

THE DUTCH HOSPITAL SHIP ORANJE

The famous Netherlands hospital ship Oranje arrived in a British port recently, carrying wounded from the different battlefields in Italy.

It was her first visit to Britain since she left her home port of Amsterdam five years ago to make her maiden voyage to the Indies. She never returned to her home port, as war broke out and she was transferred into the world's biggest hospital ship.

This is not the only record the ship holds, as her speed of 28 knots makes her the fastest motor vessel afloat. It cost the Netherlands Indies Government more than £150,000 to equip her over to her humanitarian task, whilst another £150,000 yearly was offered to the Australian Government—under whose auspices the Oranje was to sail—for her upkeep.

When Java fell in March, 1942, other financial arrangements were made, and the Oranje went on with the job, flying both the Red Cross pennant and the Netherlands ensign.

There is an all-Dutch crew on board of 350, with an occasional Australian who mustered whilst the Oranje was based here. There are also some 100 Javanese members of the crew.

The Oranje can take about 700 wounded. In charge of the ship's medical unit is a Netherlands Indies Army doctor. Apart from the small number of Dutch medical personnel, most surgeons and doctors on board are British, Australian or New Zealanders. There is also a Netherlands crew in the nursing personnel, which consists mostly of New Zealand nurses. The medical equipment is generally praised by competent medical authorities as "absolutely perfect."

At present, in this British port, the Oranje is creating quite a sensation. But, after all, she is an ordinary ship, built on ordinary wharves by and for an ordinary company. After the war, many more like her will be built, perhaps even bigger and with more splendour, as soon as the Oranje has finally finished her maiden trip and returned for the first time to her home water in Amsterdam.