

# Unicorn ship makes 1 000th call at Mossel Bay mooring

## ■ Terry Hutson

The 16 500-dwt Unicorn coastal tanker *Breede*, which entered service with Unicorn Tankers last year, became the 1 000th vessel to come alongside and be moored to the Single Buoy Mooring (SBM) at Mossel Bay in the Southern Cape at the weekend.

Mossel Bay is one of those lesser ports that seldom appears in the shipping news. Generally the harbour is too small for anything as large of a deep riding tanker, hence the establishment some years ago of two offshore moorings - the SBM (or Single Point Mooring as it is called in Mossel Bay) which is situated 1.5 nautical miles offshore in a water depth of 21 metres and a second mooring some distance away.

The second mooring, a Conventional Buoy Mooring (CBM) is closer inshore than the SBM.

According to Johan Gerber of PetroSA, which operates the local refinery and tank farm at Mossel Bay, the buoy is used for the export of final products like diesel and petrol, but condensates and reformat products are also imported through the facility.

He said the product is pumped to or from the refinery overland via a pipeline to the tank farm at Voorbaai, which is adjacent to

the harbour and from there it gets pumped via a subsea pipeline to the SBM.

For the technically minded, the SBM buoy is known as a Catenary Anchor Leg Mooring or CALM type and was developed by Imodco and Shell and is designed for use in shallow and relatively calm waters, although one example has already been installed in the North Sea in waters more than a hundred metres deep.

The Mossel Bay SBM was dry docked at Mossel Bay harbour in October last year for a complete refurbishment, which involved bringing a large heavy duty crane to the Cape from Gauteng to lift the 200-ton plus buoy from the water. After completion of the refit the buoy was returned to its mooring offshore.

The two Mossel Bay offshore moorings are managed and maintained by Smit Amandla Marine on behalf of PetroSA.

Smit Amandla provides each visiting tanker with a team consisting of a loading master and three divers, who stay on board the tanker until all cargo operations and documentation are completed. The loading master also assists the NPA harbour pilot with berthing operations even though the operation takes place at sea and not inside Mossel Bay harbour.

A close watch is kept on the sea and



The tanker *HC Dalia* on the SBM at Mossel Bay.

Photo: PetroSA

weather conditions throughout the discharging operations.

Smit Amandla Marine also maintains a buoy tender vessel named *Pentow Malgas* to assist with these operations.

*Breede*, the tanker which performed the noteworthy 1 000th mooring, was built in China for Unicorn Tankers. Although lo-

cally owned and managed, the ship flies the United Kingdom flag but is crewed by South Africans. *Breede* is a sister ship to the *Berg* and to the fleet of new builds under construction, named *Kowie*, *Umvoti*, *Gamtoos*, *Gouritz* after South African rivers, with one other still to be named.



The refurbished SBM ready to go back in the water after a full refit.

Photo: PetroSA

