



Ship Fact Sheet



DONGOLA (1905)

Base data at 15 November 1905. Last amended November 2008

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger liner
P&O Group service	1905-1926
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Barclay, Curle & Co Ltd
Yard	Glasgow
Country	UK
Yard number	455
Registry	Glasgow, UK
Official number	121270
Signal letters	HDTL
Call sign	
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	8,051 grt
Net tonnage	4,737 nrt
Deadweight	8,165 tons
Length	143.21m (470.0ft)
Breadth	17.12m (56.2ft)
Depth	7.07m (23.2ft)
Draught	8.423m (27ft 7 ³ / ₄ in)
Engines	Quadruple-expansion steam engines
Engine builders	Barclay, Curle & Co Ltd
Works	Glasgow
Country	UK
Power	8,000 ihp
Propulsion	Twin screw
Speed	15.5 knots
Passenger capacity	163 first class, 80 second class
Cargo capacity	10,082 cubic metres (356,112 cubic feet)
Crew [1914]	236 (115 European, 121 Asian). Deck 61 European; engineroom 12 European, 79 Asian; purser's department 42 European, 42 Asian
Employment	UK/India and Far East mail services, and trooping

Career

- 14.09.1905: Launched.
- 10.11.1905: Registered.
- 15.11.1905: Delivered as *Dongola* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £160,167. She was one of the four-strong 'D' class. Her name comes from a Sudanese town on the Nile, presumably commemorating General Kitchener's victory there over Mahdist forces in 1896.
- 1905: On her maiden voyage she carried Prince Arthur of Connaught and his suite to Colombo en route to conferring the Order of the Garter on the Emperor of Japan.
- 1906: Taken up for seasonal trooping charter, which was repeated every year until 1914, apart from 1911.
- 1907: Made a record Southampton/Bombay journey in 18 days, 7 hours.
- 1911: Present at King George V's Coronation Navy Review carrying guests of the Admiralty.
- 1911: Indian famine relief duties.
- 1914: On trooping charter when War was declared.
- 1915: Requisitioned. She operated as a makeshift hospital ship at the Dardanelles and later as transport, largely off the coast of East Africa.
- 05.03.1915: Collided at 0017hrs in the Bristol Channel with the anchored Belgian steamer *Espagne*, having sailed from Avonmouth at 2247hrs the previous evening. Holed below the waterline forward on the starboard side and beached west of Barry for the leak to be temporarily stopped. Refloated on a rising tide at 0448hrs and winched into Barry Dock 3 hours later.
- 17.03.1915: Left Barry after repairs.
- 1919: After the Armistice she repatriated deported Russians to Reval, and brought back refugees, before being refitted.
- 10.1920: First post-war commercial voyage London/Bombay.
- 20.05.1922: Run into by steamer *Kumana Maru* (NYK) outside Woosung Bay. Both ships beached, but the Japanese vessel was blamed for the incident.
- 01.09.1923: Assisted in relief work at the Yokohama earthquake. After the shock and ensuing fire, took aboard some 430 refugees of all nationalities.
- 03.09.1923: Sailed for Kobe with about 700 aboard. Four refugees who died onboard were buried at sea. Captain R H Griffith was decorated by the Japanese Government for the leading part he took in the rescue.
- 1924: On the Aden/Bombay 'ferry' service.
- 1925: One round voyage UK/Australia.
- 28.06.1926: Sold for £15,500 to T W Ward Ltd for demolition at Barrow.

PENINSULAR & ORIENTAL STEAM NAVIGATION COY. S.S. "DONGOLA"

At sea, 3rd September, 1923

To: The Managing Directors, P&O.S.N.Co., 122 Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.3.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour to forward my report of this ship's experience during the earthquake at Yokohama.

Saturday 1st September 1923, ship at No.8 Buoy, Yokohama Inner Harbour.

At 11.55 a.m. ship commenced to tremble and vibrate violently and on looking towards the shore it was seen that a terrible earthquake was taking place, buildings were collapsing in all directions and in a few minutes nothing could be seen for clouds of dust. When these cleared away fire could be seen starting in many directions and in half an hour the whole city was in flames. The wind which had been force 5 at 11.0 a.m. rapidly increased to force 8, direction S.S.W., the smoke and heat blown directly over the ships in the harbour was intense.

Order was given to raise steam as quickly as possible, cable to the buoy was paid out and an anchor dropped under foot. The barometer which read 29.70 in. at 10.0 a.m. fell to 29.50 by 2 p.m., it then commenced to rise and the wind abated to force 6.

It was then noticed that the breakwater had subsided several feet, but fortunately the two entrance lighthouses were left standing.

About 1.0 p.m. the piers and sheds on them were all burning fiercely, fanned by the gale. Ships alongside them let go their ropes on board (the shore ends were mostly submerged) and made their way under great difficulties outside the breakwater. Three large ships not under command passed dangerously close to the *Dongola*, one, the *Lyons Maru* actually touching our bow plates but doing no damage, cable being slacked away. There was also considerable danger from drifting and burning lighters. One of these hit the ship and sank, about 12 of the 30 occupants were hauled on board, the remainder being drowned alongside. There was also danger from flying burning debris from the shore.

Shortly before 5 p.m. the wind died away and three boats were manned by Engineers, Quartermasters, Stewards and Lascars and sent on shore under Officers to rescue what survivors were visible along the water front, and in the water close to the Bund where they had taken refuge, with thousands of Japanese, from the flames which almost reached them from the nearest houses. Each boat made several trips until after midnight when there appeared to be no more on the Bund. Upwards of two hundred and fifty souls had been rescued by that time, some of them being very badly injured and all were in a completely destitute condition.

The utmost care was taken by the ship's company to alleviate distress and make things

as comfortable as possible. A boat was despatched to the Messageries Maritimes s.s. *Andre Lebon* with a request for medical assistance and stores, her Doctor rendering valuable assistance to our Surgeon. Throughout the night the sky was illuminated by the burning city.

At daylight next morning (Sunday) the boats were again manned and sent in and more people brought off. At 9.30 a.m. it became highly dangerous for the ship and boats to remain in the inner harbour owing to the large quantities of floating oil blazing furiously and drifting in various parts of the harbour. I therefore slipped from the Buoy at 9.40 a.m. and came to an anchorage outside the breakwater. A steam launch under the charge of the Blue Funnel cargo representative (Captain Philipson) then came alongside bringing many more survivors, returning with one lifeboat in tow to pick up others known to be making their way to the Bund.

At 7.0 p.m. there were no more to be seen and boats were hoisted. The approximate number then on board being 600 of all nationalities including many Russians, Chinese and Japanese. As many of the latter as possible were transferred to Japanese ships before leaving.

At daylight on Monday the s.s. *President Jefferson* was closed (I hove up and anchored close to her), she having arrived from Kobe in the early hours of the morning, which place Yokohama residents assured me had been destroyed on Saturday morning. I sent the Chief Officer on board to obtain information as to Kobe's fate and navigational problems. All were relieved to hear that Kobe was safe when the *President Jefferson* left there on Saturday at 5.0 p.m. I then proceeded on my way to Kobe to land the people. The ship was also getting short of boiler water. Many ships left at the same time.

Fires were still raging on shore and the city of Yokohama looked completely destroyed, nothing remaining standing except a few blackened skeletons of foreign buildings.

The oil fuel storage at the Naval Port at the entrance to the gulf which had been on fire since Saturday was still burning and emitting dense volumes of smoke. The water at the entrance of the gulf for about two miles was covered with oil, several feet deep. The danger of this catching fire and blocking the entrance to the gulf appeared to be great. The forts and lighthouses were partly demolished. Soundings were taken proceeding down the gulf and passing between the forts, the depth of water being apparently the same as marked on the chart.

I despatched a wireless report to Kobe office on Saturday at 6 p.m. reporting the safety of the ship but have no information as to whether this message got through.

I may add that one of the ship's officers was on shore on Company's business when the earthquake took place, having left the Company's office a few minutes previously. He was in the centre of one of the principal streets and happened at the moment to be standing between two large foreign buildings, which withstood the shock. After the dust cleared away he was able to make his way over the fallen houses towards the remains of the pier where he waded out to a small boat and got on board the Company's steam launch close to the Bund with no crew left on board. He was afterwards joined by five

Europeans who swam off from the shore. At 5.0 p.m. the wind having dropped they caught a small sampan just awash, baled it out and made their way to the ship.

I am glad to be able to report that the behaviour of the whole ship's company was splendid throughout this most trying time and well worthy of the Company's traditions. I consider that the Purser's Department particularly distinguished themselves in their eagerness to man the rescue boats and in their efforts to care for the sufferers when on board. The Surgeon Dr. M. L. Young also worked without rest for practically 3 days, having to perform difficult operations without aid.

I have received a letter of appreciation from the principal people saved, thanking the ship's company. The total number of survivors on board this ship leaving Yokohama was 505 of whom one lady and one boy died and were buried at sea.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,
R H Griffin. Commander

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