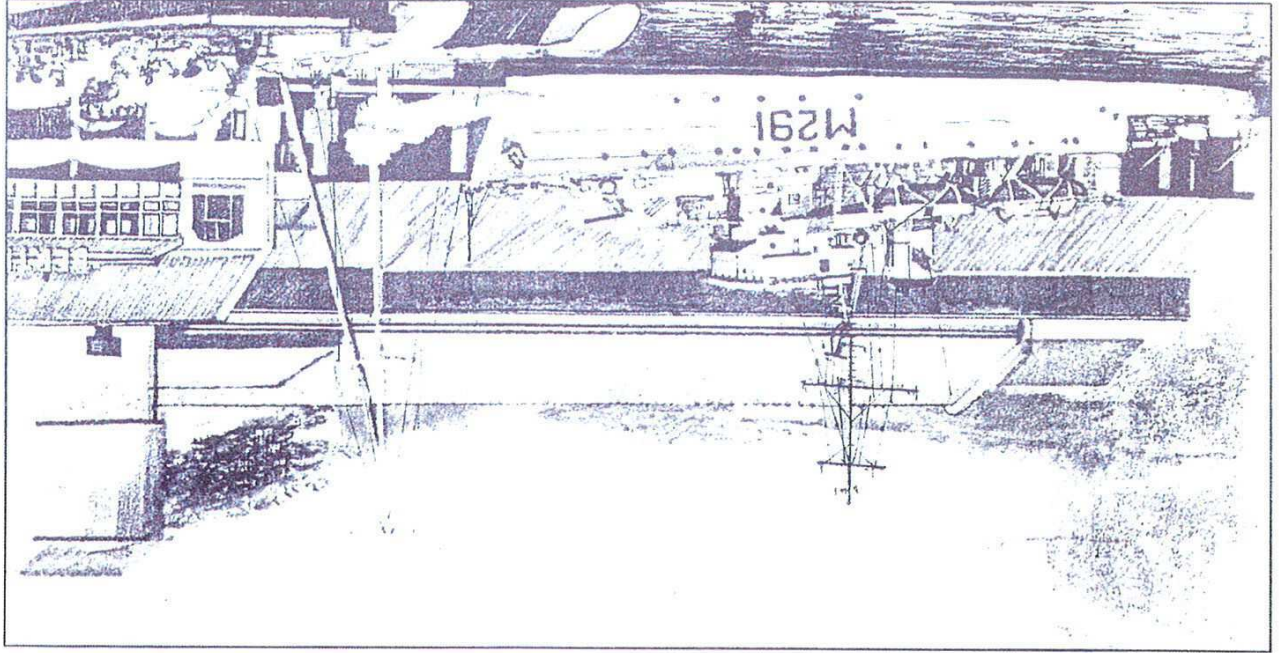
The SAS Pietermaritzburg Preservation Committee, which had the full support of Admiral HH Biermann, a former Chief of the SA Defence Force, was under the chairmanship of Commodore AE Rudman, SAN (Ret), and at the outset the other members were: Captain PD Rogers; Cdr MA Rudolphe; Lt-Cdr RMP Carne; Cdr WM Bisset; Mr GP Grylls; Mr SJ (Bertie) Reed and Mr RD Williams, a retired journalist and author.

The committee was later joined by Major JHB Hughes, Royal Marines (Ret) and by Captain M Paterson, SAN (Ret).

At its first meeting the committee defined its task as being 'to investigate the viability of preserving the vessel SAS *Pietermaritzburg* at no recurrent cost to the State.'

The objectives of preserving the vessel would be:

- (a) To restore and maintain the ship in a condition which will be a credit to the South African Navy.
- (b) To have it serve as a tangible exhibit which will make the public aware of SA's maritime heritage.
- (c) To have it become a unique tourist attraction in the already popular Waterfront development of Cape Town.



An artist's impression of how the 'retired' SAS *Pietermaritzburg* could have been used as a floating museum, at a berth adjoining the tavern/restaurant known as Bertie's Landing, in the V & A Waterfront complex.

To achieve these objectives the committee envisaged:

- (a) The formation of a trust to accept responsibility for and control over the ship, and;
- (b) The establishment of an operating company to run the vessel profitably on a day-to-day basis.

'PMB' seen as an added Waterfront attraction

At first the idea was to berth the restored vessel in the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront complex, as an amenity that would include a small conference centre, an intimate maritime restaurant, an exclusive naval-type tavern, a gallery of marine art and artefacts, a souvenir shop, a ship's museum, an information centre and a central office for naval-oriented associations.

Four full-time MBA students at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business - Martin Neethling, Richard Schram, Adrian Smith and Peter Tate - researched these and other possible uses for a preserved SAS *Pietermaritzburg* in their 'New Product Development Term Project'.

In September 1992 they produced a detailed 15-page report on what they termed 'A partial feasibility study undertaken for the SAS Pietermaritzburg Preservation Committee'.

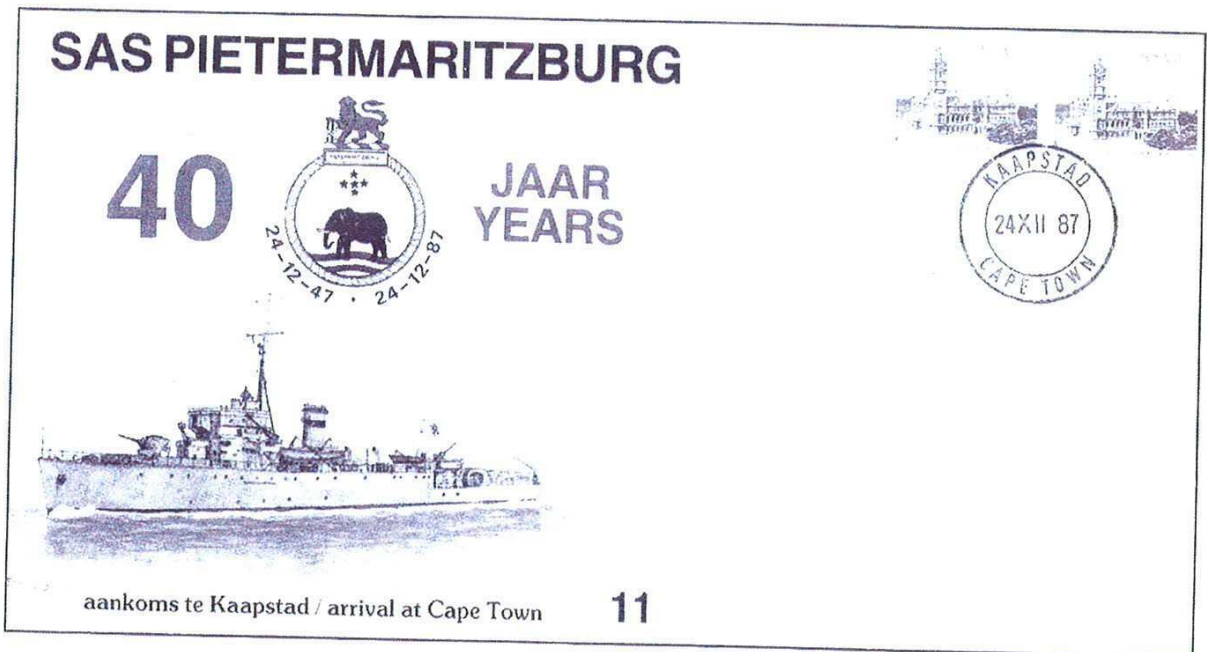
The *PMB's* riveted hull was still in reasonable condition at the time, but both propellers and shafts, the A-brackets and rudder had been removed, so the ship would have needed to be towed to Table Bay if this idea had been approved.

But approval was not forthcoming. The Table Bay Port Captain refused to allocate a berth, saying that he did not want another 'dead' ship occupying space needed for commercial and other vessels still operational and in service.

The committee then turned its attention to the possibility of making the preserved *PMB* an adjunct to the SA Naval Museum at Simon's Town, moored at a deep-water berth linked directly to the museum, in the West Dockyard.

In March 1993 it recommended that a naval heritage site be developed in the West Dockyard area, with its many historic buildings, and it pointed to the Portsmouth Naval Heritage Site in England as an example of such a development.

The committee further recommended that a national 'SA Naval Heritage



The commemorative cover issued by the base of the minesweeping flotilla, SAS *Chapman*, in 1987 to mark the 40th anniversary of SAS *Pietermaritzburg's* service with the South African Navy.

Trust' be established, rather than the single-ship preservation trust proposed earlier.

"Such a Naval Heritage Trust could be responsible for all historic naval vessels and buildings and eventually even for the SA Naval Museum. The mechanism would thus be in place for any other vessels to be preserved in the future."

There was a strong Algerines Association in existence in Britain at the time and one of the first things the preservation committee did after its formation in May 1992 was to contact this organisation and apprise it of its objectives.

The Algerines Association, with a global membership of more than 1000, showed great interest in this development, as did the Imperial War Museum with its museum ship, the cruiser *HMS Belfast*, moored near Tower Bridge

HMS Belfast visited, on the Thames

One of the members of the Simon's Town committee, Commander Mike Rudolph, visited *HMS Belfast* to examine the techniques used in the cruiser's preservation and to discuss with its management the planning and procedures that had been used to turn the ship into a viable museum, conference centre and all-round maritime amenity.

After this visit the Director General of the Imperial War Museum, Dr Alan Borg, sent a letter to Commodore Rudman in June 1992 in which he wrote:

"I have now had a meeting with Commander Rudolph and I am clear that this is an exciting and important project. The ship is historically significant for her role in the D-Day landings and also because she is almost certainly the last of her class that will be available for preservation."

"Your proposals seem to be well based and should ensure that this particular example of maritime heritage will be saved for future generations."

The Simon's Town committee was also in touch with such organisations as the Portsmouth Naval Heritage Trust, with its custodianship of historic vessels that have been restored and preserved at Portsmouth, *HMS Victory*, *HMS Warrior* and the *Mary Rose*.

Contact was also made with the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth, the Director of which threw a verbal challenge to South Africa to send a restored SAS *Pietermaritzburg* to UK to lead a symbolic fleet - including the Royal Yacht *Britannia* - across the English Channel on the 50th anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1994.

This challenge required the retention of the ship by the SA Navy, which posed serious budgetary problems. It was estimated that the required 'rebuilding' of the old *PMB* would cost more than R20 million.

The Chief of the SA Navy, as keen as he was to meet this challenge, and to



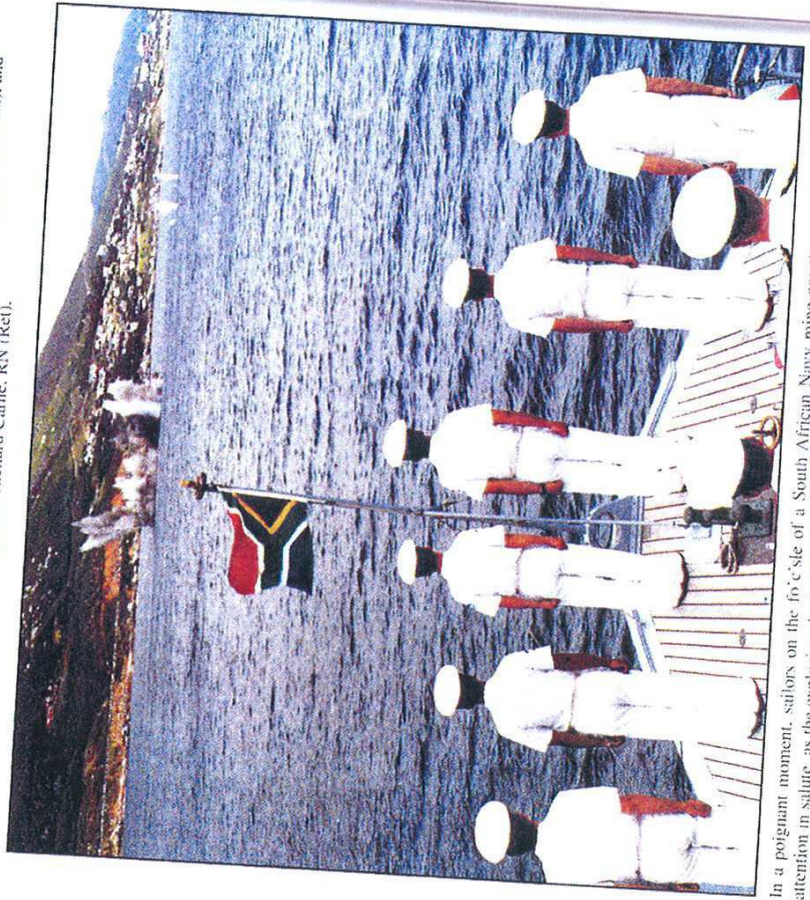
The rusted hull of the 50-year-old *PMB*, her bilges packed with explosives, is moored in position off Miller's Point near Simon's Town in 1994, ready to be ceremoniously scuttled, to become an artificial reef in False Bay.



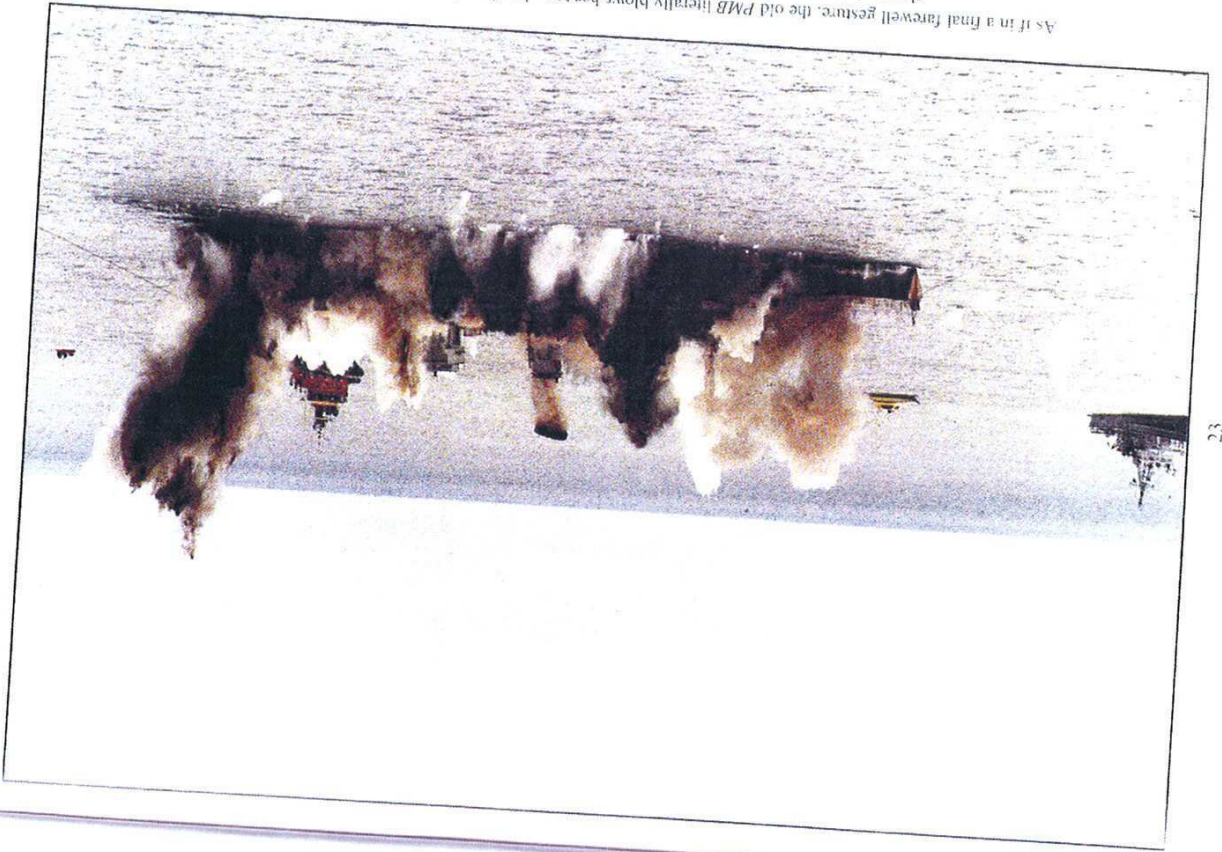
The scene ashore: Chief of the Navy, Vice-Admiral Robert Simpson-Anderson (in uniform, alongside the lectern) and some of those involved in the campaign to save the old *PMB* attend a ceremony in which homage was paid to the ship before she was scuttled.



Three members of the SAS Pietermaritzburg Preservation Committee who attended the sinking of the *PMB*.
 From left: Mr Roger Williams; Rear-Admiral (IG) André Rudman (the committee chairman), and
 Lt-Cdr Richard Carne, RN (Ret).



In a poignant moment, sailors on the frigate of a South African Navy mine countermeasures vessel come to attention in salute, as the explosives in the hull of SAS *Pietermaritzburg* are detonated.



As if in a final farewell gesture, the old *PMB* literally blows her top - her funnel cap - as the powerful explosive charges in her bilges are initiated at precisely 11h00 on November 19, 1994.

have a 'retired' South African warship lending the symbolic D-Day fleet in 1994, was at the time faced with crippling budget cuts and could not justify this kind of expenditure on an old vessel.

A detailed survey report by the SA Naval Dockyard authorities in 1992 had shown that a considerable amount of work would have to be done to restore the old ship to seaworthy condition for any length of time.

A sad farewell

Sadly, in the end, the campaign to save the ship had to be abandoned, and on November 19, 1994, the rusted hulk of the proud old *PMB*, its bilges packed with powerful explosives, was towed to a spot several hundred metres from Miller's Point near Simon's Town, and moored in position.

Ashore, several hundred people including the Chief of the Navy, had gathered to say their farewells. Mine counter-measures vessels of the SAN stood by seaward, their upper decks manned by white-uniformed crew-members.

Prayers were led by naval Padre Ralph Thornley, who had served in the old *PMB* as an able seaman.

Then, at precisely 11h00, the explosive charges on board *PMB* were initiated. There was a rapid-fire series of blasts along the ship's bottom and she settled gracefully to the sea-bed on an even keel, to become an artificial reef at a spot chosen by divers.

As Padre Thornley had put it: "This marks the end of a naval era".

The 'death' of the *PMB* led to the birth of the Naval Heritage Trust, which took up where the SAS Pietermaritzburg Preservation Committee had had to leave off, in its quest to save what was considered worthy of preserving in the proud history of SA's young Navy.

Chapter 5

COMMANDER MAC BISSET'S KEY ROLE IN DEVELOPING THE SA NAVAL MUSEUM

By Roger Williams

COMMANDER WM (Mac) Bisset retires as Officer-in-Charge of the SA Naval Museum in June 2002 after 40 years of military service, leaving a legacy of which he and the Navy can be justly proud.

Situated in the historic West Dockyard at Simon's Town, and adjoining St George's Dockyard Church, the museum has since 1992 occupied a relic of the days of sail - the Mast House.

Originally, items of naval interest were displayed at the Castle, Cape Town, where Cdr Bisset was, from 1975 to 1986, the staff officer responsible for WP Command's military and maritime museums, and for guided tours of the Castle and also of the historic Martello Tower at Simon's Town.

For short periods, he also acted as Staff Officer Military Museums, Eastern Province Command in Port Elizabeth, and assisted the Director of Military Museums at Fort Klapperkop in Pretoria.

Both museums at the Castle were dismantled in 1986, during restoration work. When the Maritime Museum was demolished, most of the Navy's ship model collection was moved to the tiny Martello Tower, near Seaforth.

Cdr Bisset then became responsible for planning the Museum of Coast and Anti-Aircraft Artillery at Fort Wynyard, Granger Bay. While there he assisted with Delville Wood Museum displays in France, in 1991.

Educated at Diocesan College, Rondebosch (Bishops) and the University of Cape Town, Cdr Bisset started his military career as an artilleryman.

He did his national service as a clerk in 10 Anti-Aircraft Battery at Youngsfield and later served in the UCT Regiment - a heavy A/A artillery unit, now the Cape Garrison Artillery - before joining the Permanent Force in 1975.


Red tape relating to new buildings, and the enormous cost involved made it impossible for the Directorate of Military Museums to proceed with plans for a new naval museum at Fort Wynyard, and after the transfer of the museum to the Navy in 1987 the Naval Board decided it should be in Simon's Town.

APPENDIX B

SITE MAP AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE WRECK OF THE SAS PIETERMARITZBURG

INFORMATION RETRIEVED FROM

"[http://wikitravel.org/en/Diving the Cape Peninsula and False Bay/SAS Pietermaritzburg](http://wikitravel.org/en/Diving_the_Cape_Peninsula_and_False_Bay/SAS_Pietermaritzburg)"

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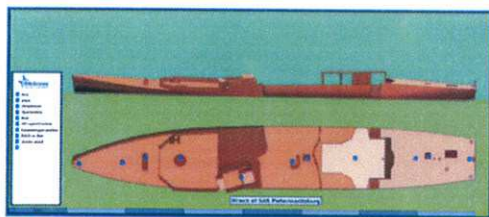
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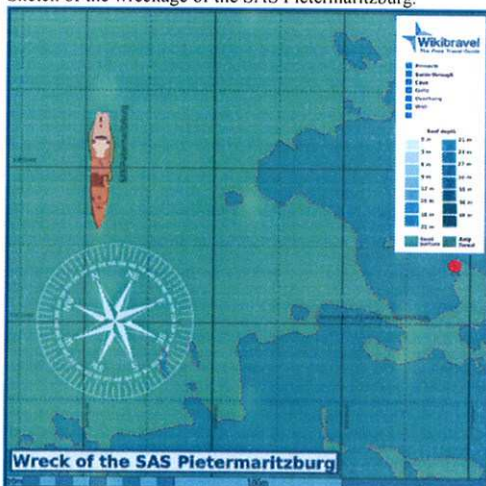
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The dive site **SAS Pietermaritzburg** is a recent wreck in the Miller's Point area on the False Bay coast of the [Cape Peninsula](#), near [Cape Town](#) in the [Western Cape](#) province of [South Africa](#).

Understand



Sketch of the wreckage of the SAS Pietermaritzburg.



Map showing the position and orientation of the wreck of the SAS Pietermaritzburg.

This is an easily accessible wreck in rapidly deteriorating condition, at a moderate depth. It is a popular site for introductory wreck dives and night dives, mainly due to the moderate depth and short distance from the launch site.

The wreck is of some historical interest, but is not currently protected by legislation as it is not of archaeological importance and it is less than 60 years since it sank.

There is a movement to have the wreck protected due to its historical interest and popularity as a dive site, as commercial salvors have been removing parts of the wreck (July 2012).

Close inspection of the wreckage in early August 2012 indicate that the rumours of salvors removing large amounts of structural plating are grossly exaggerated. There are no signs of cutting, no significant sections have gone missing, and the plating is so badly corroded that it would be of little value. The collapse of the central section of the hull is entirely consistent with simple corrosion wastage and structural collapse due to sea conditions.

Position

S34°13.303' E018° 28.465' (PS)

S34°13.300' E018° 28.452' (GW)

This site is in a Marine Protected Area (2004). A permit is required.

Name

The keel of this Algerine class ocean minesweeper was laid down on 8th October 1942 at Lobnitz and Co. Renfrewshire, the ship was launched on 18th June 1943 and completed on 7th October 1943. The ship was first commissioned in the Royal Navy as HMS Pelorus and took part in the D-day invasion of Normandy in the Second World War as the lead ship sweeping mines to make way for the invasion fleet. Sold in 1947 to the South African Navy the renamed "HMSAS Pietermaritzburg" was used as a training vessel and minesweeper. It was last decommissioned in July 1964, served as accommodations for the Mine Countermeasures squadron from 1968 to 1991 and was scuttled by explosive charges on 12 November 1994 to form an artificial reef.

	Specifications	
Displacement loaded	1330	tonnes
Length over all	68 .6	m
Beam	10 .8	m
Draft	3 .5	m
Indicated power	2400	Hp
Boilers	2	3-drum
Engines	2	Vertical 4-cylinder triple expansion
Screws	2	
Speed	16	knots
Endurance	5500	n. miles at 10 knots
Complement	115	
Armament	2	4" guns
	2	40mm Bofors Anti-aircraft
	4	Depth charge launchers

Depth

Maximum depth is 22 meters on the sand to the stern. The sand at the bow is about a metre shallower, except in the scour pit, which is about 2m deep at the forefoot. The deck at the bow is at about 17m, and it slopes down gradually to the region of the wheelhouse, where the hull has fractured across the width of the vessel. The forward section is canted to port, and the midship section remains fairly level. The hull is also fractured at the break of the quarterdeck which is now almost as high as the midship section. The quarterdeck slopes down from 17m at the high point to starboard at the break, down to about 19m on the port side of the transom. The high point is at 16.5m depth at the aft end of the superstructure, and the top of the bridgedeck is a local high point at 17m depth.

Visibility

Visibility is not often as much as 10m, and frequently less than 8m, but occasionally it can exceed 15m, and there have been reports of divers spotting the wreck from the boat, which implies flat water and visibility of at least 18m. Visibility at the surface is not always the same as at the bottom, and it is

quite common to have a murky surface layer several metres deep, with better visibility below. This may result in good visibility but poor lighting on the wreck.

Topography

The wreck was originally upright on the flat shell-sand bottom. The ship lay almost level, imbedded in the bottom as if floating in sand. Bow is to the south, Longitudinal axis close to north/south True. The deep scouring at sides where holes let water surge through has largely filled in since the structural collapse of the hull, and is now mostly around the bow. Water movement still prevents heavy silting and washes disturbed sediment clear fairly quickly.

Condition and access to the interior

The hull structure has weakened and collapsed along the lower sides, and the whole wreck forward of the quarterdeck has slumped by a couple of metres, and on the port side even more, and the gunwales which were originally several metres above the sand are now only about 3m from the sand to starboard and about a metre for much of the port side of the foredeck. This has done a lot of interior damage, and previously open access is now compromised. The forward part of the superstructure has completely collapsed, and is now a low profile heap of rusted plate fragments lying just above the level of the sand. The after part of the superstructure just forward of the break of the quarterdeck still stands, but most of the side plating has gone and you can swim straight through under the deck in most places. The quarterdeck has been least affected by these collapses, but the plating has corroded to the extent that a shot weight can fall through the deck plating.

The forward part of the hull has consequently tilted to port with the remains of the foredeck at a fairly steep angle, and parts of the deck have fallen away altogether, particularly in the area of the bridge deck. A strong storm could easily cause further collapse, and penetration of the hull should be considered fairly high risk, even in mild surge, and dangerous in a strong surge.

Penetrations of the quarterdeck section are relatively straightforward, there is good access from the fracture on both sides of the hull and from the opening in the deck plating in the aftermost compartment. The interleading doors are fairly large and clear, but there is a certain amount of snaggy stuff in the form of racks and wiring hanging around. The hatchway from the middle compartment is not very big, but should be big enough for most divers if you don't mind getting reef organisms all over your suit, so best not used unless really necessary. The aft compartment has a spacious opening in the deck which admits a fair amount of light.

The main part of the hull is partly accessible. There is an entrance aft from the fracture area on the starboard side of the transverse bulkhead which is quite low due to the subsidence, and partly obstructed by the quarterdeck structure. This opens into an alleyway leading forward with small compartments on both sides. The forward end of the alleyway opens into a machinery space and you have to go to starboard to get around the central mass of equipment (there are lots of loose and dangling bits of debris in this area), and can then exit at the midhips fracture area to starboard of the engine. The small compartments are on the whole very dark, fairly silty, and don't have much of interest in them, and their doors are quite narrow.

On the port side of the quarterdeck fracture area there is a doorway into a small cluttered compartment.

The aft superstructure is easily accessible, as most of the side plating has rusted away, leaving a mainly open sided structure with a deck above and below. This has a few snags, but is relatively clear, and would not normally be considered a penetration, as you can swim straight through most places without touching sides or changing direction.

The waist deck has collapsed over the boilers, which are now exposed though the gaps in the deck plating. It is possible to penetrate the space to the starboard side of the boilers through the fracture zone at the aft end of this space, but it is low and there is not much to see besides broken plating.

The wheelhouse and bridge deck have completely collapsed. All that remains of the forward superstructure is a lot of thin rusty plate in a low heap in the collapsed area of the hull.

The forecastle section, from the forward gun position to the bow, is canted to port by about 40°, and access may be possible from the fracture area, but it does not look safe, with loose plates and lots of dangling cable and other snags obscuring narrow tilted doorways and sharp changes of direction. The stability of the structure is doubtful, and there are no alternative exits.

Geology: Flat sand bottom surrounds the wreck. The nearest known reef is about 100m to the East, and is granite.

Conditions

The site is exposed to wind from all directions and waves from the south east and south west. The site will usually be at it's best in conditions of limited surge, particularly if penetration is intended, as the wreck is fairly shallow. Generally this means a low South Westerly component. If the south-easter is blowing there may be a slight current setting northwards, and the chop may make it difficult to see a diver on the surface. Wind chop from the north does not usually reach to the depth of the wreck. The site is usually dived in the winter, as a South Easterly swell will often reduce visibility and make the surge unpleasant.

Get in

The site can only safely be accessed by boat, usually from Millers Point slipway, which is about 1km away. It would be possible to swim out from the shore, but this is an area of heavy boat traffic at times, and the risk is a bit high, as many of the skippers are not as diligent as they should be.

See

Marine life

The wreckage is heavily encrusted with invertebrates, and home to several species of fish. In September 2010 the dominant invertebrate species was clearly the Mauve sea cucumber, which is actually more a light grey in colour. The external surface of the wreck was covered anmost everywhere with a carpet of these echinoderms. As of July 2011, there are far fewer cucumbers present, and many areas of the wreck are nearly bare. This may be a consequence of bad weather and structural collapse.



• Invertebrates have colonised the wreck



• Octopus



• Sea squirts

Features

Steel wreck of some historical interest, in rapidly deteriorating condition.



• The anchor winch on the foredeck



• Looking out to starboard from under the quarterdeck



• Heavy machinery punched a hole in the deck when the hull subsided

Photography

This can be a good site for photography if the surge is moderate. Wide angle and fisheye lenses will capture more of the mood of the wreck if the visibility is poor, which is often the case. There will also always be subjects for macro photography, but then you might as well dive on a reef.

Routes

No particular routes recommended. Start at wherever the shotline falls, and swim round the hull, then work your way up to the superstructure. Those who are more interested in the marine life will find the heaviest encrustations along the gunwales and on projections above the deck. There are still a few non-trivial penetrations possible, but they are getting more risky as the structure deteriorates, and should probably not be attempted in a surge, as this may precipitate further collapse, and you would really not want to be inside if that happens. Noise of structural movement should be a strong indicator to stay out. The visibility inside is also likely to be poor if there is much water movement.

Stay safe

Hazards

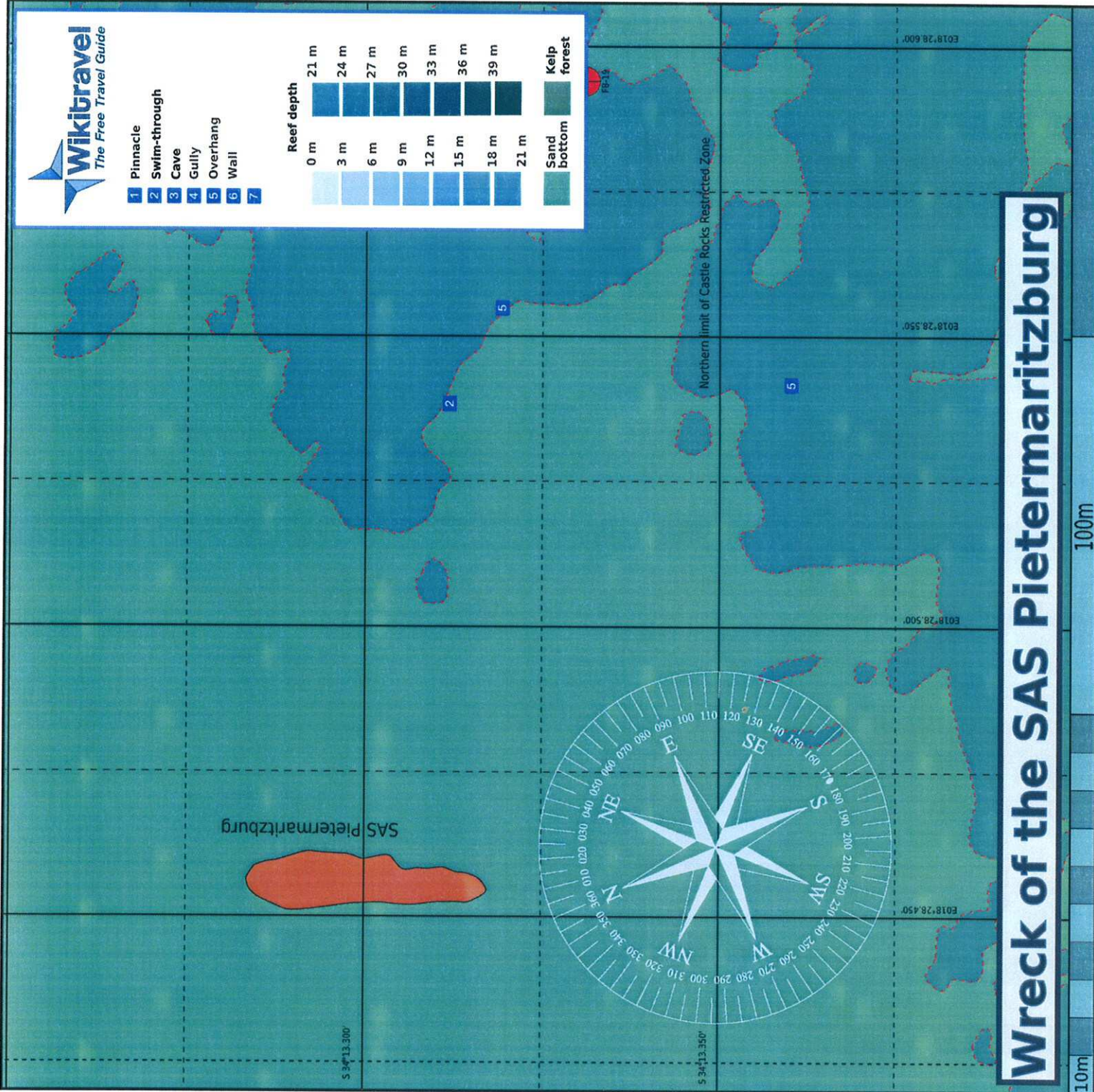
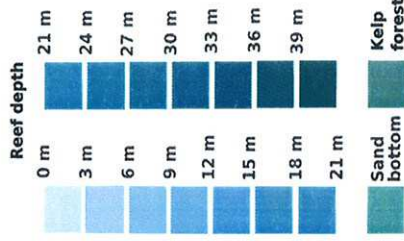
The wreck is breaking up and is structurally unstable. There are the usual wreck diving hazards of entanglement and fouling on structure, and if the surge is strong also a risk of injury on sharp edges of plates and other parts. It is possible that the wreckage may collapse further without notice, particularly in a heavy surge, and there may be surge induced flow into openings in the structure which could drag a diver into the wreckage, causing injury on sharp edged plating and frames, or entrapment in debris. The visibility inside the wreckage may be poor due to disturbed silting, particularly during surgy conditions or after unskilled penetrations, and the interior is currently full of major snags and several rather narrow access points.

Skills

No special skills required for non-penetration dives. Certification for the depth range is expected. This wreck was suitable for penetration dives by suitably competent and equipped divers, however this now less so. Careful planning and reconnaissance is recommended before attempting penetrations, and there is not much inside worth looking at. The site is also suitable for night dives.

Equipment

- 1 Pinnacle
- 2 Swim-through
- 3 Cave
- 4 Gully
- 5 Overhang
- 6 Wall
- 7



Wreck of the SAS Pietermaritzburg



- 1 Bow
- 2 Stern
- 3 Wheelhouse
- 4 Quaterdeck
- 5 Hold
- 6 Aft superstructure
- 7 Forward gun position
- 8 Hatch or door
- 9 Anchor winch
- 10

10m

Wreck of SAS Pietermaritzburg

