

# THE OIL PATCH IS DRIFTING IN

By Peter Vane

**H**UGE pools of thick oil drifted down on Britain from the North Sea yesterday, crippling seabirds, fouling breakwaters and threatening the fishing industry.

They are the first traces of a vast oil patch which has spread out to cover a sea area as big as Ireland.

Coastguards have been alerted and planes have been asked to radio back reports on the direction and size of any patches sighted.

The south coast was the first area to report the floating pools.

At Whitstable the afternoon tide washed a five-foot fringe of black scum on to the seven-mile foreshore. Children paddling in the surf had their clothes ruined.

## Oyster threat

Oyster-dredging in the shallow waters is in full swing, and the fishing fleets fear the grounds may be fouled.

At Dover—45 miles away—a dog swimming off the beach struggled ashore covered in oily oil.

At Deal seabirds were seen with their wings clogged and useless. Some died on the cliffs and shore.

Inspector A. Webb, of the R.S.P.C.A., said: "There have been more reports of oiled-in birds in the last two days than we have had all winter."

The oil comes from the Danish tanker Gerd Maerak, which was grounded at the mouth of the Elbe River two weeks ago and had to pump out 6,000 tons of her 18,000-ton cargo to refloat herself.

## More today

Last night the meteorological Office reported that the wind off the Essex and East Kent coasts was southerly, with no immediate sign of a change. If there is no switch in the wind it is almost certain that more oil will be lapping along the south coast by this afternoon.

A member of the committee formed last year to advise the Government on oil pollution said:

"I just don't know what can be done about it. It is a frightful problem. The oil is difficult enough to burn on the shore—at sea it is practically an impossibility."

A spokesman for the British Trawlers Federation said: "If it floats to Britain in any great quantity it will hit the inshore fishing industry pretty hard."

~~News of the World~~

News Chron

1/21/55

High tide 5.15 P.M.

2. Daily Sketch, February 1, 1955

# BLACK DEATH CREEPS IN WITH TIDE

Daily Sketch Reporter

**S**IX hundred square miles of black oil crept up with the tide to Kent beaches yesterday, bringing death for hundreds of sea birds.

R.S.P.C.A. officials spent all day killing oil-clogged birds by injecting them with pen-tathol.

The oil comes from 6,000 tons poured into the sea by the tanker Gord Maorsh when she was in trouble 300 miles away in the North Sea last week.

The floating mass split up. Part of it is causing havoc along 100 miles of the Danish coast. More of it was carried to the Channel, and to-day it may reach the Sussex coast.

Superintendent Frank Webb, of the R.S.C.P.A. at Dover, said last night: "Killing the bird victims is the kindest thing to do. If you clean their feathers you take away their natural oil and the birds become helpless in the water.

"Many of them swallow the black oil and suffer terribly from enteritis.

"We may have to use bulldozers to clear the bodies from the beaches."

Last night people queued at his clinic with dying birds in their arms.

D.734.

### Rettung vor Ölpest

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

Cuxhaven, 25. Januar

Der Bremer Tierarzt Dr. E. Jacob hat vielen Seevögeln, deren Gefieder durch Öl verschmutzt war, das Leben gerettet. Die Tiere waren in das Öl des dänischen Tankers „Gerd Maersk“ geraten, der, wie berichtet, nach seiner Strandung auf Scharhörnriff in der Elbmündung rund 6000 Tonnen Öl verloren hat. Dr. Jacob hat nach eigenem Verfahren mit Hilfe eines fettlösenden Alkoholsulfats die gefiederten Bewohner der Küste von der Ölpest befreit, durch die die Vögel sonst dem sicheren Tod ausgeliefert wären. Die Vögel waren dem Arzt von Tierschutzvereinen aus dem Küstengebiet geschickt worden.

Birds covered in oil.

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