



## VE Day

...Whatever the Company has been able to achieve during the war... it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the result is due to the combined efforts of the Company's employees of all nationalities, whether at home, abroad or on the high seas...

This was the Chairman's statement in October 1945.

Four months previously on 8 May 1945, the Allied forces formally accepted the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, marking the end of World War II in Europe. This day, Victory in Europe (VE) Day, has since been etched into the annals of history as a symbol of peace and of resilience.

VE Day was a culmination of years of relentless struggle and sacrifice.



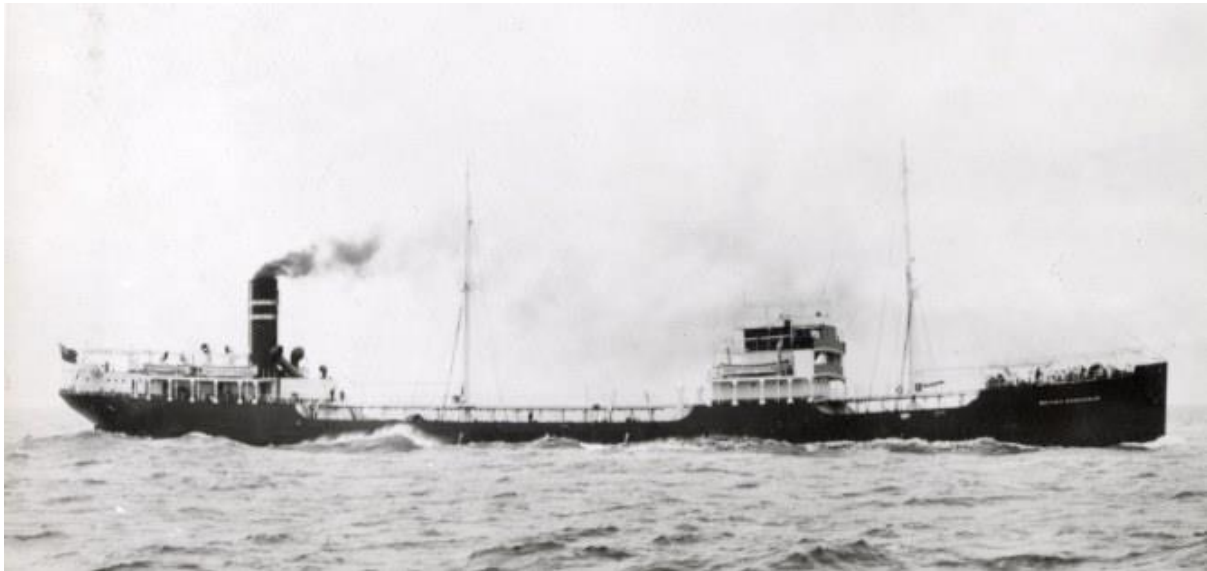
Pool motor spirit tanker, c.1940s

On the declaration of war, the Petroleum Board and its associated committees commenced operations. Also called the Pool, it was formed as a voluntary organisation of distributors of petroleum products and benzole in the UK, in compliance with the wishes of the British Government.

Its role was to pool all the resources and eliminated the use of brand names. At the end of the war one of the final meetings held at Shell-Mex House on the 24 May 1945, before the board was wound up, noted

***...What had been accomplished had been possible only because all concerned had worked together to the common purpose of giving the maximum assistance to the War Effort without regard to Company interest...***

For the crews of the Company's tankers, it had been a harrowing experience. Of the 93 ocean-going tankers, 44 were lost. Of its personnel, it was reported in 1945 that 576 Europeans and 88 Indians lost their lives.



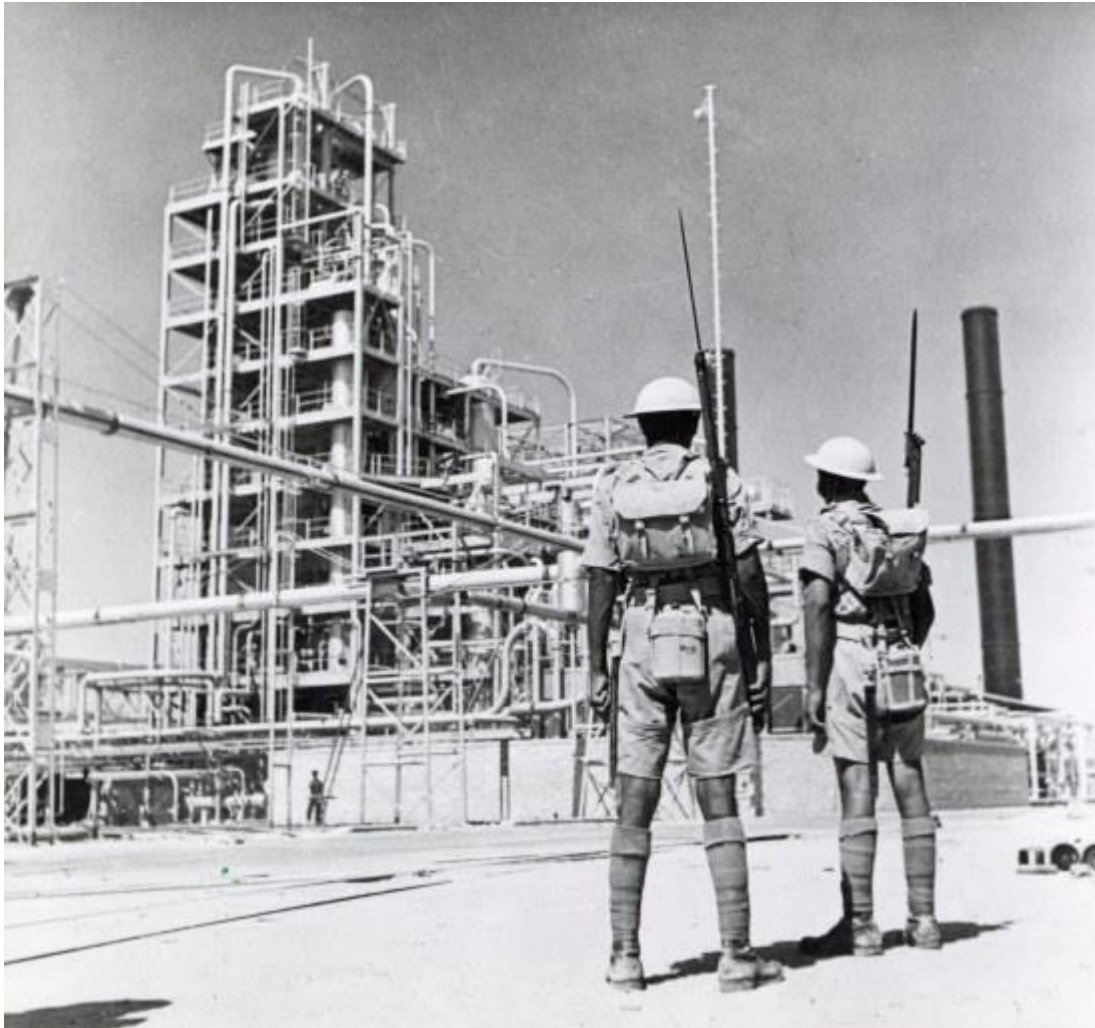
British Endeavour, sunk 1940

On 16 May 1945 the Chairman and Board of Directors sent a message to them acknowledging their contributions

***...At this unique and historic moment... We are all entitled to rejoice in this great Victory...To all vessels owned and managed by British Tanker Company greetings to all hands from Chairman Directors Management and Staff. In our thanksgivings we are remembering with pride your grand contribution to European Victory...***

The war had ravaged continents, leaving behind a trail of destruction and loss.

The company's operations in Iran and in particular Abadan had played a major role in the war in Europe and the Far East.



Allied soldiers at Abadan refinery, c. 1941

Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Smith, Commander of Persia and Iraq Force (PAIFORCE) sent a message to the London headquarters saying

***...I and all my command realise that the success which has attended the efforts of PAIFORCE is largely due to friendly cooperation of A.I.O.C. You and your men although dressed in civilian clothes have formed part of the British Empire 'Army' and PAIFORCE is glad to have been associated with your great effort...***

In total about 788 people who worked for the company lost their lives, either in the armed forces or in merchant shipping, in the 1939-45 conflict.

Yet, amidst the ruins, the spirit of humanity shone brightly.

The celebrations that erupted across Europe and beyond were not just a testament to the end of a brutal conflict, but also a collective sigh of relief and a hopeful gaze towards a future of peace.

The scenes of jubilation on 8 May 1945, were unparalleled. In London, crowds thronged the streets, waving flags and singing patriotic songs.



A truck of revellers passing through the Strand, London, VE Day 8 May 1945

The iconic images of people dancing in Trafalgar Square and the Royal Family appearing on the balcony of Buckingham Palace encapsulate the sheer joy and relief felt by millions.

Similar celebrations took place in cities and towns across the Allied nations, each community marking the day in its unique way.

The 80th anniversary of VE Day is not just a commemoration of a historical event; it is a celebration of the enduring human spirit.

As we remember and honor those who fought, let us also look forward with hope and determination to build a world where peace and justice prevail.