

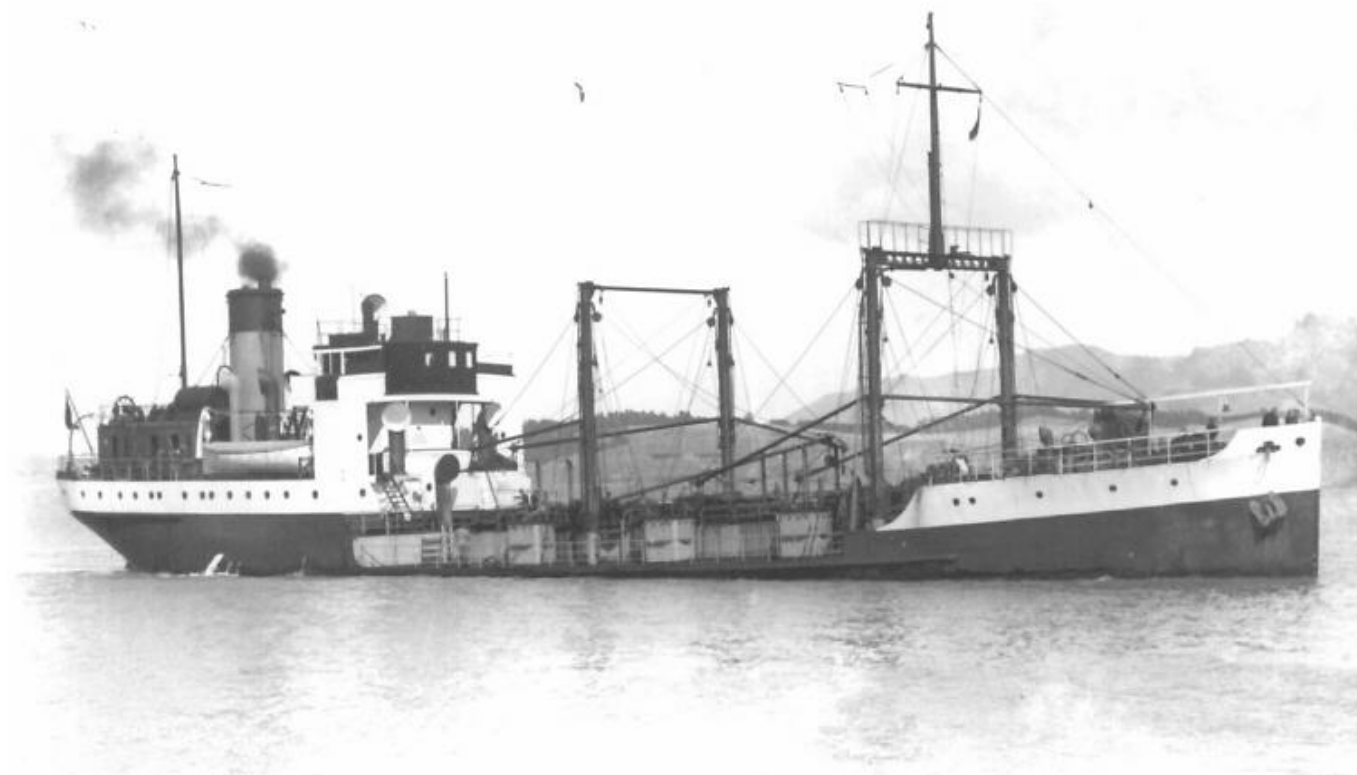
# COASTAL TANKERS

Tankers have been a part of the coastal shipping scene for many years. This history appeared in "New Zealand Marine News" Vol.49 No.4 in 2000 and I am grateful to the NZ Ship & Marine Society for allowing me to reproduce it here.

## NEW ZEALAND'S COASTAL TANKERS

by Captain Michael Pryce

Until the construction of an oil refinery was completed at Marsden Point, Whangarei, in 1964, New Zealand was totally dependent on imported refined petroleum products, shipped in bulk by overseas tankers from the Persian Gulf, Singapore, Indonesia, United States or Curacao. An early attempt to cover the distribution of the oil from the main ports in smaller quantities to the smaller New Zealand coastal ports was seen in the form of the case-oil carrier **Anamba** (1,835 gross tons, built 1902), which arrived at Wellington on 9th April 1926 from Singapore, via Lyttelton. **Anamba** had been purchased by Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co., London, in 1910, for use in carrying case-oil to small ports in the Far East, and she was based for a short time in New Zealand. British Imperial Oil Co. Ltd. (later to become Shell Oil New Zealand Ltd.) had officially opened a bulk oil installation at Miramar, Wellington, on 25th January 1926. This was designed to receive and store oil products in bulk from tankers, then transfer them into drums, tins and cases (hence, of course, the term "case-oil") for local distribution. The employment of **Anamba**, which, with engines amidships, looked much like any other cargo ship, was only a stop-gap measure on the New Zealand coast until a purpose-built coastal tanker arrived.



**Paua** - the first purpose built tanker for the NZ coast  
Photo: M. Pryce Collection

This was **Paua**, built as Yard No.750G by Harland & Wolff Ltd. at Govan, Glasgow, at a cost of ?62,103, launched on 14th April 1927 and completed on 9th June 1927. (Because she followed the similar tankers **Petronella**, **Paula** and **Agatha** from the same yard [Yard Nos. 747G, 748G and 749G], she is frequently confused with them and reported as being a sister ship, but she was in fact a one-off design). Her delivery voyage began on 9th July 1927 when she left Southampton in ballast for Singapore via Suez. At Pulau Bukom, Singapore, she loaded 810 tons of petrol, then took twentyeight days to reach New Zealand, arriving at Bluff in a howling gale on 11th September 1927. She discharged at Bluff and Timaru before arriving empty at Wellington on 16th September 1927 to commence her coastal trading. Registered initially at London, her port of registry was changed to Wellington on arrival, and she became the first oil tanker to fly the New Zealand flag. Ship details were:- 1,260 gross, 472 net tons, 217.3 ft. length overall, 36.6ft. beam and 15.1ft. depth. Her twin six-cylinder oil engines were of the 4S.C.SA type and were constructed by her builders; they

generated 225n.h.p., giving a service speed of 10 knots. Specially built for the coastal trade, she had nine oil compartments, consisting of three centre tanks with a capacity of 804 tons of motor spirit and three port and starboard wing tanks holding another 273 tons, making a total of 1,077 tons. The tanks were also fitted with special tank hatches so that they could also be used to carry cased oil, and there was a forehold able to stow a further 2,550 cases. For discharge of bulk oil, two cargo pumps with a capacity of 100 tons per hour each were used, and she was well equipped with derricks for handling the case oil.

**Anamba** was laid up for some weeks prior to **Paua's** arrival, but a few days after her successor arrived she was manned with a Chinese crew, and returned to trading in the Singapore area. She was laid up in Singapore in February 1931 and was broken up in 1932, having earned her niche in New Zealand's coastal oil transport story.

**Paua** had her tank section renewed at Hong Kong late in 1939, and the opportunity was taken to lengthen her by twentysix feet at the same time, giving her increased tonnages of 1,412 gross and 620 net. She returned to service in January 1940 and traded around most of the New Zealand coastal ports, calling at Auckland, Tauranga, Gisborne, Napier, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Wellington, Picton, Nelson, Lyttelton, Oamaru, Timaru, Dunedin and Bluff, carrying petrol and kerosene.



**Paua** arriving at Wellington  
Photo: M. Pryce Collection

Her New Zealand registry was closed on 15th December 1950, when she was sold to Colon Shipping Co. of Hong Kong and renamed **Heather**, sailing from Wellington for the last time in January 1951. In 1954 she was sold to Pan Norse S.S.Co. (Wallem & Co., Hong Kong), and renamed **Lucky Carrier**. She went aground in heavy weather on 30th May 1956, about half a mile from Fakir Point, Akyab, (now Sittwe, Burma, now Myanmar) on a voyage from Chalna to Akyab in ballast. Refloated on 8th August 1956, she arrived at Singapore in tow on 12th December 1956. Declared a constructive total loss, she was sold and broken up in mid-1957 by The Hong Kong Chiap Hua Mfy. Co. (1947) Ltd.

Her replacement was **Tanea**, launched on 17th May 1950 and completed on 25th July 1950 by John Crown & Sons Ltd., Sunderland, Yard No. 231, at a cost of ?297,024. Ship details were:-3,060 gross, 1,625 net tons and 3,325 tons deadweight, 331ft. 10ins. length overall, 46ft. 1in. beam and 16ft. 8ins. draught. She was powered by a 4SA six-cylinder Werkspoor oil engine of 333n.h.p. made by Hawthorne Leslie & Co. Ltd., Newcastle. It gave a loaded service speed of 10.75 knots and burned 6.5 tons of fuel per day. Registered at Wellington, she had six sets of port, centre and starboard cargo tanks, with numbers 4-centre and 6-centre designed for the dual carriage of bulk oil or case oil. They were fitted with large removable gastight hatches, and flat metal guard plates were fitted to the internal pipelines to avoid damage by drummed cargo. Four two-ton derricks on the main mast served the two case oil tanks, and she had a trunk deck. **Tanea** was an almost identical sister ship to **Felipes**, which preceded her from the same builders as Yard No.230 and

was delivered on 3rd March 1950 for Nederlandsche-Indies Tankstoomboot Mij., under the Dutch flag. The only external difference was the absence of derricks on **Felipes's** mainmast.

**Tanea's** delivery voyage began when she sailed from Sunderland on 27th July 1950 and she came via Bari, Haifa, Port Said, Suez, Abadan, and Singapore. She arrived at Wellington on 22nd October 1950 and took up the coastal voyages previously carried out by **Paua**, carrying only refined oils. Her trading around the New Zealand coast was mainly uneventful, one of the few minor incidents noted being her stranding in the Wanganui River whilst sailing in ballast from Castlecliff Wharf late in the evening of 11th August 1957. She was aground for only an hour and refloated after discharging 1,000 tons of water ballast, but her owners were understandably anxious, as Anglo-Saxon had previously lost their case-oil ship **Cyrena** (2,138 gross tons, built 1913) by stranding at Wanganui in May 1925.



**Tanea** in the Malacca Strait

Photo: M. Pryce Collection

The opening of New Zealand Refining Co.'s Marsden Point refinery at Whangarei early in 1964 completely changed the coastal distribution pattern, and **Tanea** became too small for the planned distribution of refined oils from the refinery around the coast. After drydocking in the floating dock at Wellington between 31st March and 2nd April 1964 she sailed from Wellington for the last time on 17th April 1964 for Singapore. She had been transferred from Shell Co. of New Zealand and Wellington registry to Shell Tankers (U.K.) Ltd. and London registry, for trading around the Singapore area.

In May 1965 she was working in South Vietnamese waters, and between July 1965 and July 1967 regularly traded from Singapore to Northwest Australian ports such as Port Hedland and Broome, sometimes calling at Cocos Island part-loaded on the return trip. Between July and September 1967 she underwent extensive steel renewals at Jurong drydock, Singapore, then between October 1967 and March 1968 served as a lightening tanker off South Vietnam. She then reverted to trading between Singapore and Northwest Australian ports until September 1968, after which she traded almost exclusively in the Singapore area. She normally loaded at Port Dickson, Pulau Bukom, and sometimes Miri, for discharge at Woodlands (Singapore Island), Kuching, Phuket, Penang, Telok Anson, and also made one-off voyages to Cocos Island, Nha Trang, Da Nang, Labuan, and Kota Kinabalu in 1969. From 1970 she traded exclusively between Pulau Bukom and Woodlands until she was laid up in the Western Anchorage, Singapore, on 20th January 1972. She arrived at Jurong, Singapore, on 31st January 1972 for demolition.



**Tanea** at Kuching, Sarawak in 1969  
Photo: M. Pryce Collection

**Tanea** at Kuching, Sarawak in 1969  
Photo: M. Pryce Collection

However, **Tanea** was followed in the New Zealand coastal trade by another tanker of similar size. She was **Maurea** (2,928 gross tons, built 1952), which had been launched on 28th November 1951 and completed on 4th April 1952 by Smith's Dock Co., Middlesbrough, as **Fragum**, Yard No. 1219, at a cost of ?333,771, for Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co., and registered at London. Ship details were:- 2,926 gross, 1,280 net tons, 3,416 tons deadweight, 331ft. 11ins. length overall, 46ft. 4ins. beam and 17ft. draught. A triple-expansion engine of 1,600i.h.p. gave her a service speed of 11.5 knots. Although of similar dimensions to **Tanea**, she was purpose-built to carry bitumen in six centre tanks, with ballast only in the wing tanks. She was mostly used in the West Coast of England trade, loading bitumen in the Mersey for Ardrossan, then sailing southwards in ballast to Heysham to load fuel oil for discharge at Mersey or Manchester Ship Canal ports, Belfast or Dublin. **Fragum** was drydocked at Newcastle, England, towards the end of 1963 and was transferred to Shell Oil N.Z. Ltd. and renamed **Maurea**, registered at Wellington. She was one of the first Shell tankers to receive the newly-modified funnel colours of red funnel with yellow shell. She arrived at Wellington on 9th April 1964 from Newcastle via Curacao and Panama, eight days before **Tanea** left for Singapore. **Maurea** started a new coastal trade of distributing bitumen and fuel oil from Marsden Point, whilst coastal distribution of refined products was done by larger overseas Shell- or B.P. -owned or chartered tankers working around the coast.



**Maurea** alongside at Auckland  
Photo: M. Pryce Collection

**Maurea**, however, was in turn to prove too small for the trade and was replaced by the larger tanker **Erne** in August 1970. After a period of lay-up at Lyttelton she was sold on 17th April 1971 to Ocean Bitumen Carriers Inc., part of the C.Y.Tung group of companies, and was renamed **Dayu**, registered at Monrovia. **Dayu** sailed from New Zealand for the Far East and changed her funnel markings to those of her new owners: blue with a black top, with a yellow star. She was next reported as working in the Saigon and Mekong Rivers, a trade for which her size would suit her admirably, probably loading cargo at Hong Kong or Singapore, or transhipping cargo from tankers at Saigon. Lloyd's List noted her as trading between Pulau Bukom, Penang and Port Dickson in December 1973. She was noted at anchor in Singapore's Western Anchorage on 18th July 1975. At a time of rising fuel oil prices her steam triple-expansion engines would not be very economical, and she arrived at Hong Kong in March 1976 for demolition by Fuji, Marden & Co. Ltd.

When Marsden Point refinery first came "on stream", the majority of refined products were carried around the coast by oil company-owned or -chartered ships. Thus, the first shipments of refined products loaded out of the refinery for delivery to other New Zealand ports were carried by the Dutch Shell tanker **Arca**, (12,222 gross tons, built 1959) and B.P.'s **British Freedom**, (11,207 gross tons, built 1950). Such ships usually completed only a few voyages around the coast before being replaced by other similar tonnage. After a time, however, there came some local maritime union pressure to have local seafarers involved in the coastal trade on dedicated tankers. This resulted in a series of tankers being demise-chartered by the oil companies for operation around the New Zealand coast. They were operated under the management of the Union Steam Ship Co. of N.Z. Ltd. and were fully manned by New Zealand crew on New Zealand articles. They largely replaced the procession of overseas tankers that had previously been working the coast.