



Ship Fact Sheet



CANTON (1938)

Base data at 13 September 1938. Last amended October 2009

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger liner
P&O Group service	1938-1962
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	
Registered owners, managers* and operators*	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd
Yard	Linthouse, Glasgow
Country	UK
Yard number	557
Registry	London, UK
Official number	166555
Call sign	GDDT
Signal letters	
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	15,784 grt
Net tonnage	9,255 nrt
Deadweight	10,320 tons
Length	171.63m (563.3ft) loa; 161.49m (530.0ft) b/p
Breadth	22.33m (73.3ft)
Depth	12.77m (41.9ft)
Draught	8.988m (29ft 6in)
Engines	Single-reduction-gearred steam turbines
Engine builders	Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd
Works	Glasgow
Country	UK
Power	18,500 shp
Propulsion	Twin screw
Speed	18 knots
Passenger capacity*	257 first class, 221 second class
Cargo capacity	10,341 cubic metres (365,248 cubic feet) including 927 cubic metres (32,730 cubic feet) insulated
Crew	319: 28 European and 50 Indian deck crew; 19 and 39 engineers' department; 103 and 80 purser's department
Employment	London/Bombay and China service

Career

- 11.1936: Ordered.
- 14.04.1938: Launched by Miss Thalia Shaw, daughter of Lord Craigmyle, recently retired Chairman of P&O.
- 11.09.1938: Ran trials.
- 13.09.1938: Delivered as *Canton* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £820,000. She was the first P&O ship to carry a 'cinema operator'. Her name is taken from a city in southern China.
- 07.10.1938: Maiden sailing London/Bombay/Singapore/Hong Kong/Yokohama. She grounded briefly on a mud bank off Grays shortly after sailing.
- 30.03.1939: Collided with the French liner *Marechal Joffre* in fog off Hong Kong. There were no casualties but *Canton* spent the next three weeks in Taikoo dry-dock in Hong Kong for repairs to her starboard side near the engineroom.
- 10.05.1939: Rescued 35 passengers and some of the crew of the Danish liner *Alsia*, which had caught fire 15km (9 miles) off Galle, Ceylon. The rescuees were safely landed in Colombo.
- 19.10.1939: Requisitioned by the Admiralty for service as an armed merchant cruiser and converted by her builders at Glasgow. Fitted with eight 6-inch and two 3-inch guns.
- 09.01.1940: Ran aground in bad weather on rocks off Barra Head at the north end of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides whilst on her way to Greenock before transferring to South America. Two holds flooded and she was badly damaged forward. Crew abandoned ship when attempts to go astern at full power failed.
- 11.01.1940: Cleared rocks under her own steam and with the destroyer HMS *Impulsive* and the armed merchant cruiser HMS *California* standing by began a two-day journey to the Clyde where she was beached at Holy Loch for temporary repairs because she was too deep to get into dry dock.
- 18.01.1940: Sailed for Glasgow where Barclay, Curle & Co Ltd carried out the necessary repairs to make her seaworthy again.
- 15.04.1940: Returned to patrol and escort duties in the Western Atlantic.
- 17.07.1940: Involved in a running battle with U-boats off the west coast of Ireland.
- 01.1941: Refitted at Greenock.
- 24.02.1941: Fired on submarine HMS *Thunderbolt* but fortunately missed!
- 18.04.1941: Refitted in New York.
- 07.10.1941: Apprehended German cargo vessel *Karnak* 480km (300 miles) north of St Paul's Rocks but failed to stop her being sunk by scuttling charges.
- 07.1942: Refitted on the Clyde.
- 01.1943: Transferred to East Indies station.
- 14.04.1944: Redelivered to P&O at Suez.
- 23.04.1944: Departed from Suez for Aden, Port Elizabeth, Simonstown and Cape Town.
- 23.05.1944: Arrived at Cape Town for conversion into a troopship.
- 17.08.1946: Arrived at Alexander Stephen & Sons, Glasgow for reconditioning,

- having sailed 415,068km (257,967 miles) as an armed merchant cruiser and 33,515km (20,830 miles) as a troopship, in which capacity she carried 6,825 troops.
- 28.09.1947: Redelivered to P&O. Passenger capacity now 297 first class, 244 tourist class. Now painted white with a buff funnel in place of pre-war black hull and funnel.
- 10.1947: Made first post-war P&O voyage UK/Hong Kong.
- 12.1953: Carried no fewer than three Rear Admirals – A F Pugsley, N V Dickinson and G A Clifford – home from the Far East on relinquishing their commands, an event believed to be unique.
- 15.10.1957: Sailing from King George V Dock, London, delayed by a fire in a cargo of toilet paper.
- 05.1960: Management and operation transferred to P&O Orient Lines.
- 1961: Sailings extended to Japan following the acquisition of *Cathay* and *Chitral*.
- 26.08.1962: Withdrawn from service at end of her last Far East/UK voyage and sold to Leung Yau Shipbreaking Co Ltd, Hong Kong, for demolition. She was the last pre-war non-air-conditioned ship on P&O's Far East service.
- 31.08.1962: Left London on delivery voyage to the breakers.
- 03.10.1962: Delivered at Hong Kong.

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