



Navigation

[Home](#)

[Countries](#)

[Fleets](#)

[War-time Stories](#)

[Survivor Stories](#)

[Sitemap](#)

[Fleets](#) >

The Anglo Saxon Petroleum Company (Shell)

In the six years prior to 1900 215 oil cargoes were transported through the Suez Canal by Shell's rapidly growing fleet. Oil production in the Dutch East Indies (Java) enabled tankers to refill at Borneo and Sumatra. In 1907, The 'Shell' Transport and Trading Company and the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company amalgamated with 38 tankers designed for the world oil trade. 1910 The launching of the 'Vulcanus' built in Holland for Royal Dutch-Shell Group propelled by 400 h.p. diesel engines, the first ocean-going motor vessel to be put into commission, all previous tankers were steamships.

At the outbreak of World War 2 on 3 September 1939 the combined fleets of the Anglo Saxon, Eagle Oil and the three Dutch Companies consisted of 208 foreign-going ships, totalling 1,859,136 tons, in addition to this the Shell Co. owned over 1,000 small craft.

During hostilities losses sustained both of ships and crew was 87 vessels of 869,661 tons sunk or destroyed, 796 British and Dutch Officers and Seamen were killed and hundreds more were wounded others were made POW's in the grim camps of Germany, Japan and the Far East. Casualties among the Asiatic crew members were 1,008. losses of ships were replaced partially by wartime acquisition of 41 vessels. Thus at the end of the war the Shell Group was left with much ship-building following the worst ordeal to which the British Merchant Navy has been subjected. A well known fact tankers operating for the Allies were the priority target of the most ruthless attacks by enemy surface-raiders, submarines and aircraft. When German aggression and Hitler's directive "tankers before everything". His general staff knew crude oil and its manifold products were the life-blood of the Fighting services and of industry. In total marine warfare the tanker is described as a 'floating volcano,, when transporting a cargo of aviation gasoline, and motor spirit, white oil, and black oil, an empty tanker is still a volatile bomb. Sunday morning, 3 September 1939. Britain was at war with Germany. All British Merchant Shipping now became subject to Government Control. Oil was in constant supply at Curacao, Galveston , Abadan, Palembang, Borneo, Sumatra, for transport and delivery in peace-time, the outbreak of war found the Shell tankers spaced over the oceans of the world in ports at home and abroad. A screen came down over the movements of all British Shipping, permits from the Board Of Trade were necessary later becoming Ministry of Shipping, and later the British Ministry Of War Transport BMOWT. Prime Minister Churchill's Minister of Shipping and Transport. The Hon. Lord Leathers. for routing and convoy. Tankers and Cargo ships were withdrawn from service and equipped with 4.7 inch Stern Guns, Bofors and Oerlicons and other defensive equipment.

The 'Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war. Never for one moment could we forget that everything happening elsewhere, on land, at sea, or in the air, depended ultimately on its outcome, and amid all other cares we viewed its changing fortunes day by day with hope or apprehension. 'Winston Churchill Vol.V. Britain in order to survive, and manufacture the logistics to produce weapons to equip her fighting forces, needed to import hundreds of thousands of tons of raw material each month. Food was brought into British Ports by Merchant Ships at a huge cost in seamen's lives and shipping tonnage, Britain produced only half enough to feed the population and the influx escaping from Nazi persecution, she had

only a few months reserves. In 1939 the last few months of the year over 50 million tons had to be imported by sea in tankers and cargo ships British and Allied. The spirit of Britain's great sea tradition 'The Brotherhood of the Sea' found early expression in the deeds of these tankermen.

Catapult Aircraft Merchant Ship CAM

One of the strangest and least-known operations of World War Two entailed using merchant ships for launching of aircraft for the protection of convoys in the Atlantic.

The CAM ships had civilian crews and flew the red ensign of British merchant ships. Because their booms and hatches were still accessible, these ships could carry cargoes of all types. The only military personnel aboard were those in a small Royal Air Force flying detachment. A single Hawker Hurricane fighter was carried on a catapult for a onetime launch; no provision was made for recovering the plane.

Once airborne, the pilot had two alternatives: to find land, or to ditch the plane and parachute from it at sea and be picked up by a ship.

These MAC ships flew the red ensign signifying their status as merchant ships. Each ship carried a crew of about 110 men, about 40 of whom constituted the core merchant crew with the balance being Royal Navy personnel who had signed the ship's articles as merchant seamen.

List of The Anglo Saxon Petroleum Company Ships

San Alberto	San Delfino	San Calisto	Ceronia	San Demetrio
Appolonia	San Florentino	Hornshell	Adina	Ohio
San Victoria	Rosalia	San Eliseo	Simni	Manvantara and Merula
San Cirilo	Harpa and Pinna	Carribbean Tanker Ferries	MV Ondina	

War Casualties among officers and crew ratings serving in the Group's Tanker Fleets, 1939-45.

Serving in the Anglo Saxon Fleet 318

Serving in the Eagle Oil Fleet 330

Serving in the Netherlands Fleet 141 Total 789 Lives Lost

Chinese Ratings Serving in the above British Vessels 766

In Netherlands Vessels 242

Total 1,807 Lives Lost.

Merchant Mariners who have made the Supreme Sacrifice in Defence of Their Country. Dedicated to the Officers and Men whose heroism and sacrifice made victory possible.