



Ship Fact Sheet



POONAH (1863)

Base data at 11 April 1863. Last amended November 2008

* indicates entries changed during P&O Group service.

Type	Passenger liner
P&O Group service	1863-1889
P&O Group status	Owned by parent company
Former Group names(s)	Was to have been named <i>Maharajah</i>
Registered owners, managers and operators	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Builders	Thames Iron Works & Shipbuilding Co
Yard	Blackwall
Country	UK
Yard number	
Lengthened (1875) by Yard	James Laing Sunderland
Country	UK
Registry*	London, UK
Official number	45786
Signal letters	VFRJ
Classification society	
Gross tonnage	2,596 grt
Net tonnage	1,478 nrt
Deadweight	1,006 tons [1883]
Length*	102.04m (334.9ft)
Breadth*	12.46m (40.9ft)
Depth*	8.44m (27.7ft)
Draught*	6.627m (21ft 9in)
Construction (if not steel)	Iron
Engines*	Tandem compound inverted direct-acting steam engines (Wolf's double-cylinder design)
Engine builders* Works*	Humphrys, Tennant & Dykes London
Country*	UK
Power	2,356 ihp
Propulsion	Single screw
Speed	10 knots
Passenger capacity	202 first class, 46 second class
Cargo capacity	2,151 cubic metres (75,966 cubic feet) [1875]

Crew

Employment Southampton/Alexandria service

Career

- 08.11.1862: Launched.
- 23.02.1863: Registered.
- 11.04.1863: Ran trials at Stokes Bay and delivered as *Poonah* for The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. *Poonah* is an antique English spelling of Pune, a town in the Bombay presidency of British India, now in Maharashtra state.
- 20.04.1863: Maiden voyage to Alexandria.
- 21.02.1867: Engine breakdown leaving Alexandria for Marseille. Transferred mails and passengers to *Euxine*.
- 28.02.1867: Towed by *Pera* from Alexandria to Malta arriving 4th March.
- 09.03.1867: Left Malta under her own power.
- 23.03.1867: Arrived in London for refit.
- 02.11.1867: Arrived at Southampton after refit. Returned to Mediterranean service.
- 08.1875: Lengthened to 126.11m (413.9ft) by James Laing, Sunderland and fitted with new compound engines developing 2,590 ihp by R & W Hawthorn, Newcastle. Tonnages now 3,044 gross, 1,685 net, deadweight 1,650 tons, passenger capacity now 200 first class, 50 second class. She came from the yard with a pronounced curve in her keel, by virtue of which she had to be specially blocked whenever she was in dry-dock thereafter.
- 18.08.1875: Re-registered at Sunderland, UK.
- 1875: On one voyage to Australia the celebrated tightrope-walker Blondin walked between the main and mizzen masts while *Poonah* was at sea, although due to heavy seas he had to sit down five times.
- 1881: Laid up in London for 6 months.
- 1883: Laid up in London again.
- 11.1884/09.1885: Four trooping voyages to Malta, Cyprus and Alexandria.
- 21.02.1885: Broke her shaft in the entrance to the English Channel. Attempts to tow her by the tug *Mount Etna* failed in heavy weather, but she was ultimately towed into Queenstown by the tug *Commodore*.
- 04.10.1885: Trooping voyage to South Africa.
- 01.1886: Two trooping voyages to Egypt.
- 07.1889: Sold at auction in London for £5,231 to Eugenio and Enrico Arbib, London.
- 06.1892: Sold to shipbreakers at Sunderland.

BLONDIN AT SEA

“Annual Register” 19 October 1875

The celebrated tight-rope walker performed an extraordinary feat on board the Peninsular and Oriental steamer Poonah on her voyage from Aden to Point de Galle. This vessel is the longest the Company possesses, measuring 431 feet. M. Blondin undertook to walk on the tight-rope from the main to the mizen mast and back. Accordingly, a stout 7-inch hawser was made fast to the mizentop, hove through a heavy block in the maintop, and hauled taut by the steam winch on deck. Lateral motion was prevented as far as possible by guys made fast to the sides of the ship, but the motion of the vessel herself could not be avoided. When Blondin stood in the maintop, pole in hand, he hesitated long enough, with one foot on the rope, to make many people think he had repented. The task was one to try even his nerves. The mizentop is of course lower than the main, and the steadying guys had pulled the rope down in the centre, so that he had to start down a rather steep incline. Blondin is accustomed to guide and steady himself by fixing his eyes on the rope about twenty feet ahead of him, but what with the rolling of the ship and the vibration of the powerful engines (the Poonah was running between twelve and thirteen knots) the rope he had now to walk on was drawn into such sinuous waves that he described it as looking more like a snake than a rope. Before he had gone five yards he was forced to sit down, to steady himself and avoid two or three rollers, which came in succession. Twice again he sat down, and then reached the mizen mast amidst hearty applause. This part of the journey was made more difficult by the sun being directly in his eyes. His return was quick and easy, till he had passed over about three-fourths of the distance, when the swell caught the ship, and he had to stop and sway from side to side, till he seemed to be quite out of the perpendicular. Much anxiety was felt by the spectators, but Blondin never lost his nerve, and coolly waiting till the troublesome rollers had passed, walked on and reached the mainmast in safety. He owned that the task was a most difficult one.

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