



Ship Fact Sheet



RAWALPINDI (1925)

Base data at 3 September 1925. Last amended April 2009

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger liner
P&O Group service	1925-1939
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former name(s)	
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Harland & Wolff Ltd
Yard	Greenock
Country	UK
Yard number	660
Registry	Greenock, UK
Official number	147827
Signal letters	KTDB
Call sign	GLRW
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Gross tonnage	16,619 grt
Net tonnage	9,416 nrt
Deadweight	8,850 tons
Length	166.88m (547.7ft)
Breadth	21.72m (71.3ft)
Depth	14.32m (47.0ft)
Draught	9.014m (29ft 7in)
Engines	Quadruple-expansion steam engines
Engine builders	Harland & Wolff Ltd
Works	Belfast
Country	UK
Power	15,000 ihp
Propulsion	Twin screw
Speed	17 knots (service); 19.6 knots (trials)
Passenger capacity	307 first class, 288 second class
Cargo capacity	10,096 cubic metres (356,600 cubic feet)
Crew	372 (15 officers, 75 seaman, 18 engineers, 63 firemen and 201 saloon crew)
Employment	London/Bombay mail service; later London/Far East

Career

- 26.03.1925: Launched by Lady Birkenhead, wife of Lord Birkenhead who had been Lord High Chancellor from 1919 to 1922.
- 02.09.1925: Ran trials.
- 03.09.1925: Delivered as *Rawalpindi* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company at a cost of £966,708. She was the second of four sisters; she was preceded by *Ranpura* and followed by *Ranchi* and *Rajputana*. The 'R' class were the first P&O ships with facilities for carrying refrigerated stores for mostly fish and fruit. Her name is taken from a town and district then in the Punjab province of British India, but later in northern Pakistan.
- 1927: Lost her cable in a typhoon at Hong Kong, but it was dredged up in time.
- 1930/1931: Cruising in addition to her mail sailings.
- 16.09.1937: Shadowed by a Japanese destroyer when nearing Hong Kong whilst homeward bound from Japan.
- 25.08.1939: Requisitioned by the Admiralty for service as an armed merchant cruiser and converted by R&H Green & Silley Weir, London. She was the first P&O ship taken up for service in the Second World War. Her after funnel was removed and eight 6-inch and two 3-inch guns were fitted.
- 19.10.1939: The German merchantman *Gonzenheim* was scuttled by her crew when *Rawalpindi* challenged her.
- 23.11.1939: At 1507hrs she encountered the German battlecruisers *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* south-east of Iceland and after an intense 13-minute bombardment she was set on fire. She sank at 2000hrs GMT. Captain E C Kennedy RN, 38 officers and 226 ratings were lost; the German warships rescued 26 survivors and another 11 were picked up by the P&O ship, *Chitral*. Contrary to some accounts, Captain Kennedy was not awarded the Victoria Cross, but did receive a posthumous Mention in Despatches - the highest honour possible in the circumstances at the time.
- 1940: Tradition (and the published war history of P&O) suggests that *Rawalpindi's* former boats were taken out of store at Tilbury and used during the Dunkirk evacuation, although P&O records and the official Dunkirk List do not confirm this. Her accommodation ladders were, for many years after the war, used to provide access to the beach below the Tower of London, until they became rotten and were taken down in the 1970's. Some of the better timber was preserved at an old people's home, Rawalpindi House, in the London Borough of Newham.
- 19.09.1969: The radar manufacturers Kelvin Hughes announced that the wreck of *Rawalpindi* had been accidentally discovered lying in 168 fathoms at 63°40'N-11°29'W when the Hull trawler *Kingston Sapphire* caught her nets on a submerged obstacle.

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