

Who refuelled which airplanes in “Old Gander”

Gander offered emergency assistance to both airplanes and the passengers flying on them and services such as weather information, flight planning and the like - but its *raison d'être* was to provide aviation fuel and lubricants to aircraft flying across the Atlantic.

Who precisely offered these refuelling facilities? To which airlines in particular did each oil company offer its wares?

One of the main suppliers was obviously “Shell”. The Royal Dutch Shell Group was created in February 1907 through the amalgamation of two rival companies: the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company of the Netherlands and the “Shell” Transport and Trading Company Ltd of the United Kingdom. It was a move largely driven by the need to compete globally with the American company Standard Oil.

On 21 March 1945, Shell's Danish headquarters in Copenhagen was bombed by Royal Air Force Mosquitoes in Operation Carthage. The target of the raid was the *Shellhus*, used as Gestapo headquarters in the city centre. It was used for the storage of dossiers and the torture of Danish citizens during interrogations. As far as is known, these Mosquitos went to Britain via the Greenland-Iceland route – and were ironically refuelled by Shell in Gander as they started on their way.

The photos below show some the refuelling activity of Shell Oil on the tarmac of the old terminal.



(BOAC Stratocruiser circa 1954)



BOAC Refueling. Coll. Fred F. Smeaton

(hand coloured by the late Fred Smeaton)



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OVERSEA AIRLINERS REFUELLING AT GANDER, NEWFOUNDLAND

(On the left is a KLM Constellation. with a
Scandanavian (SAS) DC-6 on the right)



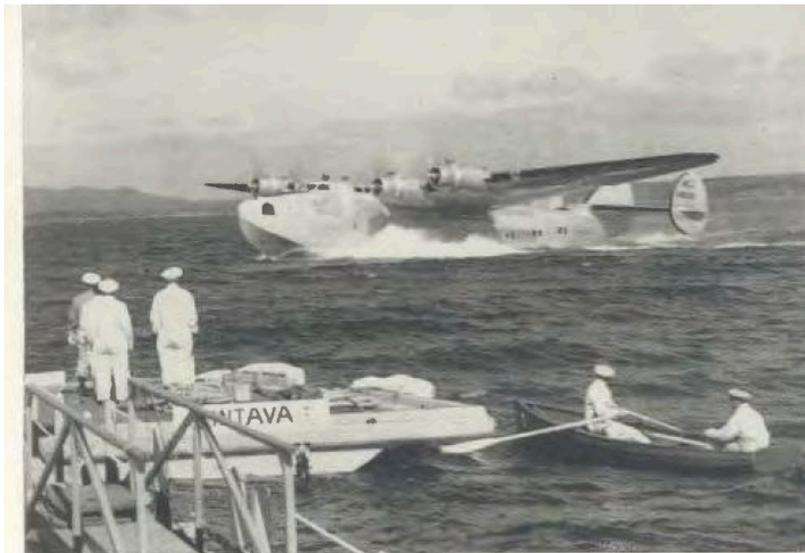
(Charles de Gaulles' Lancaster 1950,
hand coloured by the late Fred Smeaton)

The other obvious aviation-gas supplier was Esso Imperial – but Esso in Gander also had a lesser-known predecessor called Intava. That enterprise was born on 07 March 1939 from the union of Vacuum Oil Co and the Anglo-American Oil Co. Intava was the contraction of “International Aviation Associates”, with its main sales organization in London, England.

At the end of the war, Intava, under new ownership, had moved its headquarters to New York, with the intention of moving gradually back into the Old Continent. It was now 50/50 in the hands of Socony-Vacuum Oil and Standard Oil. In the 1900's, Standard Oil of New Jersey had started marketing its products under the brand name 'Esso' and the brand name for aviation products became “Esso Aviation” in 1947. The name Esso, by the way, comes from the initials “SO” of Standard Oil.

Imperial, originally a Canadian company, began in 1880 in London, Ontario, when 16 refiners created the Imperial Oil Company. In 1898 Standard Oil of New Jersey (now Exxon Mobil Corporation) acquired a majority interest in Imperial.

In Gander the Intava paint scheme remained on the trucks into the early 50s when they were gradually replaced. Shown below are several photos of Intava (starting with their barge in Botwood), followed by photos of Esso.





(hand coloured by the late Fred Smeaton)



● Re-fuelling of planes at Gander is unique, highly efficient and fast, for time is of the essence. The gasoline is brought to Lewisporte by Imperial Oil tankers and from there to Gander in tank-cars by rail. It is pumped from storage tanks into trucks which are equipped with filters, measuring gauges and other devices. The system was designed especially for Gander by Imperial Oil engineers.

(Atlantic Guardian 1950s)



(Seaboard and Western DC-4 "Frankfurt Trader")



(First jet, an RAF Canberra in 1954, refueled by Esso.
hand coloured by the late Fred Smeaton)



(Trans Canada Airlines DC-3)

Shell Oil Company tended to have the contracts to refuel European airlines, while the American airlines generally favoured Standard Oil companies (Intava and Imperial Esso).

However, aviation products are sold in the open market, so in this highly competitive industry, price will certainly have a higher priority than country loyalty.

For example, while Shell refuelled RAF Ferry Command planes during the war, Esso gassed up the RAF Canberra in 1954. Two years later, in 1956, Shell lost the Trans World Airlines contract, with a large number of their employees moving to Esso.

The following table gives the general situation:

Refuelling in “Old Gander”	
Shell Oil	Intava/Esso
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ BOAC (British) ◦ KLM (Dutch) ◦ Flying Tiger (American) ◦ SAS (and its Swedish, Danish and Norwegian predecessors) ◦ El Al (Israeli) ◦ Air France ◦ TWA after 1951 (American) ◦ TCA (now Air Canada) until around early 50s ◦ Lufthansa (German) ◦ Eastern Provincial Airways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sabena (Belgian) ◦ Aer Lingus (Irish) ◦ Seaboard and Western (American) ◦ Pan American ◦ American Airlines ◦ American Overseas Airlines ◦ TWA before 1951 and after 1956 ◦ TCA after the early 50s
<p>During the war, the refuelling of RAF Ferry Command planes was done by Shell Oil. The RCAF had its own fuel bowsers, while the USAAF fuelled transiting bombers using its own fuel trailers.</p>	

Pretty much all these airlines except TCA left Gander during the 1960s and many, such as Flying Tiger, EPA, TWA, Seaboard and Western and Pan American, have ceased to exist. Those who survived however – and many of those that followed - were happy know they could still get av-gas in Gander if needed – and especially on a certain 11 September.