

# **SOUTH AFRICAN NAVAL PERSONNEL SECONDED TO THE ROYAL NAVY 1940–1942**

by **Cdr W.M. Bisset\***

Statistics of South African naval personnel seconded to the Royal Navy between December 1943 and September 1945 have been published in Annexure B to an article in *Militaria* 12/1 1982. Since then I have traced similar statistics in the SADF Archives for June 1940 and June 1941. To these I have added details extracted from the Navy Lists for August 1941 and August 1942.

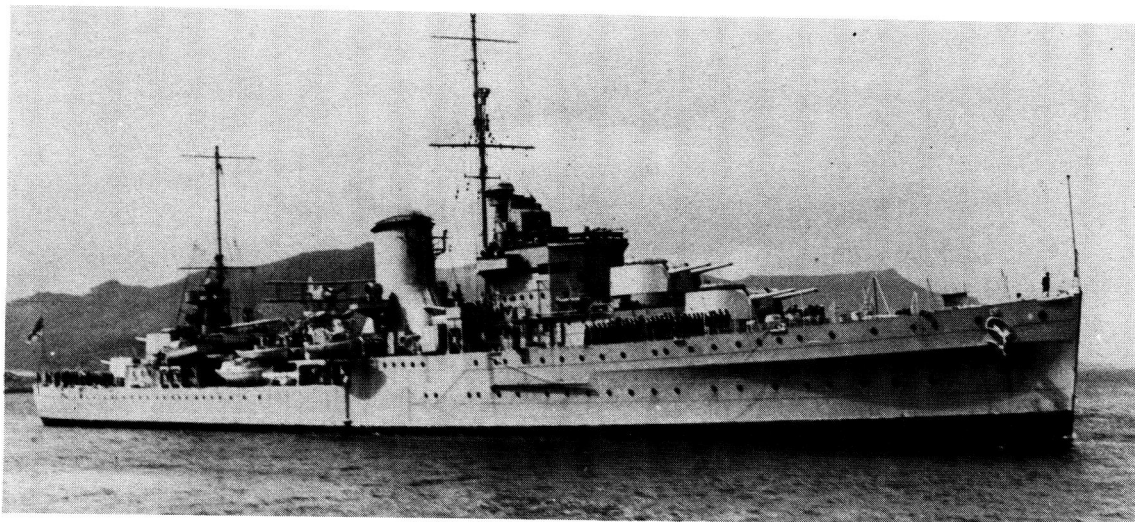
The publication of this hitherto inaccessible information makes it possible to gain a clearer picture of the important role played by our seconded naval personnel and to see how it changed during the war.

The South African Naval historical Record in-

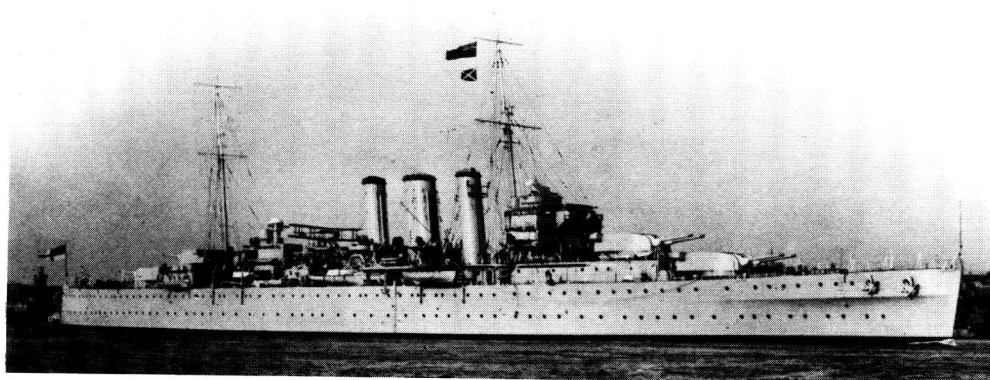
clude the following description of the 28 South Africans serving in HMS Neptune written by the Commanding Officer Capt R.C. O'Conor RN:

'They will prove a real asset to the ship. Their general smartness and intelligence has on more than one occasion put to shame young active service ratings. All are good 'mixers'. It has been a great surprise to all of us to observe how quickly they adapted themselves to what must be for them a very different life. I have been very favourably impressed by their high standard of conduct and general ability.'

\*Cdr W.M. Bisset is SSO SA Naval Museums.



***HMS Neptune, a Leander class cruiser mined off Libya on 19 December 1941. 18 South Africans were lost.***



***HMS Dorsetshire, a Norfolk class cruiser. On 27 May 1941 the Dorsetshire helped to sink the Bismarck.***

## SECONDED SA NAVAL PERSONNEL 1940–1942

Ship or shore Establishment	Type and class	Officers and mids June 1940	Ratings June 1940	Officers and mids Aug 1941	Ratings June 1941	Officers and mids Aug 1942
<i>Active</i>	'A' Class destroyer			1		1
<i>Adventure</i>	Minelayer					
<i>Afrikaner</i>	Parent Ship, Simonstown		207	13	232	31
<i>Afrikaner III and IV &amp; awaiting draft</i>				13	93	
<i>Alarm</i>	Algerine class minesweeper					1
<i>Albatros</i>	Repair ship		1		11	
<i>Alcantara</i>	Armed merchant cruiser		5	1	5	
<i>Antelope</i>	'A' class destroyer					1
<i>Asturias</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				15	
<i>Birmingham</i>	Southampton class cruiser				13	
<i>Bridgewater</i>	Bridgewater class sloop			2	18	1
<i>Bulolo</i>	Armed merchant cruiser		23		21	
<i>Burdock</i>	Flower class corvette			1		1
<i>Canton</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				6	
<i>Cape Sable</i>	Decoy vessel, Armed merchant cruiser				4	
<i>Cape Town</i>	Carlisle class cruiser			1	1	1
<i>Caradoc</i>	Caledon class cruiser				1	
<i>Carnarvon Castle</i>	Armed merchant cruiser		31		44	
<i>Cathay</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				6	
<i>City of Durban</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				6	
<i>Comorin</i>	Armed merchant cruiser		18		11	
<i>Corfu</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				6	
<i>Cornwall</i>	Kent class cruiser		46	3	84	
<i>Cumberland</i>	Kent class cruiser		24	1	87	1
<i>Dasher</i>	Archer class escort carrier					1
<i>Dauntless</i>	'D' class cruiser					1
<i>Delhi</i>	'D' class cruiser				25	
<i>Delphinium</i>	Flower class corvette				3	
<i>Devonshire</i>	London class cruiser			1	22	1
<i>Dolphin</i>	Submarine depot, Gosport			1		
<i>Dorothy Gray</i>	Auxiliary patrol vessel			1		
<i>Dorsetshire</i>	Norfolk class cruiser		16	3	66	
<i>Dragon</i>	'D' class cruiser			1	36	1
<i>Drake</i>	Parent Ship Devonport			1		
<i>Duke</i>	RN Training Establishment Great Malvern, Worcestershire					1
<i>Eaglet</i>	Parent ship Liverpool					1
<i>Edinburgh Castle and Vindictive</i>	Depot ship, Freetown Fleet repair ship		40	4	67	
<i>Eland</i>	Naval base, Freetown					4
<i>Elfin</i>	Tender (submarine base?)			1		
<i>Encounter</i>	'E' class destroyer				10	
<i>Enterprise</i>	'E' class cruiser				20	
<i>Erica</i>	Flower class corvette				4	
<i>Esperance Bay</i>	Armed merchant cruiser		9		5	
<i>Forward II</i>	Parent ship, Newhaven					1
<i>Gloucester</i>	Southampton class cruiser		38		29	
<i>Hawkins</i>	Hawkins class cruiser			1	50	1
<i>Hermes</i>	Courageous class aircraft carrier			2	77	
<i>Impala</i>	Anti-submarine vessel				8	
<i>Indomitable</i>	Illustrious class aircraft carrier					1
<i>Isis</i>	'S' class destroyer				12	
<i>King Gruffydd</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				5	
<i>Kos 21</i>	Anti-submarine vessel			1		
<i>Lanka</i>	East Indies Station Colombo					1
<i>Latona</i>	Manxman class minelayer				5	
<i>London</i>	London class cruiser					1
<i>Mauritius</i>	Fiji class cruiser				11	
<i>Medway</i>	Submarine depot ship				1	
<i>Milford</i>	Falmouth class sloop		9		14	
<i>Nelson</i>	Nelson class battleship				20	
<i>Neptune</i>	Leander class cruiser			1	27	
<i>Newcastle</i>	Southampton class cruiser				18	
<i>Nile</i>	Base at Alexandria			1	77	3
<i>HMHS Oxfordshire</i>	Hospital ship				2	
<i>Pandora</i>	'P' class submarine					1

**SECONDED SA NAVAL PERSONNEL 1940–1942**

Ship or shore Establishment	Type and class	Officers and mids June 1940	Ratings June 1940	Officers and mids Aug 1941	Ratings June 1941	Officers and mids Aug 1942
<i>Phoebe</i>	Dido class cruiser				5	
<i>Pretoria Castle</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				25	
<i>Primula</i>	Flower class corvette				7	
<i>Pursuivant</i>	Base Falkland Islands				1	
<i>Queen of Bermuda</i>	Armed merchant cruiser				12	
<i>Royal Sovereign</i>	Royal Sovereign class battleship			2	41	1
<i>Saker II</i>	British Admiralty Delegation, Washington, USA					
<i>Shropshire</i>	London class cruiser		82	2	143	1
<i>Snapdragon</i>	Flower class corvette				1	2
<i>Sobkra</i>	Anti-submarine vessel					1
<i>Tamarisk</i>	Flower class corvette					1
<i>Tynwald</i>	Auxiliary anti-aircraft vessel (seagoing)					1
<i>Vernon</i>	Torpedo School and Experimental Establishment, Portsmouth			1		
<i>Victorious</i>	Illustrious class aircraft carrier			1		
<i>Vulcan</i>	Coastal Forces depot ship				2	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>						
	RN Barracks Chatham, Devonport and Portsmouth				6	
	Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships		40		103	
	Awaiting draft to DEMS		23			
	Armed guards in 2 Norwegian merchant ships		9			
	Temp duty in HM Transports		3			
	Admiralty Service Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban		37			
	RNVR (SA) Bases and SANS HQ		8		10	
	Serving at RNVR (SA) Bases	8				
	Under training at RNVR (SA) Bases		56		68	
	New entries under training at RNVR Bases		81			
	Lent to Seaward Defence Force	34	130		68	
	SDF Tempy RNVR (SA) under Admiralty				143	
	Torpedo and Mining Department					1
	Other officers serving under the Admiralty	30				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1 913</b>	<b>65</b>