

Shipping Company

Brief History



Orient Steam Navigation Company



Operator of high-quality passenger liners between the UK and Australia and pioneer of recreational cruising

Pre-P&O Years

The Orient Steam Navigation Company was formally established in 1878 but had for many years operated passenger sailing ships with the name 'Orient' first used in 1850. It was jointly managed by two London firms; Anderson, Anderson & Company and F Green & Company and concentrated its interests on the Australian trade in partnership first with Pacific Steam Navigation Company of Liverpool and then with the Royal Mail company, and providing a co-ordinated mail and passenger service with ships of the P&O fleet.



The P&O Years

At the end of 1918, The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company acquired a controlling interest in Orient's share capital. Early the following year, management companies Anderson and Green were merged into a private limited company formed for the purpose, Anderson, Green & Company Ltd, and owned by the Anderson family and Inchcape interests. Anderson, Green & Co was acquired by P&O in 1949. The relationship between Orient and P&O were close (they co-operated on ship design in the 1930s and joint trans-Pacific services under the 'Orient & Pacific' name in the 1950s) but

they maintained separate trading identities and independent shore organizations until 1960.

In 1960, in the face of changes in the Australian passenger trade, the balance of the Orient shares were acquired by P&O, and new companies using the P&O/Orient Lines name were set up to run the combined services and manage the ships of the two companies. This arrangement only ran until 1966, by which time the former Orient vessels had all been transferred to P&O ownership and changed their Orient 'corn' livery for the much blander P&O white. Orient Steam Navigation Company Ltd was used as a company of registry for some of P&O's bulk carriers and gas carriers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but this was purely a paper arrangement. The company was wound up in 1998.

Archive Collection

The archive records relating to Orient Steam Navigation Company are on permanent loan by P&O to the [National Maritime Museum](#), Greenwich. The great bulk of the collection comprises material which dates only from 1942 - most earlier records were destroyed in World War II when the company's City offices were bombed. What does exist are records relating to Anderson, Green & Company, Minutes of Directors' meetings, shareholder reports, correspondence, ships' voyage reports and various staff records. For a full listing of materials deposited at the Museum, it is best to consult the NMM [catalogue](#) directly.



Some records of Orient Line are also held by the [Australian National Maritime Museum](#), Sydney.

Selected Published Sources

McCart, Neil, *Passenger Ships of the Orient Line*. (Wellingborough, Patrick Stephens, 1987)

Newall, Peter, *Orient Line, A Fleet History*. (Ships in Focus Publications, 2004)