

Mersey's Biggest Tanker will Operate under the Dutch Flag

The biggest tanker in the fleet of Shell Tankers N.V., Rotterdam, will be the 65,500-d.w.t. *Sepia*, which was launched by Messrs Cammell Laird & Co. (Shipbuilders and Engineers), Limited, Birkenhead, recently. The ship is the largest and the longest ship yet built in the area. Named by Mrs. H. Wilkinson, wife of Mr. H. Wilkinson, a managing director of the Royal Dutch Shell Group, the ship is the second of three 65,000-ton tankers building in the United Kingdom for the Group. The first of these, the *Serenia*, was launched in October 1960, by Vickers-Armstrongs (Shipbuilders), Ltd., and the third, the *Solen*, is building by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson, Ltd. The two last-named vessels will be operated under the British flag.

As Mr. L. Schepers, a managing-director of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group remarked in an address after the launching ceremony, the ship is by far the largest yet built by the yard for the Group. Her launching nearly coincides with the Group's decision to sell another 16 older ships in addition to the 20 sold in 1960, which is explained by the Group's aim for greater efficiency and economy.

The *Sepia* is the second of her name to be launched for Shell, the first being a 9,000-tonner launched in 1906. The new ship costs 30 times the cost of the original one, but on the other hand the new big ship is the equivalent of 10 of the original 9,000 tonners in terms of transportation equivalent. The ship is a far cry from the s.s. *Attaka*, shown in the accompanying picture. The *Attaka* (ex-*Sublime*) was one of 12 steam hoppers purchased by Shell in 1899 from the Suez Canal Co. and converted to carry oil in bulk. Of small draught, they were particularly suitable for conveying crude oil from Borneo fields to Balik Papan refinery and to supply products from main ocean depots to small but profitable markets in the East not previously open to bulk oil trade.

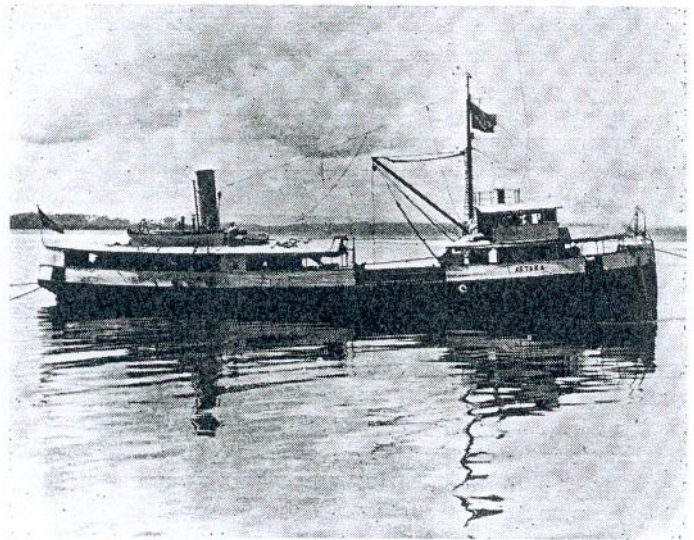
The *Attaka*, an iron screw steamer of 310 tons gross, was built by Lobnitz & Co., Renfrew. Her propulsion machinery consisted of two compound engines, each of 260 i.h.p. In 1907, when the shipping interests of the Shell Transport & Trading Company and the Royal Dutch Company merged, the ship was transferred to the Bataafsche Petroleum Mij., The Hague, for trading in the then Dutch East Indies. Towards the end of 1928 the *Attaka* was converted to a lighter. In 1933 the ship was sold to the Royal Netherlands Navy for use as a gunnery target.

The *Attaka* was one of the series of vessels which included the *Ouady*, *Peluse*, *Port Twefik*, *Said*, *Serapeum*, *Suez*, *Toussoum*, *Rhamses*, and *Timsah*. The four first-named vessels as well as the *Suez* were all transferred to the Nederlandsche Industrie en Handel Mij (Royal Dutch Petroleum Company) to be followed by the *Serapeum* and the *Toussoum*.

At the time of the transfer the combined fleets of the Shell Transport & Trading Company and the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company numbered 28 ships, totalling 142,000 tons d.w. Since then the fleet has grown steadily and today companies within the Royal Dutch/Shell Group either manage or have on charter some 550 ships comprising various flags and approximating 10 million tons d.w. This is about one-sixth of the world tanker tonnage.

Progress of shipping under the Shell flag is further reflected in the size of the tankers constituting the fleet. These mainly range from 15,000 to 47,000/48,000 tons, but the launching of the 65,000-ton *Sepia* points to still bigger ships. Nor is the ship representative of the biggest size of vessel now owned by the Group, for at the end of January, the Group took delivery of the *Sitala*, one of two 74,000-tonners ordered from the Chantiers de l'Atlantique, Saint Nazaire, France, by the Société Maritime Shell. The *Sitala* is the biggest Shell tanker operated under the French flag. The ship is capable of transiting the Suez Canal with a cargo of 60,000 tons of crude oil from the Middle East and can lift the remaining 14,000 tons in one of the Mediterranean ports.

Ships like these are a decided advance from the initial *Murex*, the first of eight ships of between 5/6,000 tons ordered by Marcus Samuel (later to become the first Lord Bearstead), founder of the Shell Line, after he had seen tankers carrying oil in



The *Attaka*, an early Shell Tanker

bulk across the Caspian Sea. The *Murex* was named after a shell, by which Marcus Samuel established a practice which has been perpetuated to this day. However, when the Eagle Oil Fleet was integrated with the Shell Tanker Fleet in January, 1960, their vessels retained their original names which were derived from the names of Saints in the Spanish American Church Calendar.

This brief sketch of the growth of the Shell Tanker fleet illustrates the remark made by Mr. Schepers at Birkenhead that there is nothing very remarkable about a British yard building a tanker which is to fly the Dutch flag, for within the Group these two nationalities have been in partnership for well over 50 years and, as has been said, "disregard the North Sea".

The principal characteristics of the new *Sepia* are as follows:

Length overall	817 ft. 9 in.
Breadth moulded	112 ft. 6 in.
Depth moulded to upper deck	57 ft. 9 in.
Summer draft	about 42 ft. 6 in.
Deadweight	approximately 65,500 tons
Service speed	16½ knots

The vessel is constructed throughout of steel, to Lloyd's special survey, Class 100 A1, carrying petroleum in bulk, and has a raked stem, cruiser stern, poop, midship deckhouse and fore-castle. Above the poop is a large deckhouse. Situated on the casing top is a large swimming pool.

A large deckhouse, upon the bridge amidships, carries the upper bridge deck, and upon this is built the captain's house, the navigating bridge and wheelhouse, etc.

Accommodation is provided in the poop for seamen and engine room ratings, and in addition the refrigerated chambers and sundry store rooms are arranged at the after end. The deckhouse on the poop deck contains the officers' dining saloon and smoke room, crew's recreation room, crew's and petty officers' mess room, petty officers' smoke room, also accommodation for junior engineer officers and petty officers. The senior engineer officers are berthed in the boat deckhouse. An electric lift is fitted to operate between the boat deck and the engine room for the engine room staff. The navigating officers are accommodated in the house on the bridge deck amidships, the captain's accommodation together with that for the pilot, owners' room and lounge, being on the upper bridge deck. All rooms are single berthed and throughout the vessel the accommodation is of the highest quality. The deck and engineer officers have private toilets adjacent to their living rooms. All accommodation is ventilated, air cooled and heated by mechanical means.

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The oil carrying compartments consist of 14 main tanks each sub-divided by longitudinal bulkheads into 3 compartments. The main pump room is placed forward of the machinery space. An oil fuel bunker is fitted forward of the cargo tanks. The peak tank forward is a dry tank and the after peak tank is arranged for water ballast.

The vessel has one foremast, arranged at the after end of the forecastle deck, and a signal mast on top of the wheelhouse for radar scanner, signal and navigating lamps. A derrick post is fitted in the after well, port and starboard. Each post carries one 5-ton derrick for lifting oil hoses. The deck machinery outfit consists of a steam cable capstan, four steam turbine warping capstans, six steam tensioning winches and one steam warping winch.

A complete navigational outfit is supplied, including echo sounding, radio direction finding, radar, and gyro compass. The steering gear is of the electric-hydraulic type having four rams and two independent pumping units. Complete life saving appliances are provided to Ministry of Transport requirements, the boats being of aluminium alloy, under gravity davits.

The propelling machinery consists of one high-pressure and one low-pressure ahead turbine, also one high-pressure and one low-pressure astern turbine. The H.P. astern turbine is overhung from the H.P. ahead and the L.P. astern is incorporated in the low pressure casing. Power is transmitted through double reduction articulated gearing to a single propeller. The turbines are capable of developing a maximum power of 22,000 s.h.p. There are two Babcock & Wilcox watertube boilers of the "Selectable Superheat" marine type, supplying steam at 600 p.s.i.g. and 900° F. temperature at the superheater outlet. A steam generator of Messrs. Caird & Rayner make is fitted for supplying saturated steam at 150 p.s.i.g. to the cargo heating and deck steam, etc.

The engine room auxiliaries are in general electrically driven, the current being supplied by two 600 kW turbo alternators of Messrs. W. H. Allen make. A 125 kW diesel generator supplied by the National Gas and Oil Engine Co. Ltd. with W. H. Allen alternator is provided for emergency and harbour use.