CANTON (1848)
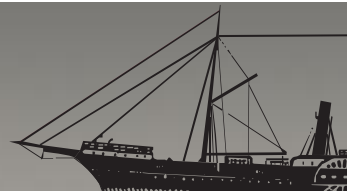
Base data at 26 May 1848.   Last amended November 2008
* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger/cargo ship
P&O Group service	1848-1859
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Tod & McGregor
Yard	Glasgow
Country	UK
Yard number	49
Registry	
Official number	32731
Signal letters	
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	400 grt
Net tonnage	218 nrt
Deadweight	
Length	52.62m (172.7ft)
Breadth	6.52m (21.4ft)
Depth	3.36m (10.7ft)
Draught	
Construction (if not steel)	Iron
Engines	Side lever steam engines
Engine builders	Tod & McGregor
Works	Glasgow
Country	UK
Power	150 ihp
Propulsion	Paddles
Speed	8 knots
Passenger capacity	
Cargo capacity	9,820 cubic feet
Crew	
Employment	Hong Kong/Canton and Macao branch service

Career

28.03.1848:	Launched.
26.05.1848:	Delivered as *Canton* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. Built for an unsubsidised branch service, she was armed for defence against Canton River pirates with two 32-pounder shell-firing guns (one source says four 32-pound carronades), 30 muskets, 30 cutlasses and 30 pairs of pistols; her crew included ex-Naval gunners.
09.06.1848:	Registered.
25.06.1848:	Left Southampton but collided with the brig *John Woodhall* off the Isle of Wight and put back to port 27th June with damage forward. Her second officer, who was on watch, was suspended.
04.07.1848:	Sailed again via the Cape, Simons Bay, Mauritius, Galle and Singapore.
19.02.1849:	Arrived in Hong Kong. There was no mail contract for the branch service to Canton, but Hong Kong merchants made arrangements with the P&O agent in Hong Kong for *Canton* to be used for mails.
29.09.1849:	Sighted the sailing brig HMS *Columbine* becalmed while in action against pirate junks, the latter escaping by use of sweeps. *Canton* towed the warship within range of the enemy, whose craft were quickly sunk or surrendered, and carried Naval casualties back to Hong Kong for treatment the next day. In the same year she was chartered under a Naval lieutenant by local merchants to search for a number of ships thought to have been pirated, a mission blessed with some success.
1856:	Ran aground on an uncharted rock, remaining aground for 8 weeks before being salvaged and repaired 'at moderate expense'.
09.1856/ 01.1857:	Replaced in service by the chartered steamer *Sir Charles Forbes*.
1857:	Gross tonnage re-stated as 348 grt.
05.10.1859:	Driven ashore at Macao during a typhoon and became a total loss. Though all aboard were saved the wreck broke in two and was abandoned. The financial loss was not small; since the war in China her trading results had been poor and she was in poor repair, and P&O's Hong Kong agents had already been told to look for a buyer. She suffered no loss of life in the typhoon.

CHINESE PIRATES
From vol.6 of "The Royal Navy: a history from the earliest times to the present" by William Laird Clowes (7 vols., London, Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1897-1903),

In the meantime Troubridge had put Lieutenant William Mould, of the *Amazon*, and some seamen and Marines, into the trading steamer *Canton,* Thomas Jamieson master, and had sent him on further search for the missing vessels. On September 9th, the *Canton* had captured a pirate junk, and released a vessel which had been captured by her. Later on the same day, Mould had boarded a sugar junk, which had just been released by Shap'n'gtzai on payment of 1100 dollars' ransom. That night, he had

passed through a mass of junks which he had afterwards ascertained to be the pirate fleet. Early on the 10th, the *Canton* had entered Tienpakh, and, her boats having been fired at by three junks at anchor there, she had entered the port, burnt the junks, killed many of the pirates, and taken 11 prisoners, who reported that Shap'n'gtzai had sailed on the previous evening. Mould had followed, first to Nowchow, and then to Hoihow, in Hainan, where he had learnt of an engagement between the pirates and the Chinese admiral Hwang. After destroying two more junks off Mamee, the *Canton* had returned to Hong Kong on September 15th, and Mould and his people had rejoined the *Amazon.*

The *Columbine*, and the *Phlegethon,* of the HEI Co.'s service, were with the *Amazon* when the *Canton* returned. Troubridge had just been ordered to Singapore, and, leaving Hay as senior officer on the spot, he desired him to carry out certain instructions. In pursuance of these, Hay searched various ports along the coast, and then ran over to Macao, and put himself into communication with the United States' Commodore Geisinger, who was there in the *Plymouth*. One of Geisinger's officers, Lieutenant Thomas Jefferson Page, had captured two pirate junks which had seized American cargoes; and, as the Portuguese at Macao would not receive the prizes, Geisinger desired that the pirates should be tried in the Admiralty Court at Hong Kong. He therefore handed over the junks to Hay, who obtained the approval of Governor Samuel George Bonham; whereupon the trial took place on October 4th.

At the trial full information came out as to the history and proceedings of Shap'n'gtzai otherwise Chang-shih-wu-tz who had lived in Hong Kong, under British protection, until 1846, and of Chuiapoo, otherwise Tzeeapo, who also had lived in Victoria as a barber and a collector of facts which might be useful to him in his murderous profession. Just before the trial, Shap'n'gtzai had attacked and murdered a rival pirate and his people, and had then opened negotiations with the Chinese government with a view to entering the Chinese navy with his officers and fleet, and clearing the seas of other freebooters. Happily, the terms demanded were too high; and Shap'n'gtzai had to settle with the requirements of justice in another manner.

On September 27th, 1849, Governor Bonham informed Hay that Chuiapoo was ravaging the coast about ninety miles to the eastward of Hong Kong. No other vessel being ready, Hay went in chase with the *Columbine* only. On the night of the 28th, fourteen pirate junks were observed leaving Tysami, which was in flames. Followed and closed, they refused to heave to, and showed a desire to fight. The *Columbine* anticipated them by pouring three broadsides into their leader, and then, the breeze having fallen, had to manoeuvre by means of her sweeps. After a brisk action, the pirates made off early in the morning of the 29th, pursued by the sloop. In the chase three junks, which had suffered more than the rest, were abandoned, their crews being distributed among the remaining eleven.   Towards noon, the *Canton* was seen approaching. She had been chartered by an American, Mr. Watkins, to search for a missing ship and with Watkins's cordial consent, her master, Mr. Jamieson, steamed for the pirates. They were, however, too strong for him and all he could ultimately do was to endeavour to tow the *Columbine* into action, but, receiving a shot through his steam chest, he could not accomplish even that. The *Columbine* herself grounded while trying to follow one of the pirates, and had to be towed off, but, when still aground, she sent her pinnace, cutter and gig, under Lieutenant James Henry Bridges, who was accompanied by Mr. Watkins, after the fugitive. These boarded and carried her after a

desperate struggle. Seeing one of the pirates running below with lighted joss-stick, as if to blow up the magazine, Midshipman Charles Ramsay Goddard dashed after him, but, ere he could come up with him, the fellow fired the powder. The explosion so seriously injured the brave Midshipman that he died next day. Besides him, three men were killed and six wounded in the attack.

The *Canton* towed the *Columbine* to the entrance of *Bias* Bay, and then proceeded with the wounded to Hong Kong, where she handed Hay's dispatch to the Commander-in-Chief, who happened to be there. Sir Francis Augustus Collier instantly ordered the *Fury*, steamer, 6, Commander James Willcox, with a strong detachment of seamen and Marines under Lieutenant William Garnham Luard, of the flagship *Hastings*, to go to the assistance of the *Columbine*.

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