

Programme for the Opening Ceremony of the  
New Oil Dock at Eastham, 19th January 1954

In their own interest the Press are asked to arrive well  
before the time stated.

---

11- 0/

11-45 a.m. Guests arrive.

During this period the Central Band of the Royal Air Force under the direction of Wing Commander A.E. Simms, O.B.E., L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., will be playing from the bandstand on the site.

12- 0 noon. B.B.C. Commentator will set the scene.

12- 0/

12-25 p.m. B.B.C. Live Broadcast. Commentator Richard Dimpleby.

12-15 p.m. Fanfare of Trumpets by Trumpeters of the Life Guards. (By permission of Colonel E.J.S. Ward, M.V.O., M.C., Commanding Household Cavalry). Trumpet Major - Benjamin Clarke.

Sir Leslie Roberts, C.B.E., Chairman and Managing Director, Manchester Ship Canal Company, will make an important announcement as the S.T.S. "VELLETTIA" moves forward from the Lock to the Dock breaking the ribbon upon entry.

The National Anthem played by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and the Trumpeters of the Life Guards, followed by a 16 round salute fired by the Royal Artillery from the Dock Side.

\* Two Squadrons of Royal Air Force Meteor Jets will fly over the Dock and dip in salute, to be followed by the Pipe Band of the Liverpool Scottish who will march round the perimeter of the Dock.

12-30 p.m. End of first part of Ceremony.

12-45 p.m. Lunch will be served.

2-15 p.m. Speeches by Sir Leslie Roberts, C.B.E.  
approx. Chairman & Managing Director,  
The Manchester Ship Canal Company.

The Lord Mayor of Manchester,  
Alderman A. Moss, M.A., J.P.

Mr. F. J. Stephens,  
Managing Director,  
Shell Petroleum Company Ltd., and  
Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co. Ltd.

3- 0 p.m. Conducted tour of the Dock and Lock.

3-45 p.m. Tea.

4-15 p.m. Party disperses.

X

The Fly Past will consist of 12 Meteor Jet Fighter Aircraft from Royal Air Force, Hooton Park, flying in formation of three lots of diamonds for the first run, then back in arrowhead formation. They will be led by the Commanding Officer of R.A.F. Hooton Park, Wing Commander M. Kellett, D.F.C., a Regular Officer. The only other Regular Officer in the Fly Past will be the Officer Commanding No.611 (West Lancashire) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, Squadron Leader S. Kirtley. Squadron Leader J.E. Storrar, D.F.C. who commands No.610 (County of Chester) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and who is a Veterinary Surgeon in every-day life, will also be flying.

Apart from the two Regular Officers in the Fly Past the rest of the Pilots, all week-end fliers, are in civilian life Test Pilots, Schoolmasters, Post Office Engineers, Travellers, Insurance Agents etc. The two Auxiliary Squadrons to which they belong are both based at R.A.F. Hooton Park.

No.610 Squadron which destroyed a total of 135 enemy aircraft during the second World War was awarded the Esher Trophy last year as the most efficient Fighter Squadron in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. It was presented to the Squadron Commander on the 10th of October, 1953, by the Earl of Limerick who is Chairman of the Council of the Territorial and Auxiliary Forces Associations. No.610 Squadron was formed at Hooton Park in 1936 and was one of the Fighter Units actively engaged against the Luftwaffe during the evacuation of Dunkirk and in the Battle of Britain, operating mainly from Biggin Hill and Hawkinge, Kent. During the following years it was engaged on a variety of tasks - fighter sweeps, intruder work, convoy escort, shipping reconnaissance and bomber escort. In the summer of 1944 the Squadron was employed against flying bombs, destroying 50. Towards the end of the war it became part of the 2nd Tactical Air Force.

No.611 Squadron was formed at Liverpool on the 8th of February, 1936 and its first home station was Speke. On Coronation Day, the 12th May, 1937, the Squadron made its first public appearance, taking part in the Military Parade. On the 19th May, 1938, the King and Queen visited Liverpool and the Squadron mounted a Guard of Honour, the first Royal Guard of Honour mounted by any unit of the Auxiliary Air Force. In Spring 1939, the Squadron was changed from a Bomber to a Fighter Squadron and Spitfire Mark 1 aircraft replaced Harts and Hinds.

On the outbreak of war the Squadron found itself based at a forward airfield ready to intercept enemy raiders. A few weeks later the Squadron moved and drew its first blood in October 1939 when it encountered a formation of Heinkel 115's off Spurn Head breaking it up and destroying one of them. The Squadron helped to provide cover for the Dunkirk evacuation and destroyed 8 enemy aircraft as well as probably destroying and damaging others. In September that year the Squadron was in the thick of the Battle of Britain, and by the end of the month destroyed 50 enemy aircraft, a figure which was more than twice doubled in the next few months. When D-Day arrived No.611 Squadron had the distinction of being the first British Fighter Squadron to cross the Beach Head just ahead of the landing craft.

In August 1945 the Squadron was temporarily disbanded having destroyed or damaged approximately 250 enemy aircraft, flying 35,000 hours and over 7,000,000 miles (equal to 260 trips round the world) during the war.

PRESS ARRANGEMENTS.

REPORTERS.

Reporters will be accommodated at the rear of the grandstand where a number of telephones have been installed for their use. 9 Lines. Telephone Nos. Eastham 2031/9.

PHOTOGRAPHERS, NEWSREELS, B.B.C., TELEVISION.

A 50ft. camera tower has been erected on the Dock and Lock side. If your wind screen displays the correct wind screen sticker you will automatically be directed to this tower.

LUNCH.

Lunch will be provided only if you state your requirements on the reply card.

FIELD GLASSES.

As the Dock and Lock cover a vast area, field glasses will be an advantage.

WIND SCREEN STICKERS AND PRESS BADGES.

Please ensure that these are displayed and worn.

---

# TANKER BREAKS RIBBON DEAD ON TIME

VELLETIA'S 26,000 GALLONS FROM  
KUWAIT MAKE HISTORY

## GUNS ROAR SALUTE AS BRITAIN'S BIGGEST OIL DOCK OPENS

The largest oil dock in Britain, which has been under construction at Eastham, near the entrance to the 36-mile long Manchester Ship Canal during the past four years, was opened yesterday by Sir Leslie Roberts, chairman and managing director of the Ship Canal Company

Sir Leslie watched the company's 28,000-ton tanker Velletia move slowly from the entrance lock and break a ribbon spanning the entrance into the dock.

The naming—"Queen Elizabeth II Dock"—was kept secret until the Velletia was cheered in by thousands of well-wishers from all parts of Merseyside and Manchester.

The tanker was delayed by bad weather but Captain James Thornton, 54-year-old master commodore of the 150-strong Shell tanker fleet, kept four hours in hand on his voyage from Kuwait to be in time for the ceremony.

He arrived on time with more than 26,000 tons of crude oil, which would be in the refining plants within 24 hours.

### THE HONOURS

A 16-round salute was fired by the Royal Artillery. Two squadrons of R.A.F. Meteor jet fighters flew over the dock dipping in salute and the pipe band of the Liverpool Scottish Regiment played lively airs.

The dock covers 19 acres—bigger than Trafalgar Square—and each of the four berths can accommodate a ship as big as the old Mauritania.

Four vessels of this size can carry a total of 100,000 tons of oil into the dock, the four walls of which are made of nearly 500,000 cubic yards of concrete.

More than 600 men and women worked round the clock for three years to help build the new dock.

Safety-first precautions include oil weirs, the first of their kind in the world.

If oil spills from a tanker a device sucks the surface mixture of water and oil into chambers deep in the walls of the dock where the oil can be skimmed off and collected.

Not only is the fire hazard reduced but the reclaimed fuel can be pumped back into the oil lines.

The scheme has cost £5 million.

*Recorder*

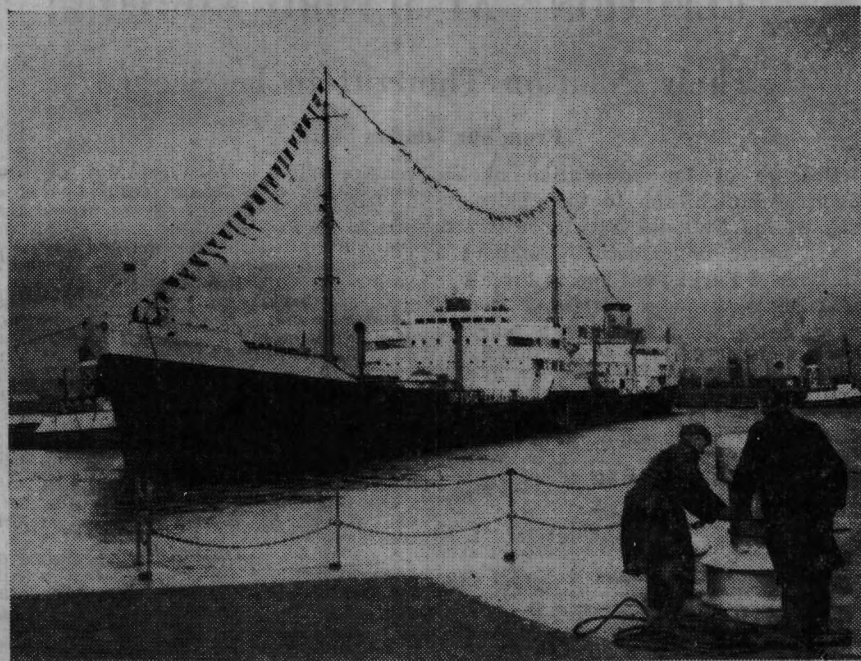
*20/1/54*

*Mr. Stagg*

MR.  
STAGG

20/1/54.

NEW DOCK NAMED AFTER THE QUEEN



The Vellelia tying up after opening the dock

From our own Reporter

EASTHAM, TUESDAY.

The Manchester Ship Canal Company's new oil dock here was opened at midday to-day, and simultaneously Sir Leslie Roberts, chairman of the company, announced that the Queen had "graciously commanded that it should carry her illustrious name."

The Queen Elizabeth II Dock, which took four years to build and cost about £5 millions, is the largest oil dock in Great Britain. It serves the refinery area at Stanlow (which includes the great new Shell installation) and will take tankers of 30,000 tons or more. It was one of these "super-tankers"—the Vellelia (28,000 tons) just back from Kuwait—that performed the essential ceremony by breaking a ribbon hung with pennants across the entrance.

This was a big day in the history of the Manchester Ship Canal—the opening by Queen Victoria 60 years ago was more than once recalled—and the most was certainly made of it. Pageantry was piled on pageantry, band followed band. Guns banged and Meteors roared. There was champagne and turtle soup. Even the date on the commemorative booklet was printed in the high Roman manner as "January XIX." Manchester, when it puts on a show, never does it by half; it would sooner overdo it by two-thirds.

A range of temporary buildings had been put up on one of the artificial plateaux, 80 feet high, formed from the earth excavated from the dock. One of them was a grandstand, constructed of corrugated iron painted green but yet contriving to look elegant, like a pavilion at a joust. From it the guests had an impressive view, across the dock, of grey skies and the grey water of the Mersey, separated by the blue-grey hills on the Lancashire side, with a splash of bright red here and there from a buoy, a funnel, a flag. Ships were moving up and down the Ship Canal, which begins near the entrance to the dock. Immediately in front of the grandstand the Central Band of the Royal Air Force

was playing "Land of Hope and Glory," and trumpeters of the Life Guards, splendid in their scarlet tunics and plumes and their shining helmets, were pretending to trumpet for the benefit of photographers.

Then the time came for them to sound their fanfare in earnest. Sir Leslie Roberts made his announcement about the name, which was applauded, and the Vellelia, which had been waiting, dressed overall, in the entrance lock, moved forward—propelled by her tugs and broke the ribbon. The R.A.F. band played the National Anthem, and then gunners of the 252nd (Manchester) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (Territorial Army), fired a sixteen-round salute. The echoes had hardly died away when twelve Meteor jet aircraft from the R.A.F. station at Hooton Park, not far away, flew over in formation and dipped in salute, followed by a solitary Meteor, trailing a banner bearing the new name of the dock.

All this time the skirl of pipes had been getting louder, and eventually the pipes and drums of the 1st Battalion, the Liverpool Scottish (T.A.), came into view and marched round the dock. No more servicemen were forthcoming—the Navy, for all the water in the neighbourhood, remained silent—and the guests moved in to lunch. The timing of all these military operations was perfect, one phase following another like voices in a fugue.

Technical Hitch

Lunch was in another of the stately pleasure-domes erected for the occasion—a hut sumptuously transformed into a banqueting hall. The meal was excellent, but during the speeches the arrangements, which had worked so admirably until then, broke down somewhat.

Sir Leslie Roberts proposed a toast, but no one in the rather remote press tables could hear a word. A microphone was on the table before him, but only, as far as one could tell, for ornament. It was passed across to Mr F. J. Stephens, managing director of the Shell Petroleum Company, Ltd., when he rose to reply. He had a slightly louder voice, but at that moment some of the aircraft still in the sky drowned it.

The Lord Mayor of Manchester (Alderman A. Moss) also spoke—on the new Elizabethan Age. There was a tour of the dock, and the celebrations were over. Meanwhile the Vellelia had long since been nosed into her berth by tugs and was ready for work.