



FACTS

Type:	Bar Class Boom Defence Vessel
Length:	193.57 feet (59 metres)
Breadth:	32.02 feet (9.76 metres)
Depth:	11.06 feet (3.37 metres)
Gross Tonnage:	960
Net Tonnage:	750
Engine:	Triple Expansion Reciprocating Engine
Shafts:	One
Indicated Horse Power (IHP):	850
Speed:	11 knots
Fuel:	186 tons of oil fuel
Range:	3 000 miles
Armament:	One 12-pounder AA gun
Complement:	32

HISTORY OF THE SAS SOMERSET

The *HMS Barcross* was built for the Royal Navy in the Blythe Shipyard in 1941 and launched in the same year. She was the first in a class of 76 similar boom defence vessels which were built during the World War II. After being commissioned in 1942, she sailed to South Africa where she was stationed in Saldanha Bay, laying and servicing booms. On 23 January 1943 she was renamed *HMSAS Barcross*, a name that she kept until 1947 when she was laid up at the Salisbury Island Naval Base at Durban.

In 1955 the vessel was renamed the *SAS Somerset* and recommissioned as part of the SA Navy and operational duties were restricted to salvage operations.

The ship was originally coal fired, but converted in 1959 to burn oil. New boilers were installed in 1967.

The name derives from the horse which Dick King rode in 1842 on his historical ride between Durban and Grahamstown. He completed a journey of 960 km (600 miles) in 10 days in order to request help for the besieged British garrison at Port Natal (now the Old Fort, Durban) - hence the seahorse in the ship's crest.

Known as the African Queen, she was decommissioned on 31 March 1986. At the time she was the longest serving ship in the SA Navy. She was one of the first ships of the SA Navy when it was formed after World War II. She witnesses many of the SA Navy's historic milestones and later played an important role in the history of marine salvage in South Africa.

On 24 May 1988 the *SAS Somerset* was towed from Simon's Town to Table Bay harbour where she was refurbished before she was officially handed over on 2 September 1998 by the Chief of the South African Navy, Vice-Admiral G Syndercombe, to the South African Cultural History Museum that later amalgamated with four other museums to form the Southern Flagship Institution, now known as Iziko Museums of South Africa.

Do visit the SA Maritime Centre in the V&A Waterfront next to ABSA Bank. Please ask staff for directions.