

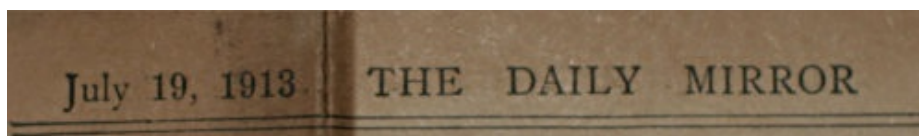


## Beginnings of UK "Oil Age"

Posted by [Chris Vernon](#) on January 2, 2007 - 9:08pm in [The Oil Drum: Europe](#)

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During my travels this holiday season I came across a single page from the Daily Mirror, a British tabloid (if that's the historically correct term), from 19th July 1913. This would have been interesting in itself but this 93 year old sheet of paper had a very interesting story about the construction of Great Britain's first oil-driven battleship heralding the beginning of the "Oil Age".

Churchill underlines the military importance of imported oil leading the discussion to the country's potential self sufficiency in oil. Clearly this is decades before off-shore oil discoveries so shale beds are considered along with a recent breakthrough demonstrating how some 20 gallons of oil can be economically produced from a ton of coal.

Of course some things never change, growing world demand was even reported to be forcing up the price of oil in 1913. As it turned out the UK never embarked on economically significant coal to liquids programmes or exploitation of the shale resources.

Full article below the fold.

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# FIRST OIL-DRIVEN BATTLESHIP.

Super-Dreadnought Now Building  
to Use Liquid Fuel Only.

## OIL FROM COAL.

“Nothing to Prevent Navy from Being Run  
on New Fuel Produced in Britain.”

The “Oil Age” in British history has begun.

The battleship Queen Elizabeth, it was authoritatively stated yesterday at Portsmouth, where this ship is now being built for launching this autumn, will be the first super-Dreadnought in the world to be driven wholly by means of oil fuel.

The vessel is being constructed without any bunkers accommodation, and her fuel will be carried in a specially sealed and strengthened double bottom, which will be so arranged that in the event of mishap, such as collision with a rock, the whole of her oil would not be lost.

The absence of the immense storage for 3,000 tons of coal, which is the capacity of her predecessors, has enabled the constructors to give more cabin accommodation, which has been lacking in other Dreadnoughts.

The furnaces will burn the oil in the form of a thick spray, similar in appearance to a London fog, the liquid being supplied under great pressure at intense heat.

In outline the ship will be the same as others of her type. She will carry funnels, but it is said that in this remarkable vessel several other important changes in armament, armour protection and speed will be introduced.

Further information on HMS Queen Elizabeth is available here: [Wikipedia](#)

## SMOKY COAL PRODUCT.

Mr. Churchill's statement in the House of Commons on Thursday night that "the power to maintain command of the sea in wartime depends on our oil supply" has made British citizens realise the immense importance now attached to oil as fuel.

Great Britain's natural resources in oil fuel are far greater than most people suppose. Not only are there worked in Scotland shale beds capable of producing annually 450,000 tons of oil fuel, equal to nearly 100,000,000 gallons, but similar beds exist in the English Midlands, and in Dorset and Warwickshire.

Recently elaborate experiments have been conducted at Barking which are said to have demonstrated that all the bituminous or smoky coal produced in Great Britain, about four-fifths of the 280,000,000 tons brought to the surface annually, can be so treated as to yield per ton some twenty gallons of various kinds of oil fuel.

### INDEPENDENT OF FOREIGN PETROL.

"There is nothing to prevent the British Navy being entirely run on oil fuel produced cheaply and in constant supply within our shores," said Mr. Salisbury Jones, an authority on oil fuel, of Throgmorton-street, to *The Daily Mirror* yesterday.

"The problem has now been solved of extracting oil fuel economically and profitably from all British coal capable of being carbonised, of which the output is about 200 million tons annually. This would yield some 4,000,000,000 gallons of oil fuel. In fact, by extracting oil from coal Britain can be independent of foreign petrol.

"The Government is paying 70s. a ton, or about 4d. a gallon, for crude or heavy oil fuel from abroad.

"The omnibus companies of London pay 8d. a gallon for oil only slightly less crude, which could not have been used for their purpose a few years ago. Both kinds can be supplied at least as cheaply from bituminous coal.

"The prices of all kinds of oil have risen and are rising similarly. The world's growing demand for oil must put prices up.

## NOT ENOUGH PETROL.

Mr. T. Thorne Baker, *The Daily Mirror* scientific expert, said yesterday: "The maintenance of our naval supremacy since steamships came into being has been facilitated by our wealth of coal. We possess also huge resources in oil fuel, hitherto relatively unrecognised, which must be utilised if our Navy and mercantile marine are to retain their supremacy.

"In Norway recently I found that already 6,000 out of some 13,000 deep-sea fishing boats were motor-boats consuming crude oil costing no more than 7½d. a gallon.

"This illustrates the extraordinary rapidity with which boats are being adapted for motor propulsion, and explains why the demand for oil fuel all over the world must become steadily keener.

"There is, for instance, not enough petrol in the world to go round. If petrol is scarce it means that the crude oil from which it is evaporated is scarce also. Petrol is the 'cream,' as it were. Crude oil of qualities which would have been thrown away as refuse a few years ago is now freely used, and machinery has been adapted to the use of cruder oils."

## "GIFT WARSHIPS" ONLY DELAYED.

"The heart of Canada is sound on the naval question, and she may be confidently relied upon to do her duty both to herself and the Empire. Her contribution of battleships is only delayed," said the Hon. W. T. White, Canadian Minister of Finance, yesterday. He is now in London after a holiday in Devon.

The image below shows the construction of an oil storage depot at Killingholme. Interestingly this is now the site of a large ConocoPhillips oil refinery, opened in 1969 and sited here as a good place to land North African crude. The simultaneous discovery of North Sea oil made it a highly successful venture now responsible for 10% of UK petrol and 14% of all other oil products.



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