



Ship Fact Sheet



PALMA (1903)

Base data at 9 October 1903. Last amended November 2008

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger/cargo liner
P&O Group service	1903-1924
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Workman, Clark & Co Ltd
Yard	Belfast
Country	UK
Yard number	202
Registry	Belfast, UK
Official number	116009
Signal letters	VGLT
Call sign	
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	7,632 grt
Net tonnage	4,913 nrt
Deadweight*	11,319 tons
Length	146.25m (480.0ft)
Breadth	17.43m (57.2ft)
Depth	9.96m (32.7ft)
Draught	8.322m (27ft 3 ³ / ₄ in)
Engines	Triple-expansion steam engines
Engine builders	Workman, Clark & Co Ltd
Works	Belfast
Country	UK
Power	5,000 ihp
Propulsion	Twin screw
Speed	14 knots
Passenger capacity	12 first class
Cargo capacity	14,511 cubic metres (512,560 cubic feet)
Crew [1914]	117 (26 European, 91 Asian). Deck 15 European, 30 Asian; engine room 10 European, 51 Asian; purser's department 1 European, 10 Asian
Employment	Indian and Far East services

Career

- 25.08.1903: Launched.
- 09.10.1903: Delivered as *Palma* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £107,110. She was third of the 5-strong 'P' class. Palma is the capital of the Balearic Islands, a Spanish province in the western Mediterranean.
- 1904: In a triple collision in fog off Gravesend.
- 1906: Refrigerating equipment fitted.
- 10.1906: Deadweight 10,809 tons.
- 09.12.1911: Heavy seas in the Channel carried away her steering gear pipes and No.5 hatch cover.
- 1912: Appeared briefly on the P&O Branch Line to Australia via the Cape.
- 1914: Commissioned as a Fleet Auxiliary.
- 29.04.1917: Fired on by a submarine west of the Scilly Isles.
- 18.06.1917: Attacked by two German submarines 500km (300 miles) west of the Irish coast when sailing in convoy from New York to Liverpool. Three torpedoes were fired but all missed, and the attack was discontinued.
- 18.04.1920: Took in tow the disabled steamer *Australmead* in the Indian Ocean and towed her 2,000km (1,200 miles) to Mauritius, arriving 27th April.
- 1921: In collision with the US schooner *Horace E Munro*, which was abandoned, but won damages in the ensuing court case.
- 1924: Sold for £17,000 to Attilio Ardito, Italy, for demolition.
- 27.11.1924: Handed over at Genoa.

EXTRACTS FROM A TALK TO THE DUNOON MENS BUSINESS CLUB

11 December 1958

Meantime I got my Second Engineer's ticket and was appointed to the P&O steamer *Palma* in September 1918. This vessel was a cargo ship with accommodation for a few passengers and was fitted to carry refrigerated cargo in her forward three holds. We were running to the US in convoy and on Armistice Day 1918 were on the way home from Boston with a cargo of bacon, grain and other foodstuffs. The "flu" epidemic was then raging and we had it badly on board as also had the other ships in the convoy. Each day about 4 p.m. the armed merchant cruiser HMS *Avon* which was escort flagship signalled the convoy to slow down and bury the dead. We had some deaths on board among the Indian crew and we arrived in London very short-handed and had to put many of our crew in hospital. *Palma* loaded in London after this for Australia calling at Durban (via the Cape) for coal. As food was very short at home we only loaded at one Australian port (Melbourne) and the ship was loaded to her marks in 6 days (working through the night as well). A record passage was made I remember as the Captain took the shortest route going well South out and home via the Cape. *Palma* continued trading to Australia and we had the usual cargoes of wool, grain, frozen mutton, butter, fruit, and also metals mostly copper and tin.

In the spring of 1920 we had a salvage job, towing the Australian Government cargo ship *Australmead* over 1,500 miles in the South Indian Ocean to Port Louis in Mauritius. *Australmead*, an old Glasgow tramp which had belonged to Messrs Burrells of Glasgow and was bought by the Australians at the end of the First World War, had broken down owing to having her mooring ropes (which had washed off the fo'c'sle head in bad weather) wind themselves so tightly round her propeller that the main engines pulled up dead. We got her SOS when only 100 miles away and when we got to her the crew were attempting to cut the ropes with sharpened long fire slices from the boiler room. From a heaving life boat in a 15 to 20 foot sea this proved useless and dangerous and the attempt had to be abandoned as also was the lifeboat which was damaged and the crew of the lifeboat were lucky to get back on board safely.

This tow was a job and getting the towing wire rigged to *Australmead's* anchor cable a major operation of seamanship. As it was, after towing for nearly two days at about 6 or 7 knots something gave on the Australian ship and towing wire and anchor cable were left dangling over our stern nearly a quarter of a mile down in the depths of the sea. Luckily it was a bit calmer weather by this time but getting all this weight back on board and then re-rigged took over 30 hours of hard work. The weight of towing wire and anchor chain was too much for our deck winches and this meant using the anchor windless and hauling up a bit at a time. At last we got under way again and finally made Port Louis safely.

When we foregathered in Port Louis with the crew of the *Australmead* it was a strange tale we heard of how the ropes washed overboard and what happened when the engines pulled up dead. Capt. Lampkier talked of big cash rewards for the salvage operation but the P&O only claimed towage expenses from the Australian Government

and the crew got a Lloyd's award much less than salvage and made according to one's rate of wages. A Glasgow lawyer in whose office I had worked before serving my apprenticeship and whom I met when on leave after this tow forecast to me that P&O would not claim full salvage and that I would be lucky to get a month's wages as my share. Twelve months later when the awards were fixed I got about three month's pay which you can guess was very welcome.

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