



Ship Fact Sheet



MALACCA (1892)

Base data at 17 February 1892. Last amended November 2008

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger/cargo liner
P&O Group service	1892-1909
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Naval Construction & Armaments Co Ltd
Yard	Barrow-in-Furness
Country	UK
Yard number	195
Registry	Barrow, UK
Official number	93426
Signal letters	MLPB
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	4,044 grt
Net tonnage	2,616 nrt
Deadweight	5,652 tons
Length	117.31m (385.0ft)
Breadth	13.77m (45.2ft)
Depth	8.53m (28.0ft)
Draught	7.985m (26ft 2½in)
Engines	Triple-expansion steam engine
Engine builders	Naval Construction & Armaments Co Ltd
Works	Barrow-in-Furness
Country	UK
Power	3,000 ihp
Propulsion	Single screw
Speed	11 knots
Passenger capacity	30 first class
Cargo capacity	7,463 cubic metres (263,580 cubic feet)
Crew	
Employment	London/Indian and Far Eastern 'intermediate' services

Career

- 30.12.1891: Launched by Miss Cassidy of Lancaster.
- 15.02.1892: Registered.
- 17.02.1892: Ran trials and left her builders as *Malacca* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £70,750. She originally carried yards on a tall foremast, but these were later removed and the mast shortened so she could use the Manchester Ship Canal. A sister ship was named *Formosa*. Her name, that of the strait between Malaya and Sumatra, had been previously used by P&O in 1866.
- 1894: Collided with *Aden* in the Thames.
- 1897: Employed as a hospital ship for the Benin Expeditionary Force.
- 13.07.1904: Seized by the Russian Volunteer Fleet cruiser *Petersburg* 4km (2.5 miles) off the Great Haruish, near Gebel Zukour in the Red Sea, on the suspicion that she was carrying armaments to Japan. A Russian crew was placed on board. Her sister *Formosa* was seized a few days later, but soon released at Suez.
- 19.07.1904: Arrived at Suez where all passengers and crew were put ashore, excepting the Chief Officer and two petty officers. The Russian flag was raised and it was announced that she was to be taken to Libau for full examination.
- 21.07.1904: Sailed from Suez.
- 27.07.1904: Arrived at Algiers, where she was released following Government intervention. The Russian Government subsequently paid £10,000 compensation in 1908, though P&O had claimed £25,000 and the Russians had offered only £6,117. Her detention completely disrupted the intermediate service to China and led to P&O refusing ordinary cargo for Japan in case the Russians considered it contraband.
- 1908: Laid up in Royal Victoria Dock, London, after failing to reach her reserve price at auction.
- 08.1909: Sold for £6,336 to Forth Shipbreaking Co Ltd.
- 21.09.1909: Arrived at Bo'ness for demolition.

THE MALACCA AFFAIR, OR, RUSSIAN ABOUT ON THE HIGH SEAS

In 1904 two of P&O's passenger/cargo liners on the UK/China "intermediate" (i.e. non-mail) service, the 4,045-ton sisters *Malacca* and *Formosa*, were seized by a Russian cruiser in the Red Sea. Russia and Japan were at war at the time and the incidents were obviously intended to stop arms or other contraband reaching Japan; possibly the Russians had every right under international law to stop the vessels, though perhaps not to take the further action that they did.

Formosa, seized a few days after her sister, was released at Suez, but *Malacca's* case was different: her crew were put off at Port Said except for the Chief Officer and two petty officers, who were obliged to sail her to Algiers. Settlement of the case took years and the ultimate conclusion far from satisfied P&O. Just to balance matters a little, when *Formosa* reached the Far East on her next voyage, she was stopped and searched again - by a Japanese cruiser!

The following are relevant extracts from P&O Annual Reports and the proceedings of the 1908 Annual General Meeting :

Annual Report 2 December 1904: "Malacca" Affair

The seizure of this ship by a Russian Cruiser in the Red Sea, and of her sister-ship, the "Formosa," only a few days afterwards, were incidents so widely known that any detailed explanation concerning them is rendered unnecessary.

Owing to the firm attitude taken up by H.M. Government, both ships were released, and in the case of the "Formosa," this took place so immediately after seizure that the delay and inconvenience might be held to be only of a trifling character, although the annoyance and anxiety were very great.

But the "Malacca's" case was different, and the delay before she could resume her voyage was such as to throw out completely the working of the Company's Service on the China Intermediate Line, involving a very serious loss, and the Company have, therefore, claimed compensation from the Russian Government for the damage thus sustained.

It need scarcely be added that from the outset of the war between Russia and Japan, the Company have been very careful to avoid any infringement of neutrality, or the conveyance of munitions of war or contraband in any distinguishable shape. But the uncertainty as to whether ordinary mercantile shipments might not be treated as contraband by Russia and lay the ships open to seizure, determined the Directors to decline all shipments to Japan for the time being, a decision which has involved a very considerable sacrifice of legitimate freight.

Annual Report 1 December 1908 : Seizure of "Malacca" and "Formosa"

It will be recollected that in 1904 these two steamers were seized in the Red Sea by a vessel of the Russian Volunteer fleet, during the war with Japan. They were

subsequently released through the prompt action of His Majesty's Government. In the case of the "Formosa" the detention was only for a day or two, but the "Malacca" was carried captive to Algiers, the crew being considered as prisoners, while they were at the same time forced to navigate the ship. Owing to the detention thus caused, the "Malacca's" regular turn of service was lost, and practically an entire voyage to China and Japan was sacrificed in order to bring about the normal regularity of the line, while a considerable expense was also incurred through the delay in question. Worst of all, the subsequent loading of many of the Company's vessels, more particularly at Antwerp, was seriously prejudiced by these occurrences, through a belief on the part of merchants that it was safer to ship by French and German steamers, than by the Company's line, while that war lasted.

It was difficult to assess accurately the damage inflicted on the Company by this action on the part of the Russian Government, from which they had forthwith to retreat, presumably with apologies to His Majesty's Government. But the Directors easily gave chapter and verse for a claim which they sent through the Foreign Office of £25,000 as damages in the case of the "Malacca" affair. After a delay of three years, an offer to settle this claim was received through that department, from the Russian Government, for the sum of £6,117! Naturally this proposal was rejected by the Directors, and after much correspondence, and the lapse of several months, a further offer was received, through the Foreign Office, of £7,348, which was equally declined. The Directors were then recommended to place themselves in the hands of the Russian Embassy, a course they did not see their way to adopt, and after a good deal of perseverance, and a lengthened recapitulation of all the facts of the case, on their part, the Foreign Office tackled the case a third time, and eventually succeeded in obtaining a further offer of £10,000, which the Secretary of State assured the Directors was final and could not be amended. There was therefore nothing left to do, otherwise than to accept this sum, inadequate as it is, to compensate the Company for the injury inflicted upon them by a seizure of their ships in contravention of the common law of nations.

This brief narrative, taken from an interminable correspondence, cannot be dismissed without recording the thanks of the Company, to both the Secretaries of State, who had to deal with what was undoubtedly a troublesome affair: to the Marquess of Lansdowne for his energetic action in the release of these vessels, and to Sir Edward Grey for his support of the Company's case against the travesty of justice meted out by the Russian Government.

Annual General Meeting 11 December 1908 : Speech by Sir Thomas Sutherland

Now, gentlemen, I have nearly concluded my remarks, and I need hardly repeat to you what we have written in our Report at full length, in fact we have given rather a summary of a three years' correspondence with regard to the "Malacca" affair. The seizure of this vessel and the "Formosa" was not a blow aimed at the P. and O. Company, but at the British Government, because the latter were the allies of the Japanese. It is difficult to say what the extent of the injury inflicted upon us was, because it was very natural that after these events shippers, especially on the Continent, should consider it very much safer to send their goods by vessels owned by French and German owners, who were the allies not of the Japanese but of the Russians. There is no doubt whatever that if this matter had been submitted to an

impartial tribunal we should have recovered large damages. But the shabbiest part of the whole proceeding lies in the fact that the Russians decline absolutely to grant any compensation to our officers and crew who were carried prisoners in the "Malacca." We have to meet that obligation ourselves to some extent. We have already charged in our account the sum of \3,500 on account of the expenses of the voyage of the "Malacca," so that we shall receive net between \5,000 and \6,000 against the very moderate and reasonable claim of \25,000 which we put forward. (Hear, hear.)

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