

King Line Launch

ON Friday, 15th March, 1957, the motor vessel "King Charles" was launched at the yards of Messrs. Harland & Wolff, Belfast, by Mrs. Turnbull, wife of Mr. R. M. Turnbull, a director of the King Line. The occasion was momentous, for 30 years had elapsed since a ceremony for the launching of a King Line vessel had taken place.

The King Line was founded in 1889 as The King Alfred Steamship Company, Limited. This Company, registered in Glasgow, was formed by Mr. Owen Cosby Philipps (later Lord Kilsant) for the purchase of a steamship called "King Alfred", and four years later the name was changed to the present one and the fleet increased. In 1914 the Company was trading with eight vessels, although the end of the First World War saw the fleet reduced to two. During the 1920's the number of ships was maintained at around eight, of a size averaging 8,000 tons deadweight, and the foundations of the present fleet were laid just before the severe 1929 depression with the delivery of nine new motorships of similar tonnage.

Further additions were made to the fleet during the late 1930's so that by 1939 there were in ownership the nine motorships and five steamships. Eleven vessels were lost by 1945 and four "Empires" were added to the three remaining motorships.

The King Line has for many years been associated with the Union-Castle Line—in addition to Lord Kilsant's connection, Sir Vernon Thomson was also Chairman of both Companies—but in 1949 the Company became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Union-Castle Line and is now part of the British & Commonwealth Group.

Since 1950 there has been considerable change in the fleet with the sale of two of the 1920 motorships left after the war and the purchase of "King James" (an "Empire"). In 1950, three new motorships were ordered (Kings "Alexander" and "Malcolm", delivered in 1952, and "King Arthur", 1953) and with the present programme of three further motorships of about 9,500 tons deadweight—of which "King Charles" is the first ("King George" and "King Henry" being the names of those to follow by mid-1958)—the fleet will consist of ten motor vessels and two oil-burning steamers.



The "King Charles" is a single-screw motor-driven vessel of Shelter Deck type with an overall length of 467 feet, gross tonnage about 5,900. She is designed on modern lines with straight, well-raked rounded stem, cruiser stern, two raked masts and a single oval raked funnel, and two complete steel decks and Bridge, Boat, Navigating Bridge and Docking Bridge Decks. The hull is divided into eight watertight compartments and a double bottom suitably divided is fitted arranged for the carriage of fresh water, water ballast, oil fuel and lubricating oil. There are four main cargo holds, two forward and two aft of the machinery space with corresponding 'tween decks. The cargo-handling equipment includes one 50-ton, one 25-ton, four 10-ton and six 5-ton derricks.

The officers and petty officers are accommodated in deckhouses amidships and the ratings on the main deck aft. The vessel will be propelled by a six-cylinder, single-acting, four-stroke diesel engine, conservatively rated and providing necessary power at 115 r.p.m. The necessary equipment is being installed for operation of the main engine on heavy oil.