

*The JR More, based at the Durban Maritime Museum had steelwork refurbished was blasted and repainted during an extensive refurbishment. Picture: Supplied.*

## Grand old ladies of Durban Maritime Museum back after refurbishment

By Daily News Reporter  Mar 10, 2020



Durban - Two grand old ladies of the Durban Maritime Museum will once again take up their rightful places at the popular tourist destination on the city's esplanade.

The iconic ships had undergone much-needed refurbishment on the dry-docks of Durban based ship repair and building firm, Southern African Shipyards.

Since August 2019, the JR More, a 59-year-old tug and the SAS Durban, a wooden minesweeper from the same era were receiving tender; love and care from ship repair staff at Southern African Shipyards.

Under the watchful eye of the company's Ship Repair Manager, Natasha Ramdhanee and her skilled staff of tradesmen, the vessels have been given the royal treatment befitting their grand stature.

On the JR More, Southern African Shipyards refurbished the steelwork, did blasting and repainted the vessel, while on the SAS Durban, the ship repair teams repaired damaged and rotten woodwork.

Both these vessels had extensive underwater repairs that were urgently required to stop the ingress of water on various plates on their hulls.

Ramdhanee said they were delighted by the outcome of the repairs and so is the Durban Maritime Museum who are very happy with the work that had been done.

She added that refurbishing the two grand old ladies of the sea was not a job to be rushed.

"We took out time refurbishing the ladies because of the delicacy of the vessels. We had to treat them like old ladies and with the respect they deserved," Ramdhanee said.

"After spending more time than we initially anticipated with the repairs we have now given them both new leases on life and they can once again take pride of place at the museum," she added.

The JR More was handed over to the museum in 1982.

Soon after that, it was joined by the SAS Durban and was officially handed over to the museum by then Chief of the Navy, Vice- Admiral Glen Syndercomber in May 1988.

SAS Durban is one of the last surviving 'Ton' class minesweepers developed originally for the Royal Navy and later introduced in several navies, among them being South Africa.

SAS Durban was the first naval ship to be built for the South African Navy, as opposed to ships transferred from the Royal Navy. An estimated 120 of this type of wooden-hulled minesweepers were built with over 30 of those going to commonwealth countries.

South Africa received the largest number – ten of which the first eight were transferred from the Royal Navy.

SAS Durban and SAS Windhoek were ordered and built specifically for the SA Navy.

SAS Durban was built by Camper and Nicholson of Gosport.

Zamakhize Mkhize, the Boat Supervisor at the Durban Maritime Museum says vessels should be dry-docked every five years but due to the age of the JR More and SAS Durban they should be dry-docked every three years to preserve them for longer.

She said that the two vessels required intensive repairs to keep them safe for the public use and that was the reason they chose Southern African Shipyards for the refurbishment.

Mkhize said the JR More and SAS Durban were important artefacts in Durban's maritime history and the vessels give the thousands of tourists who pass through the museum every year a glimpse into the past.

"It's important to know about your past. What has happened in the past affects how we approach the future," she said.

"The JR More and SAS Durban are exhibits that display the olden day seafarer life at sea. This provides an interesting experience for modern seafarers to see how seafarers lived before on vessels. This brings the experience to life as you walk and explore the vessels. There is also a pirate room which excites children greatly. It's full of treasure, it displays the way pirates lived before, the kind of diet they ate etc. it's an exciting time that is presented in the room. The exhibits in the Port Natal Maritime Museum are an important window into maritime history. And every single exhibit is important. The public should come to the museum to learn about maritime history and to experience the feeling that comes with all the artefacts displayed," she said.

Mkhize said that among the displays at the museum that enthralls visitors is the 100-year-old uLundi.

"This vessel uLundi and all the other artefacts onsite have a rich history which the public could learn from. The public should come to visit the museum not only to view uLundi or the JR More and SAS Durban but also to view all the other artefacts that have a very interesting history associated with them, like the NCS Challenger which is a vessel in which Anthony Steward sailed with around the world".

He made an epic voyage navigating the globe in an open vessel.

The Britannia room is designed to display the maritime history in an exciting manner. The museum also displays a bit of World War 2, there's a statue of the Lady in White in the museum. the museum also caters for ship model lovers, we have a good collection of ship models as part of our exhibition," she said.

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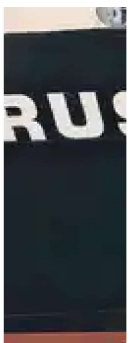
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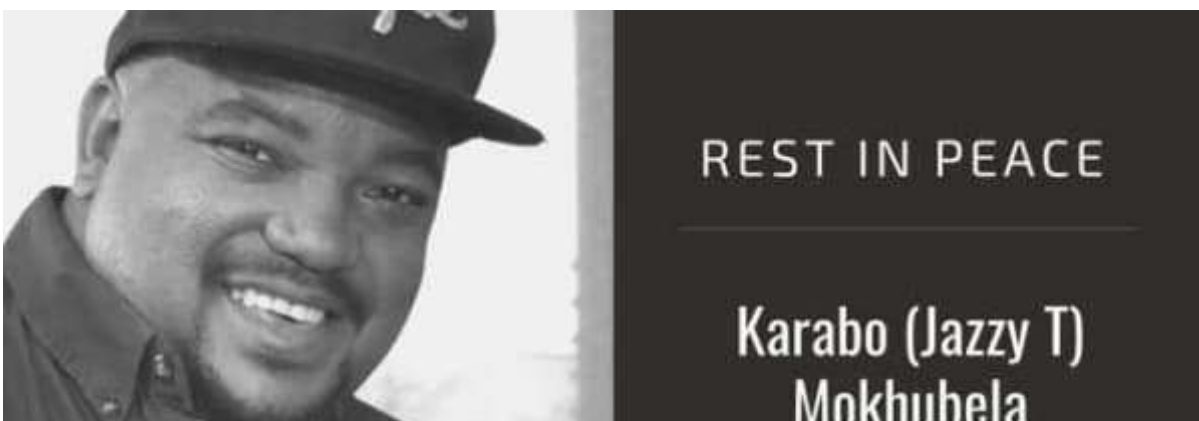
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