



Ship Fact Sheet



GREAT LIVERPOOL (1838)

Base data at September 1840. Last amended March 2010

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger liner
P&O Group service	1840-1846
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	Liverpool
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Humble & Milcrest
Yard	Liverpool
Country	UK
Yard number	
Registry	
Official number	None
Signal letters	
Classification society	
Gross tonnage	1,382 grt
Net tonnage	587 nrt
Deadweight	
Length	65.11m (213.7ft)
Breadth	7.77m (25.5ft)
Depth	5.79m (19.0ft)
Draught	
Construction (if not steel)	Wood
Engines	Direct-acting side-lever steam engines
Engine builders	George Forester & Co
Works	Liverpool
Country	UK
Power	468 ihp
Propulsion	Paddles
Speed	9 knots
Passenger capacity	
Cargo capacity	
Crew	
Employment	Southampton/Alexandria service

Career

- Ordered for Sir John Tobin.
- 14.10.1837: Launched as *Liverpool* for Transatlantic Steamship Co, Liverpool. Original specifications were 1,140 gross, 559 net.
- 10.1838: Sold to James Hartley, Liverpool. Her cabins (98 passengers) and staterooms were reputedly the finest afloat, but she was a failure on the Atlantic, being 'strong and staunch, but very wet', not to mention 'slow and cranky'.
- 20.10.1838: Maiden sailing Liverpool/New York with between 50 and 60 passengers, forced back to Cork after six days battling a tremendous gale.
- 06.11.1838: Reached New York after voyage lasting 16 days 17 hours. The return voyage took 14.5 days.
- 1839: Six outward voyages to New York all took over 16.5 days. Fastest return voyage 13 days 17 hours.
- 16.12.1839: Left New York on her last homeward crossing.
- 30.12.1839: Put into Fayal in the Azores with low bunkers.
- 11.01.1840: Arrived at Liverpool after a 27-day crossing.
- 04.1840: Transatlantic Steam joined forces with the Peninsular Steam concern and agreed to transfer *Liverpool* (and the incomplete *United States*, renamed *Oriental*) to the new Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, taking £80,000 in shares and with Transatlantic's Francis Carleton becoming one of P&O's three Managing Directors. As Peninsular Steam already had a ship named *Liverpool*, the Atlantic liner, the larger of the two, became *Great Liverpool*.
- 09.1840: Taken over by Peninsular Steam Navigation Company and renamed *Great Liverpool*. Re-boilered and tonnages increased.
- 10.1840: First P&O sailing from Liverpool to Alexandria. Apparently she had some difficulty in passing the Admiralty surveyors before being accepted to carry mails.
- 02.1841: Ownership transferred to The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.
- 07.12.1841: Broke down near Finisterre. Towed to Falmouth by *Oriental* (arrived 9th December). Mails taken on by *Montrose*.
- 01.02.1843: Left Southampton with the first passengers booked to travel through to India by P&O, connecting with the first sailing of *Hindustan* from Suez to Calcutta, arriving on 24th March 1843.
- 11.1843: Broke her intermediate shaft and lost power to her port paddle in the Eastern Mediterranean. The mails were carried from Alexandria to Malta by HMS *Alecto*, and on to Gibraltar by HMS *Geyser*, and there was a protracted dispute over payment to the Navy for this help.
- 01.1845: Inaugurated bi-monthly sailings to Egypt, and was given new boilers originally intended for P&O's *Braganza*.
- 24.02.1846: Struck a reef about 11km (7 miles) off Cape Finisterre at 0400hrs when on a voyage from Alexandria to Southampton. Fog and a strong current were blamed and three lives were lost, two women and a child, when a lifeboat was swamped in the surf. She was

beached near Corcubion, Spain, where there was little protection by the local authorities and the wreck was looted. The mails and baggage were however saved, First Officer Bencraft cutting through the hull to the mail room and sending the contents to Oporto where they were put aboard a Peninsular run ship (the chartered steamer *Queen*).

27.02.1846: Broke up in a storm.

01.03.1846: Although Captain McLeod was later found to be blameless, the wreck so preyed on his mind that he committed suicide in his hotel room at Corunna. Evidence from two other P&O ships, *Pacha* and *Oriental*, and the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's *Tweed*, suggested that a south-westerly storm in the Atlantic had caused all three ships to find themselves anything up to 20km (12 miles) eastward of where they reckoned themselves to be, exactly what happened to *Great Liverpool*.

LOSS OF THE GREAT LIVERPOOL

"The Times", Monday March 9th, 1846

Intelligence reached town on Saturday of the total loss of the Great Liverpool steamer, which took place on the 24th of February, at 4 in the morning, off Cape Finisterre, by getting on shoals. The catastrophe appears to have been wholly the result of accident. It is said that no blame whatever attaches to Captain M'Leod, the commander. Only three lives were lost, although it is stated that there were about 150 souls on board. Mrs. Archer, from Bombay, a Miss Morris, aged 7, and an Indian female servant, were the three that perished by the swamping of the boat, while attempting to escape. 79 of the passengers and 21 of the crew have arrived at Southampton by the *Pacha*, which also had a narrow escape of being wrecked, having run on shore off Oporto. In the letter which follows, addressed by the Captain to Mr. Allan, secretary of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, there will be found a full account of the circumstances under which the catastrophe took place:-

"Vice Consulate-office, District of Corcubion, Feb. 28, 1846.

"To James Allan, Esq., Secretary, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.

"Dear Sir, It is with feelings of the most painful grief that I have to acquaint you, for the information of the managing directors and all whom it may concern, that at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 24th inst., while steering NNE with a strong wind from the SSW, and a heavy sea running, and about seven to ten miles from Cape Finisterre, the weather thick, dark, and hazy, the ship going about ten knots an hour, we struck upon a shoal or rock, and made so much water in the engine-room that she soon became unmanageable from the fires being put out, and consequently drifting towards the Land, and grounded in a small sandy shoal, called 'Guros,' about one league and a half to southward of Corcubion, where she lay with her head to the southward broadside on the beach, at the distance of 300 yards, on which a heavy surf was breaking. The boats were all got ready for lowering to land the passengers and crew, and the larboard lifeboat was sent with a party of seamen and a line to haul a rope on shore, which they with difficulty reached in safety, and we soon after got a hawser on shore, and the end

of it made fast and hove taut from the ship. Mr. Hamilton, chief officer, was sent in the launch with a party of passengers and crew, amongst whom were several ladies and children; all were safely landed except Mrs. Archer, a child belonging to Mrs. Morris, 7 years old, and a native female Indian servant, who were lost in the surf on the beach by the swamping of the launch, though every exertion was made, both by shore, on the beach, and in the launch to save them. After this the launch, which was with great difficulty hauled alongside by us on board, and baled out, made several successful trips, and all on board were safely landed. By 11 am, going myself in the last trip, having previously ascertained that every person was out of the ship, the sea at that period was breaking heavily over her, and she was fast breaking up on the starboard side, amidships. The pinnace was stove-in lowering, and the starboard quarter boat by the sea striking her violently. On getting on shore I found several articles of different kinds had already floated there, and a number of the people of the coast had come down and were plundering all they could get away, although all means were taken to prevent it. In fact we have been most shamefully plundered and robbed in every possible way.

“Considering it necessary to communicate with the nearest English Consul or agent, I dispatched Mr. Lane (purser) to Corcubion, where I learned a consular agent resided, to claim protection for ourselves and property that might come on shore. On his arrival there he found the consular agent (a Spaniard, and not speaking English) to be a person of no influence; indeed apparently incapable of rendering assistance of any sort. He, therefore, deemed it indispensable to proceed at once to Corunna, distance 45 miles, and communicate with Mr. Santos, the Consul-General for Galicia, and was promised by the consular agent that passports, horses, and guides for himself and three passengers, should ready be at half-past 5 o'clock on the following morning. Instead of this, neither horses nor passports were ready, but finally, a refusal to allow him to proceed. He afterwards found that the Consul had sent a messenger to Corunna, that morning, without even allowing Mr. Lane to know he was going to do so. The passengers, I fear, have suffered much from the Vice Consul not having sought or selected any place for them to go to, and also from the scarcity and difficulty of getting provisions of almost any sort, and the accommodation they have been enabled to get being of the most miserable description.

“I am happy to say that every officer and man under my command behaved themselves under these most trying circumstances to my most entire satisfaction, and I cannot omit mentioning to you the great assistance I received, and the praiseworthy exertions that were made in our critical situation by Capt. Bowen of the ship *Hindustan*, passenger on board from Ceylon.

“Wednesday, 25th.

“The weather having moderated for a few hours, I went on board at low water with the officers and crew, and succeeded in getting up and landing a great portion of the mails, a few packages of cargo, and some passengers' baggage, all in a most damaged state. On the afternoon of this day I came up to this place to note a protest, being the earliest that I could get away from the beach, but did not succeed in doing so till the following morning.

"Thursday, 26th.

"Being unable to make the protest in Spanish, I wrote it in English, and presented it to the Vice Consul, a copy of which I enclose herewith. After this made I an application to him as to whether we could not get up from the beach (a distance of five miles, and over high hills) the mails and such articles as had already been saved. Her applied to the alcalde, or mayor, for 12 bullock carts, which were granted, and proceeded 'at noon to the beach; but on arrival there, the officer in charge from the Customs, or Guarda Costa, would not permit a single thing to be removed, although he acknowledged his inability to protect all the property from the ladrones or thieves, saying no order for their removal had been received. The carts, therefore, returned empty, and immediately came back to the Vice-Consul to know how it was that he had not procured an order, if it were necessary. He said it must come from the Minister of Customs, who just then came up, and on applying to him for an order to bring the mails, &c., to the Vice-Consul's house, he said they must all go to the Custom-house at Corcubion, which is on the opposite side of the bay, to be under his custody. However, on reasoning with him, I believe he determined on allowing the things to be put in the Vice-Consul's house - at least until the arrival of Mr. Santos from Corunna, and was to leave himself at 7 o'clock next morning for the purpose of removing them. During this time the officers and crew have been living under temporary tents on the beach, subsisting on such food as could be got from the ship, with a supply of bread from this village (Cee). They are, of course, affording every protection in their power to their property, but the barefaced plundering that goes on is incredible. The soldiery, or Caraboneros, having even gone so far as to present the bayonet at the officers and men while saving property, which they (the soldiers) took in charge and sold afterwards themselves.

"Friday, 27th.

"During last night, blowing hard, the ship went entirely to pieces. The carts went to the beach; but from the state of the weather, did not arrive in time to load; they were in charge of the Minister of Customs. I deemed it proper to remain all night on the beach, to facilitate the loading in the morning. During the night a great concourse of people assembled, and lighted 13 fires around us from the wreck, and the most determined system of pillaging was carried on without the possibility of preventing it. I sent Mr. Lane back to the village to push things forward for the morning, and on his arrival at 5 o'clock, Mr. Santos, Vice-Consul from Corunna, just then came in. The whole circumstances were laid before him, and he was fully convinced of the badness of the Vice-Consul or agent here; in fact, when he called him before Mr. Lane he seemed quite incapable of giving any explanation of his conduct. Mr. Santos considered it best not to dismiss him from his office at once, thinking it better to avail himself of his services until the settlement of the affair.

"Saturday, 28th.

"Mr. Santos arrived at the beach at 7 o'clock this morning, and through the authority with which he came prepared, and his own unremitting exertions, sufficient carts and oxen were engaged to remove the whole of the mails and property to the Vice-Consul's house by 3 pm, accompanied by the whole of the officers and crew, who for the present occupy a large storeroom of the Vice-Consul's

“Arrangements have been made for starting the first batch of passengers to-morrow morning, and on the following morning another party will start for Corunna. The ladies and children cannot possibly proceed until side-saddles arrive from Corunna, which will be on Tuesday next.

“The Admiralty agent and myself conjointly have written by express to the Admiralty Agent and Commander of the Pacha, requesting them to detain her at Corunna 24 hours, in case the mails &c, which proceed home by a felucca tomorrow, do not arrive in the ordinary time to embark by her. I have deemed it prudent, after consulting with Mr Santos, to remain here until I see everybody on their way to England, and I have therefore sent Mr Lane with the first batch of passengers, and instructions to proceed with the despatches by the speediest opportunity to St Mary-axe.

“The passengers have all been more comfortably housed lately, and both them and the ship’s company are all well, with the exception of Lieutenant Williamson, Admiralty Agent, who has been very poorly since he left Malta.

“I am dear Sir,
Your very obedient servant
A M’Leod”

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