

No. 27662

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
and
SOUTH AFRICA**

**Exchange of letters constituting an agreement concerning the
regulation of the terms of settlement of the salvaging of
the wreck of HMS Birkenhead. Pretoria, 22 September
1989**

Authentic text: English.

*Registered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
on 23 November 1990.*

**ROYAUME-UNI DE GRANDE-BRETAGNE
ET D'IRLANDE DU NORD
et
AFRIQUE DU SUD**

**Échange de lettres constituant un accord relatif aux condi-
tions réglant la récupération de l'épave du navire HMS
Birkenhead. Pretoria, 22 septembre 1989**

Texte authentique : anglais.

*Enregistré par le Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord
le 23 novembre 1990.*

EXCHANGE OF NOTES CONSTITUTING AN AGREEMENT¹ BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF THE TERMS OF SETTLEMENT OF THE SALVAGING OF THE WRECK OF HMS *BIRKENHEAD*

I

*Her Majesty's Ambassador at Pretoria to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of South Africa*

Pretoria
22 September 1989

Your Excellency

I have the honour to refer to recent discussions between our two Governments about the question of the wreck of the *Birkenhead* and to propose a settlement of all outstanding issues in the following terms:

The wreck of the *Birkenhead* shall, as a military grave, continue to be treated at all stages with respect. In particular, the South African Government shall seek to ensure that the salvors treat reverently and refrain from disturbing or bringing to the surface any human remains which may be discovered at the site of the wreck or in its vicinity. British military historians shall have temporary access for research purposes to salvaged artefacts designated for South African museums.

The South African Government shall as far as possible ensure that representative examples of salvaged artefacts identifiable with a particular British regiment or institution are offered without charge to that regiment (or its successor) or to such institution.

The British Government shall not enter into any salvage contract in respect of the *Birkenhead* and shall not object to the South African Government maintaining its existing salvage arrangements in regard to the wreck under the applicable South African legislation.

If any gold coin (apart from the coins considered to have been in private ownership) were to be recovered, such coin (after deduction of the share due to the salvors in accordance with the existing salvage arrangements) would be shared equally between our two Governments.

In order to facilitate the implementation of these arrangements, consultations shall be held as necessary between representatives of our two Governments, the salvors and other South African institutions concerned.

¹ Came into force on 22 September 1989, the date of the note in reply, in accordance with the provisions of the said notes.