

Over the past 100 years of serving customers, the word 'Shell', our emblem and colours have stood for quality and professionalism in our products and services. We hope you find this short history helpful and interesting.

The word 'Shell' first appeared in 1891, as the trade mark for kerosene being shipped to the Far East by Marcus Samuel and Company. This small London business dealt originally in antiques, curios and oriental seashells. These became so popular – the Victorians used them to decorate trinket boxes in particular – that soon they formed the basis of the company's profitable import and export trade with the Far East.

The word was elevated to corporate status in 1897, when Samuel formed the Shell Transport and Trading Company. By 1904 a Pecten seashell emblem had been introduced to give visual emphasis to the word.

EXPLORING THE ORIGINS

The choice of this emblem was not surprising, particularly since each of Samuel's tankers carrying kerosene to the Far East had been named after a different seashell. But why that Pecten? It was certainly not the simplest shape to reproduce in printed form.

Both the word and Pecten symbol may, however, have been suggested to Samuel and Co. by another interested party. A Mr Graham, who imported Samuel's kerosene into India and sold it as 'Graham's Oil', subscribed capital to – and became a director of – the Shell Transport and Trading Company.

There is some evidence that the Shell emblem was taken from his family coat of arms. The 'St James's Shell' had been adopted by the Graham family after their ancestors made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella in Spain.

Whatever its origins, the original design was a reasonably faithful reproduction of the Pecten or scallop shell. And the current emblem is part of a growing trend towards simplicity in graphic design.

WHY RED AND YELLOW?

The exact origins of the Shell red and yellow are hard to define. True, Samuel and Company first shipped kerosene to the Far East in tin containers painted red. But the link, once again, could be with Spain.

In 1915, when the Shell Company of California first built service stations, they had to compete against other companies. Bright colours were the solution, but colours that would not offend the Californians. Because of the state's strong Spanish connections, the red and yellow of Spain were chosen.

Today, red and yellow, with only minor modifications, are the colours used by Shell companies worldwide.

The Shell emblem - or Pecten - remains one of the greatest brand symbols of the 20th Century



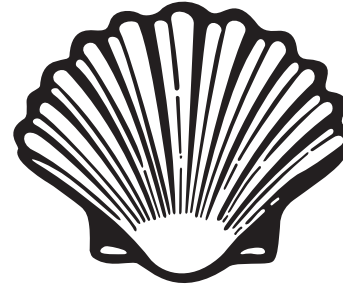
1900



1904



1909



1930



1948



1955



1961



1971



1995



1999