

# The Little Bitumen Tanker “Cree”

By Geoff Walker



(Unknown photographer)

The Bitumen/Product Tanker **MV Cree** photographed whilst at anchor off Kota Kinabalu in late 1972, waiting to discharge a full cargo of Bitumen from Pulau Bukom, Singapore.

Nostalgia recalls; during the early 1970s, a small bitumen tanker named “**Cree**” that was regularly seen executing its voyages around Southeast Asia, and Indonesia, and occasionally to Port Hedland in northwest Australia. This handy little vessel had been built in Hong Kong, by the Hong Kong and Whampoa Dockyard Company Ltd., (today known as Hong Kong United Dockyard or HUD), for Matheson and Company Ltd., (Jardine, Matheson and Company Ltd., Hong Kong, as managers).

“**Cree**” was quite small, with an overall length of only 85m, beam of 13m and a service speed of 11 knots, driven by a MAN diesel of 2200 BHP. Completed in January 1970 she had been designed to service some of the more remote and smaller river ports of Asia, consequently she had a GRT of only 1593 tons and a DWT of 2449 tons.



The “**Cree**” photographed whilst secured alongside the old Straits Steamships jetty at Telok Anson (in 1982 renamed Teluk Intan), during late 1972. The vessel later underwent modification to her funnel, which was slightly raised to enclose the engine exhaust outlets

(Unknown photographer)

In 1977 this smart little vessel was sold to the UK coastal company, **Metcalf Motor Coasters Ltd.**, later in 1978 to merge with S. William Coe and Company Ltd., who were appointed managers. The ship was subsequently renamed "**Robert M**", following the naming convention for Metcalf Motor Coasters, and placed under the British flag.



(Unknown Photographer)

"**MT Robert M**" captured on camera when under the ownership of Metcalf Motor Coasters Ltd – UK.



(Unknown photographer)

The "**MT Robert M**", showing her modified funnel, and following the removal of her aft deck awnings.

The Booker Group, who were the beneficial owners of the S. William Coe & Company coaster fleet, which included the "**Robert M**" (ex-Cree), was ultimately taken over by James Fisher & Sons Ltd. in 1984.

In 1997 the vessel was sold to Haswell Company Ltd., Sharjah, (Cyrus Shipping Services, Sharjah, managers), and renamed **NESA I**, then **NESA R**. In 2001 she was reflagged to Panama, in 2002 to Comoros flag, 2007 to St Kitts and Nevis flag and finally in 2007 to Sierra Leone flag. She was eventually sent for demolition at Gadani Beach in December 2009.

So, came about the demise of a little ship that had an interesting career and holds nostalgic memories for those who served on her, especially during her Far East and UK coastal trading years.

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Sources: Various shipping sources in the Public Domain. Booker Group Archives, Metcalf Motor Coaster Archives, S. William Coe & Co Archives.

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