



Ship Fact Sheet



KARMALA (1914)

Base data at 22 June 1914. Last amended November 2008

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger/cargo liner
P&O Group service	1914-1932
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	Was to have been named <i>Kandahar</i>
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Cammell, Laird & Co Ltd
Yard	Birkenhead
Country	UK
Yard number	798
Registry	Liverpool, UK
Official number	135590
Signal letters	JFTB
Call sign	GQSB
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	8,983 grt
Net tonnage	5,687 nrt
Deadweight	10,940 tons
Length	146.25m (480.0ft)
Breadth	17.73m (58.2ft)
Depth	10.30m (33.8ft)
Draught	8.806m (28ft 10 ⁷ / ₈ in)
Engines	Quadruple-expansion steam engines
Engine builders	Cammell, Laird & Co Ltd
Works	Birkenhead
Country	UK
Power	9,000 ihp
Propulsion	Twin screw
Speed	15 knots
Passenger capacity	71 first class and 17 children, 66 second class
Cargo capacity	14,170 cubic metres (500,500 cubic feet)
Crew	192 (53 European, 139 Asian). Deck 18 European, 34 Asian; engine room 11 European, 79 Asian; purser's department 24 European, 26 Asian
Employment	Intermediate UK/India service

Career

- 14.03.1914: Launched.
- 22.06.1914: Ran trials and delivered as *Karmala* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £196,274. She was third of the 6-strong 'K' class to be delivered. Karmala is a town in Maharashtra State, India.
- 16.11.1914: Left Bombay as headquarters ship of the India Expeditionary Force for the capture of Tanga in German East Africa.
- 1915: Returned to commercial service.
- 03.1917: Attacked by a submarine in the Mediterranean. A torpedo missed, and the vessel was beaten off in a gun duel. Later requisitioned for transport duties, mostly on the North Atlantic carrying foodstuffs east and sailing west in ballast.
- 1918: Carried US troops, then reverted to the Indian service. Narrowly missed by a torpedo off northwest Ireland.
- 1918/1919: Repatriated Australian troops before going back on the India and Far East services.
- 16.01.1924: Fire in the Engineroom stairs put out after two houses, but the storekeeper died in the fire. A Company document suggests he might have been smuggling firearms.
- 1927: Transport service during troubles in China, carrying troops and armoured cars for the Shanghai Defence Force.
- 04.1932: Sold for £14,100 to Amakaru Gomei Kaisha, Japan for demolition.
- 30.06.1932: Delivered at Yokohama.

EXTRACTS FROM A TALK TO THE DUNOON MEN'S BUSINESS CLUB**11 December 1958**

My first voyage to sea was made on the P&O *Karmala* to Australia in 1916. This ship was an "intermediate" passenger liner normally carrying passengers to Calcutta and ports en route via the Suez Canal. As the best part of the P&O mail ships had been taken by the Admiralty for use as armed merchant cruisers, troop and hospital ships the *Karmala* was then put on the mail run to Australia. Her speed all out was about 16 knots so she had to be driven to keep anywhere near the mail speed. She was dry docked at Tilbury before we sailed and the wood lining of her stern tubes was found to be rather badly worn. This would normally have been put right at once but the Admiralty required the dry dock so this work was put off to be done when we arrived at Sydney. This voyage was a very memorable one as outward bound during bad weather we had trouble with the starboard propeller shaft stern gland, the packing broke up and the gland itself was fractured. The sea of course poured in and we had quite a job keeping the shaft tunnel bilges down. A "jury" gland was made however and we arrived in port without further trouble. Repairs to the stern tubes was duly made in Sydney and we took on passengers for the return voyage including many women and children, also 300 men of the Australian Light Horse (without horses) for General Allenby's Army in Palestine.

Just after passing through the Straits of Messina we were attacked by a German submarine, two torpedoes missed us and then the submarine surfaced and attacked by gunfire. The ship replied with her only armament which was an old 4.7-inch gun with very little range. After a running fight the ship outstripped the submarine, doing well over her trial trip speed by screwing down the boiler safety valves and having extra men firing the boilers. Next day the ship struck the ground off the Italian coast due I understand to an uncharted rock though the Captain was hugging the coast in case of further submarine attack. The ship was quite badly damaged forward and flooded to sea level as far as the forward reserve coal bunker and we were 11 feet by the head when we made Spezia for repairs. The repairs at Spezia took about a month and then were only of a temporary nature. The permanent repairs were carried out in London. Our passengers of course went home overland from Spezia and we heard arrived safely. This I understand was the last voyage with women and children from Australia during the First World War.

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