Commodore Fairbairn dies

Staff Reporter

COMMODORE John Fairbairn, former commanding officer of the S A naval dockyard at Simon's Town, has died in Tygerberg Hospital after an illness. He was 72.

He was a great-great-grandson of John Fairbairn, an early campaigner for Press freedom in South Africa.

Commodore Fairbairn served in a number of naval vessels in war and peace and planted the flag annexing Marion Island to South Africa in 1948.

He was educated at Diocesan College, Rondebosch, and joined the South Africa division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) in the 1930s.

At the outbreak of World War 2 he became an officer in South Africa's fledgling navy. He commanded several of South Africa's "little ships" along the coast and in the Mediterranean and was later appointed naval officer in command of Saldanha in 1944.

Commodore Fairbairn

He was put in charge of the SA naval contingent for the victory parade in London in 1946.

Commodore Fairbairn was in command of the Loch-class frigate HMSAS Transvaal at the annexation of Marion and Prince Edward islands in 1948.

He unveiled a commemorative plaque five years ago when he revisited Marion Island with members of the National Monuments Council.

He was appointed naval officer in command of Simon's Town dockyard in 1965 and became the commanding officer of the dockyard three years later. He retired in 1972.

His wife died in England in 1963. He is survived by his daughter Tessa.