

Wellknown Unicorn ship makes 1000th call at Mossel Bay mooring

SOUTHERN CAPE. - The 16 500-dwt Unicorn coastal tanker Breede became the 1000th vessel to come alongside and be moored to the single buoy mooring (SBM) at Mossel Bay 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 as a deep riding tanker, hence the establishment some years ago of two offshore moorings - the SBM, 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 end-products such as 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, adjacent to the harbour, and from there it is pumped via a sub-sea pipeline to the SBM.

For the technically minded, the SBM is known as a catenary anchor leg mooring, or CALM type and was developed by Imodco and Shell for use in shallow and relatively calm waters. One example has been installed in the North Sea in waters of more than a hundred metres.

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 National Ports Authority 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 weather conditions throughout the discharging operations.

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

Breede was built in China for Unicorn Tankers. Although locally 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 newbuilds under construction, named Kowie, Umvoti, Gamtoos and Gouritz after South African rivers, with one other still to be named.



The tanker HC Dalia on the single buoy mooring at Mossel Bay. Pictures supplied by PetroSA

