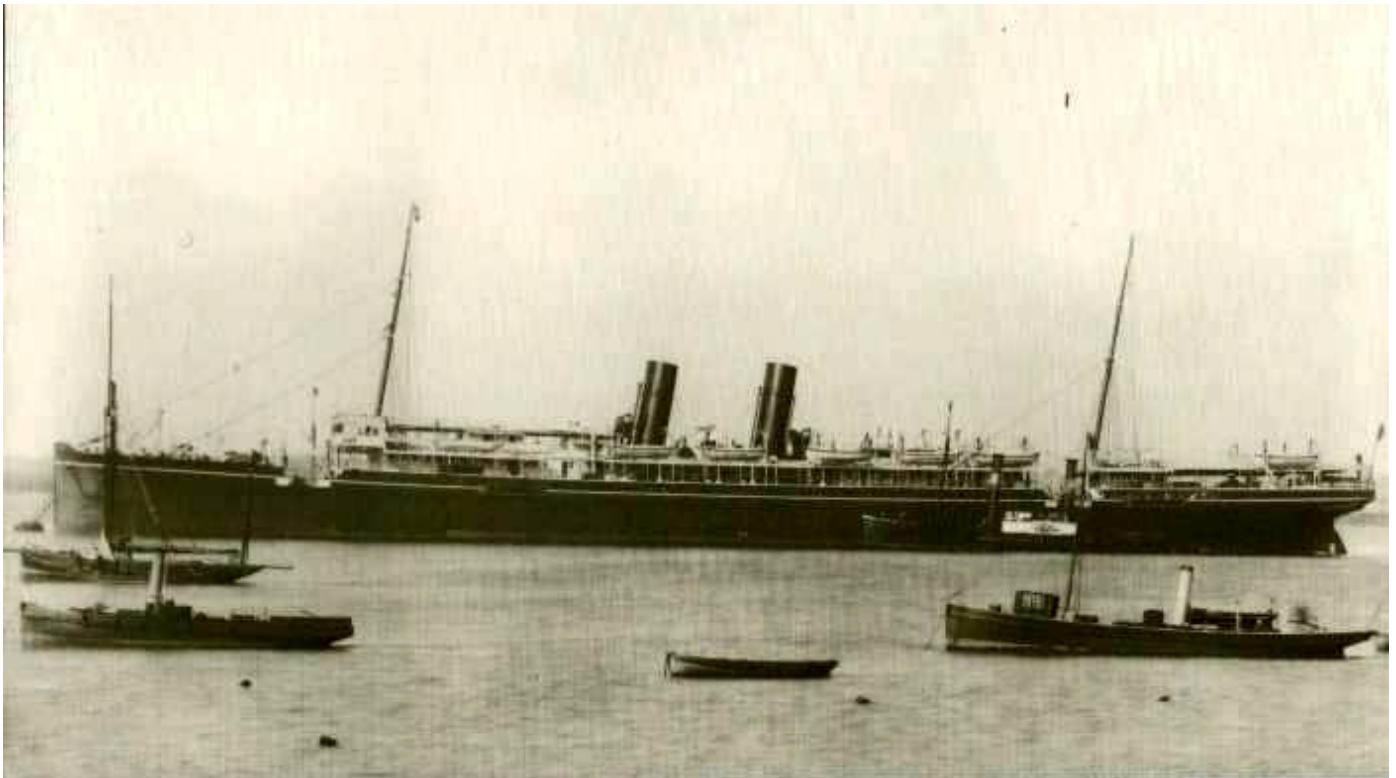


The Old Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company

c1835 - 1972

The ss Egypt of 1897

"The shipping lines had amassed a great deal of wealth through the provision of reliable and increasingly comfortable sea travel. This invested them with immense political and economic power. The business of building ships is also one which requires utmost care and attention to detail, given the disastrous consequences of ocean travel if a collision took place....." From: Designing Liners - A History of Interior Design Afloat by Annie Wealleans.



LOSS OF THE S.S. EGYPT - RELATIVES WAIT FOR NEWS

London. 22nd May 1922.

'The courtyard of the P. and O. offices in Leadenhall Street, London, was the scene of a pathetic

vigil today, From early morning groups of relatives of passengers and crew were gathered waiting for news of the six men, seven women, and two children passengers members of the crew not accounted for- among the survivors who have reached Brest from the wrecked liner Egypt. Eighty names on the boat rollcall are unanswered, of which 50 are of Lascars. It is reported that 23 bodies have been recovered. No news has at present been received - from other ships known to have been in the vicinity regarding the picking up of possible drifting survivors as was hoped. One vessel was nine miles away at the time of the collision. The survivors point out that the great list the Egypt took immediately after the impact made it most difficult for the passengers to approach the lifeboats. All three wireless operators perished. The chief, operator, Mr Arthur Hardwick, died at his post. He was at dinner at the time of the collision. He rushed up to the cabin and told the third operator to go to the boat deck and help the officers, saying, "I will look after the wireless myself." When the last boat had left the assistant returned and spoke to Hardwick, but he refused to leave his post. He continued tapping out the S.O.S. He was last seen standing at the door of the wireless cabin as the vessel plunged beneath the waves.

The steamers Lapland and Rotterdam, arriving at Plymouth from New York, were delayed by fog. They report that they heard the S.O.S. 400 miles away.

Several of the biggest clothing stores at Brest have been ransacked to provide outfits for the rescued, some of whom are most destitute. 'The rescued pay tribute to the courage and persistence of the French crew of the steamer Seine and the lifeboats' crews. Two of the Egypt's crew were injured as a result of the impact.

The Egypt was a three decked steamer, of a tonnage of 7,941. She was built at Greenock in 1897 by Messrs. Caird and Co. The vessel has been running between India and England for a number of years. The cargo steamer Seine has a tonnage of 1383. and was built by W. Dobson and Co. at Newcastle in 1899.'

From: The Australian Broken Hill's Barrier Miner Newspaper, Tuesday 23rd May 1922

Note: The Egypt's Commander, Captain A. Collyer, was suspended for six months, but resigned on a full pension, after the Admiralty Court of Enquiry found the Seine was responsible for the tragedy.



The ss EGYPT ~ Builders: Caird & Company of Greenock, Yard No 285

Port of Registry: London

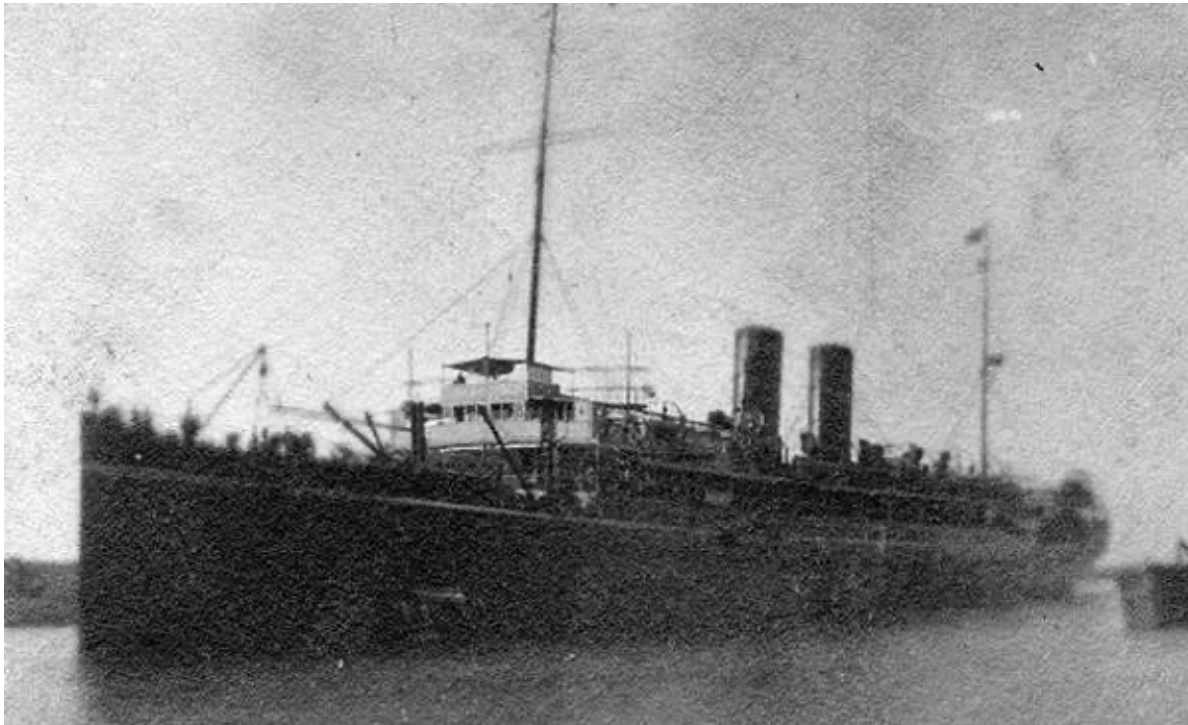
Engine: Steam triple expansion, 11,000 ihp. Trials Speed: 18.3 knots

Launched: Saturday, 15th May 1897

Tonnage: 7912 grt ~ Length: 499.8 feet ~ Breadth: 54.3 feet ~ Draught: 24.5 feet

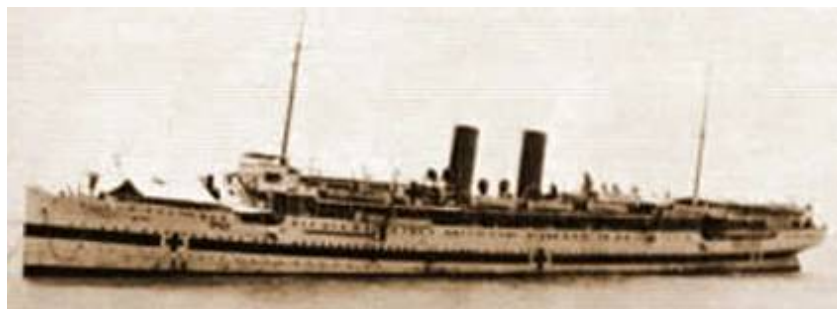


Captain Alexander Nicol Cameron MBE, seen on the left in this photograph, served in the ss Egypt as Senior 2nd Officer in 1921 - before her fatal collision. Leaving the P&O in 1922, to teach at Leith Nautical College, and shortly afterwards becoming Principal of the Sir John Cass Nautical College in London. He was awarded the MBE for his technical advice on the building and positioning of the Mulberry Harbours in the Normandy landings of 1944, particularly on Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches.

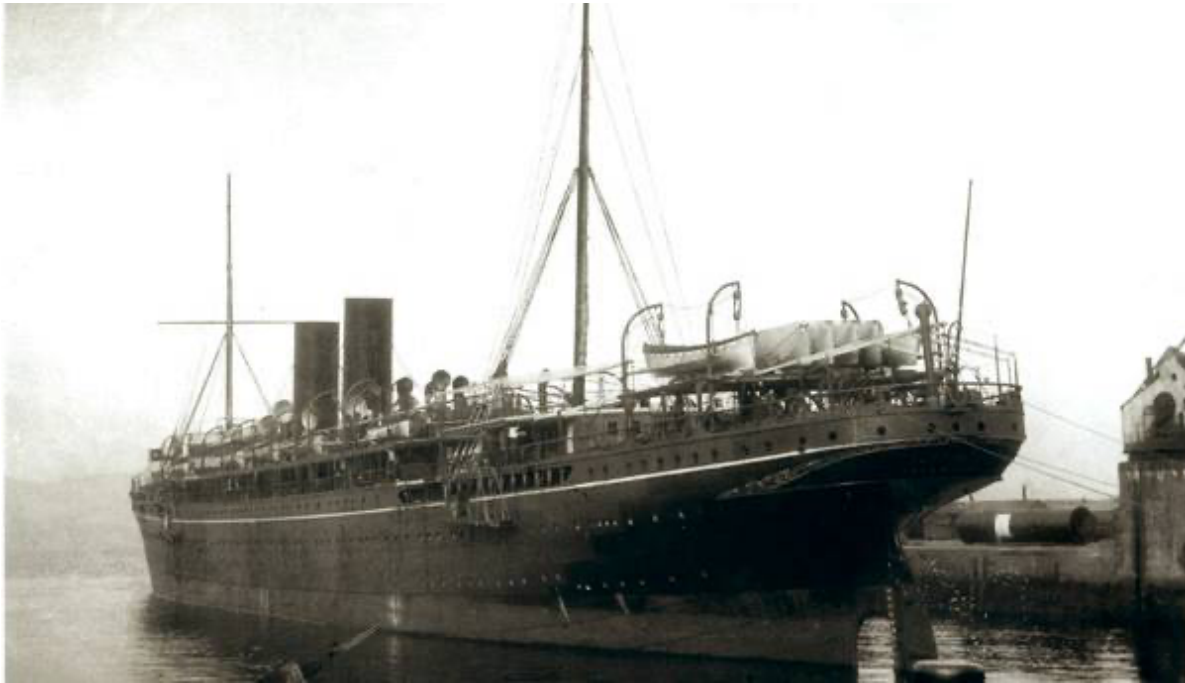


ss Egypt in the Suez Canal

In September of 1897, the ss Egypt left London on her maiden voyage to Bombay, after which she spent most of her early days on the Australian run.



During 1910 while on Eastern services she brought the Princess Royal home from Egypt, then continued to cruise the Mediterranean up to the time of the Great War. Declared as a Hospital Ship, she was repainted in white, marked with the international Red Cross colours in August 1915, and converted to accommodate up to 461 patients. She saw service in the Dardanelles and continued in this role until June 1919.



The P&O Steam Navigation Company's ss Egypt was one of a class of five identical steamships: India, China, Arabia and Persia. They each carried 320 passengers in First Class and 160 in Second.

The Egypt left Tilbury for Marseilles and Bombay on 19th May 1922, with 44 passengers and 294 crew on board, of whom 208 were Lascars and 'other Asiatics'. The majority of her passengers were scheduled to join the ship at Marseilles, thereby avoiding the worst of the North Atlantic weather, in particular the notorious Bay of Biscay. In addition to her mails and general cargo, she carried a consignment of gold and silver totalling £1,054,000 in value. On the evening of the next day, in the neighbourhood of Ushant, she ran into thick fog and after proceeding for some little time at reduced speed, Captain Collyer ordered 'stop engine'. The sea was flat calm, and there was little or no wind.

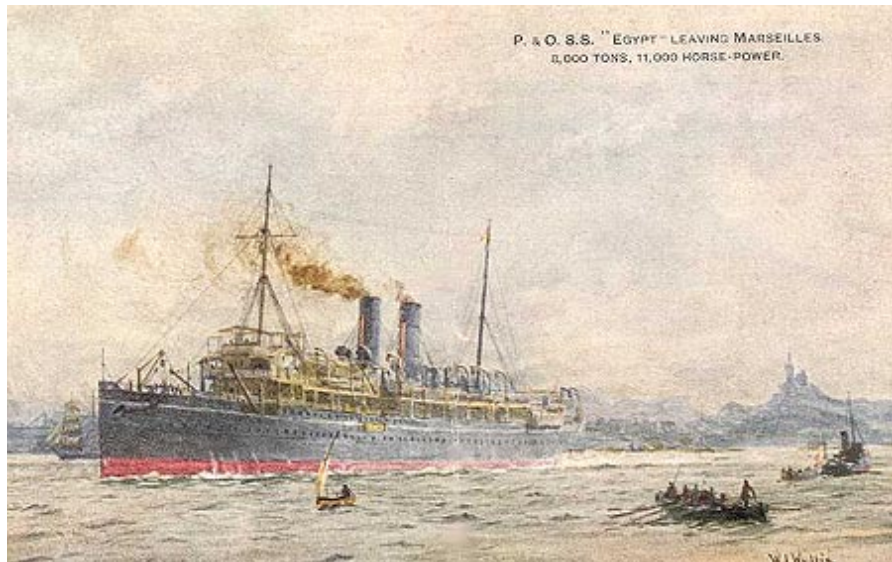
Visibility was estimated at being no more than a mere thirty yards. Off Ushant the main traffic routes run approximately 208 degrees to Cape Finisterre and 028 degrees northbound. The sound of another steamship's whistle could be heard gradually approaching - but the fog was too dense to locate her visually. Captain Collyer decided that the approaching ship was on a reciprocal course to Egypt's. The next blast of her whistle put her on his port beam - then she suddenly emerged from the fog, going very fast, and within 15 seconds had struck Egypt on her port side, between her twin funnels, with terrific force. She was the French cargo steamer Seine, a ship with strengthened bows, that had been built to deal with Baltic ice. Momentum propelled her as she ripped down the port side of the Egypt, tearing her open. The fatally stricken Egypt at once began to sink and a dreadful panic was reported to have ensued among the Lascar seamen, who rushed the boats. All orderly methods of saving life went by the board. The heavy list to port also created much greater difficulties for the officers who were desperately striving to preserve some sort of order and discipline. In spite of this, four undamaged boats were got away - but within 20 minutes of the collision, the Egypt sank. Her list was so great that just prior to her going, as many boats, rafts and deck fittings as possible were

cut loose, so that they might float free when the wreck submerged. By this action the lives of many persons were saved. There are several instances of individual heroism, such as that of an army officer who jumped into a boat and forced its Lascar occupants to return to the ship's side, eventually getting 70 people away in safety. Meanwhile, the vessel which had done the damage, the French steamship Seine, 1,383 tons, on passage from La Pallice to Le Havre, took the survivors on board and conveyed them to Brest. Because of the thick fog, her captain had left his more normal coastal route, standing well out to sea in order to clear the busy traffic off Ushant. Twelve passengers and 84 crew were lost with the ship, and one person later died in hospital. Captain Collyer remained at his post to the last and was picked up in the water by one of the boats. The position of the vessels at the time of the collision was about 20 miles off the Armen Lighthouse, the disaster occurring about 7 o'clock in the evening. Lloyds of London paid the insurance claim in full.

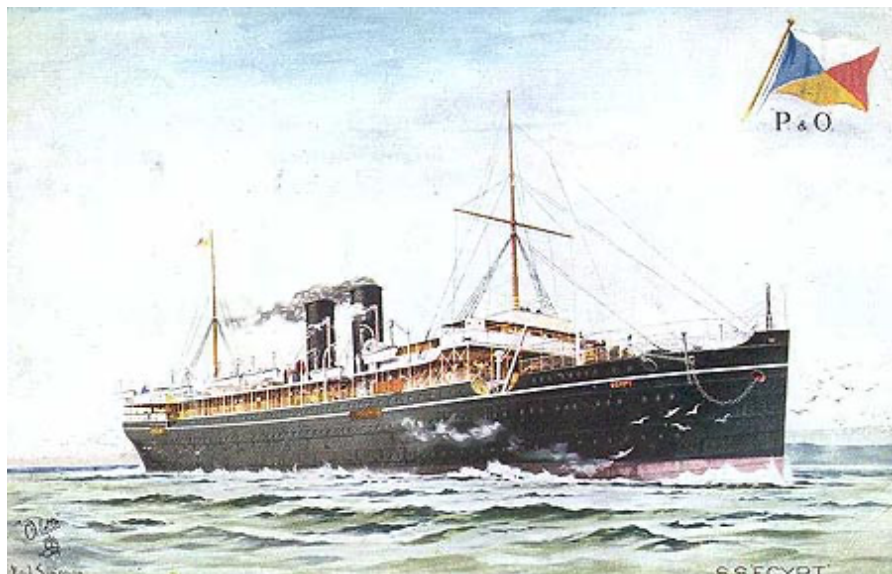
With help from 'The Dictionary of Disasters At Sea', by Charles Hocking and 'These Splendid Ships', by David Divine.

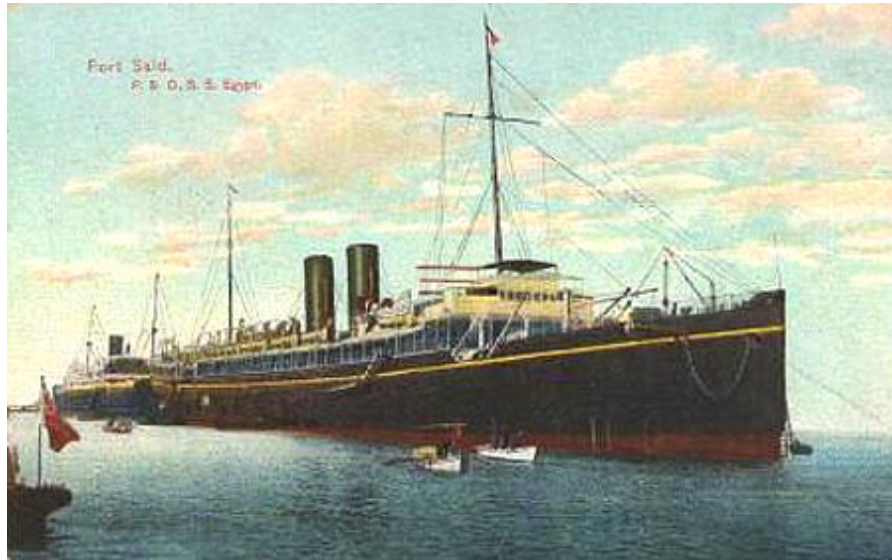


On board, destined for the Government of India, were 1,089 gold bars, 1,229 silver bars, 165,979 gold pound coins, - totalling around 5.5 tons of gold and 43 tons of silver. The ship's cargo also included a large batch of banknotes of 5, 10 and 100 Rupee denominations, commissioned from the printers Waterlow & Son, by the Nizam of Hyderabad.



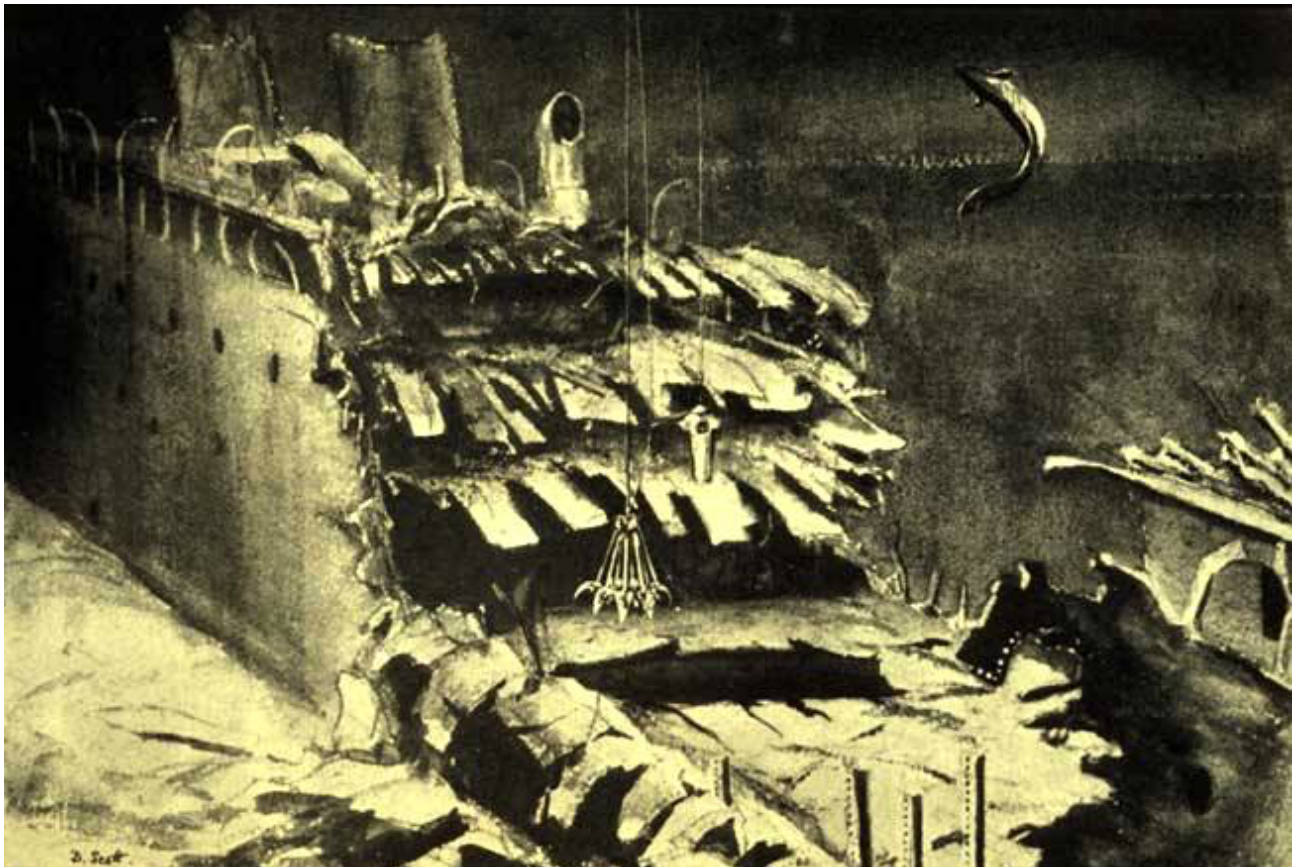
'It is in the sequel that the Egypt achieved a strange, posthumous fame, for the million pounds of gold in her mail room became the prize of one of the greatest stories of salvage in the history of the sea.' David Divine, 'These Splendid Ships'.





Salvage..

Note; *The Times* journalist David Scott covers this incredible story of salvage in detail with in two rare 1931/2 books 'Seventy Fathoms Deep' and 'The Egypt's Gold'.



David Scott's impression of how the wreck would have looked during the salvage operation of 1932.

The task of recovering the specie lost in the liner marked a new era in the science of undersea salvage. The work was taken in hand as soon as possible, but not without misgiving, for the vessel had sunk in 60 fathoms of water, a depth beyond that at which diving operations could normally be carried on. From 1923 to 1928 various companies conducted a search for the wreck, but without success. In 1925, Mr Peter Sandberg, of the London firm of Sandberg and Swinburne, conceived the idea of recovering the gold with an elaborate apparatus he called 'The Eye' - an electrically powered submersible observation chamber, fitted with rudimentary external manipulator arms. A contract was negotiated with the Salvage Association of London, and M.Allain Terme, a Frenchman, was employed to carry out the work - but was then superseded by the Italian Sorima Company of Genoa, with their Neufeldt and Kuhnke 'diving shell' and cylindrical observation chamber, which had proved successful during trials in the Mediterranean.

A contract was awarded to Sorima in 1928, and in June, 1929, the Italian Society for Marine Recovery, directed by Commendatore Giovanni Quaglia, took up the search, with their salvage vessel, the ss Artiglio.



The Italian salvage vessel Artiglio

After many disappointments, extending over 15 months ,the wreck was located at a depth of 360

feet, by means of drag lines. The Egypt was lying on an even keel, with masts and funnels still standing, and on a smooth sea bed.



THE OBSERVATION-SHELL GOING DOWN. THE DIVER IS INSIDE IT
AND THE LID HAS BEEN SCREWED ON

The patent diving machine carried on board the Italian salvage ship, Artiglio, enabled a diver to descend to this great depth in perfect safety and later to recover nearly all the specie. Blasting operations opened up a way into the ship's hull through which the treasure was eventually extracted.



THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE 'EGYPT'. FRANCESCHI, JUST UP FROM THE WRECK,
DESCRIBING WHAT HE HAS SEEN

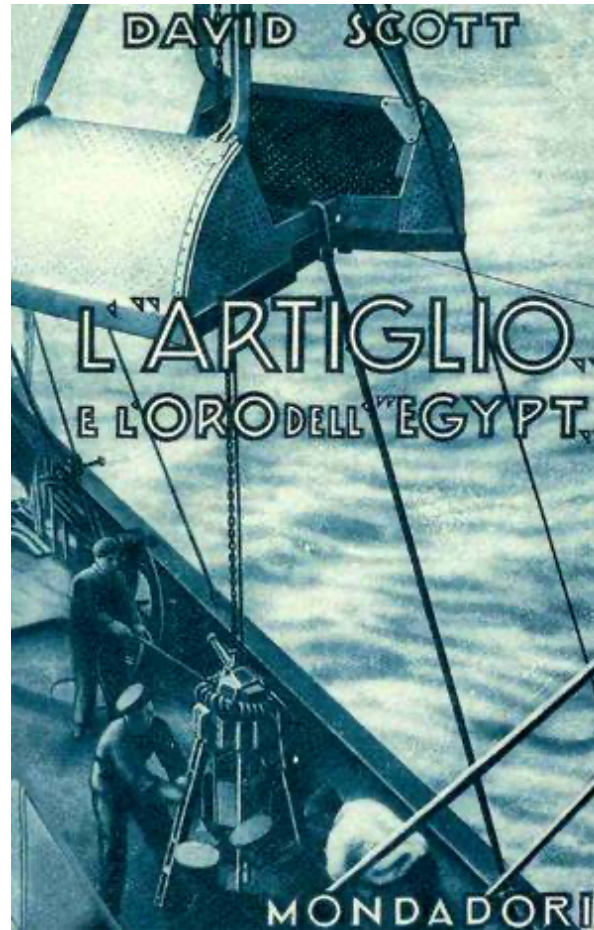
The cost of the salvage from first to last to the Italian company alone was £200,000, but a great task had been achieved and much valuable experience of deep sea diving had been gained. An idea of the immensity of the work may be realised from the fact that it did not finally conclude until 1933, or nearly five years after it commenced. Taking into account the fruitless years of search by the French and Swedish companies from 1923 onwards, quite ten years had been spent on salving the Egypt's valuable cargo.



THE CAPTAIN'S SAFE FROM THE 'EGYPT' COMING ABOARD THE
'ARTIGLIO'. NOTE HOW NEATLY THE GRAB IS HOLDING IT



The irrepressible *Giovani Qaglia* with two gold bars from the Egypt.



It is said that 14,929 sovereigns, 17 gold bars and 30 silver ingots are still unaccounted for.....

http://www.deepimage.co.uk/wrecks/egypt/egypt_mainpages/egypt_mainpage.htm

Additional information about the history of the Salvage Ship Artiglio can be found at the Artiglio foundation:

<http://www.premioartiglio.it/>

Back to the ship - and her beautiful interiors....

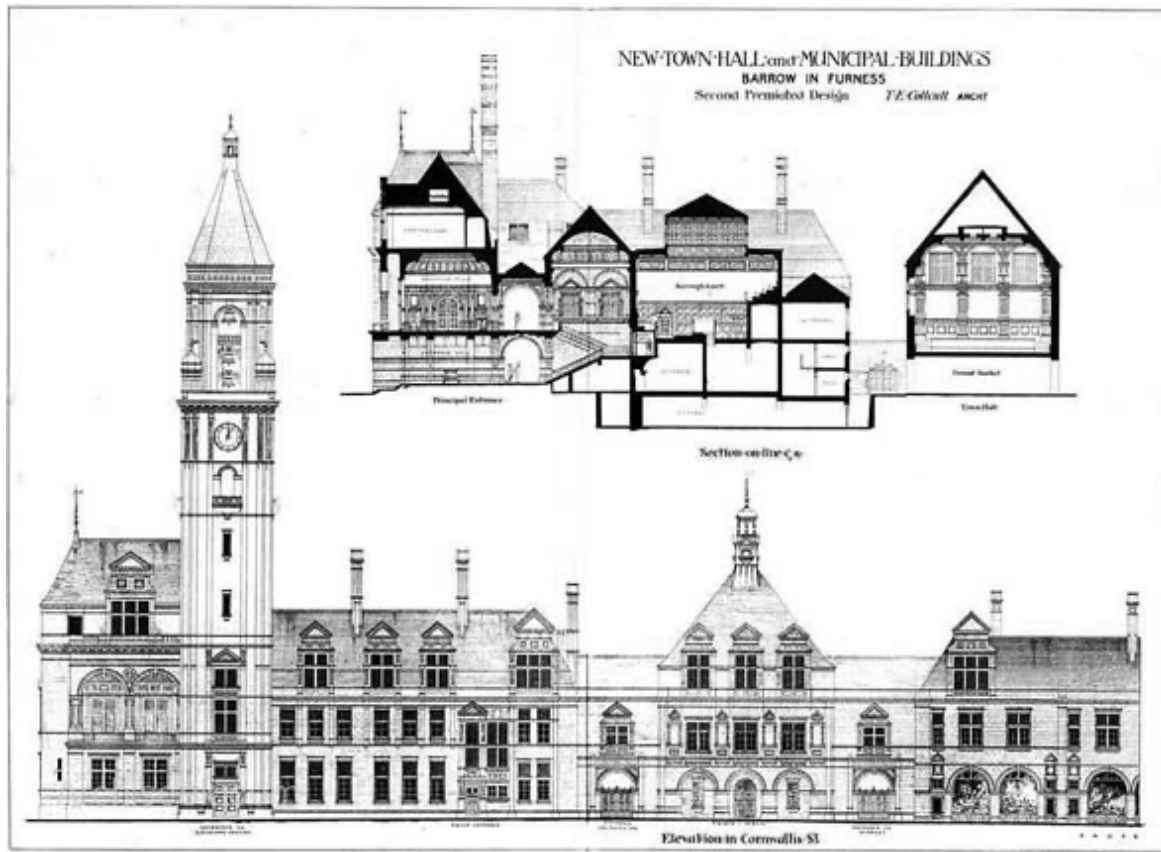


The first class dining saloon aboard the ss Egypt



Thomas Edward Collcutt, an architect of the Arts and Crafts Movement, was born in Oxford on 16th

March 1840 and devoted a lifetime to creating buildings and interiors that were widely recognised for their richness in style, finishes and furnishings.



Buildings such as Lloyds Register in Fenchurch Street, London's Savoy Hotel, the Imperial Institute, the Midland Bank on Ludgate Hill, the Public Library in Blackburn, Wakefield Town Hall, the Town Hall & Municipal Buildings at Barrow-in-Furness and many others. Originally apprenticed to George Edmund Street, a leading practitioner of the Victorian Gothic revival, Thomas Colcutt set up his own practice in 1873, and designed ebonized pieces for Collinson and Lock, one of the foremost producers of Aesthetic and Art Nouveau furniture in London



A cabinet made by T E Collcutt in 1871, in mahogany, ebonised and painted, with metal fittings. Now in the V&A, London

He was one of the first artists to be asked to help in a worthier treatment of the interior decoration of passenger ships of the major steamship companies, and in this capacity he dealt with a considerable number of P&O steamships.

His interiors soon became the fashion for many first class music rooms, dining areas and lounges in the Company's ships throughout the late 1890's and early 1900s, among them the India, China, **Egypt**, and the Medina in 1911. By the 1880's, steamships had become a popular and luxurious way to travel, and P&O employed specialist architects and designers to create a sense of sumptuousness and style aboard their more prestigious ships. In total, Thomas Colcutt completed 12 interiors for P&O, from 1896 to 1903.



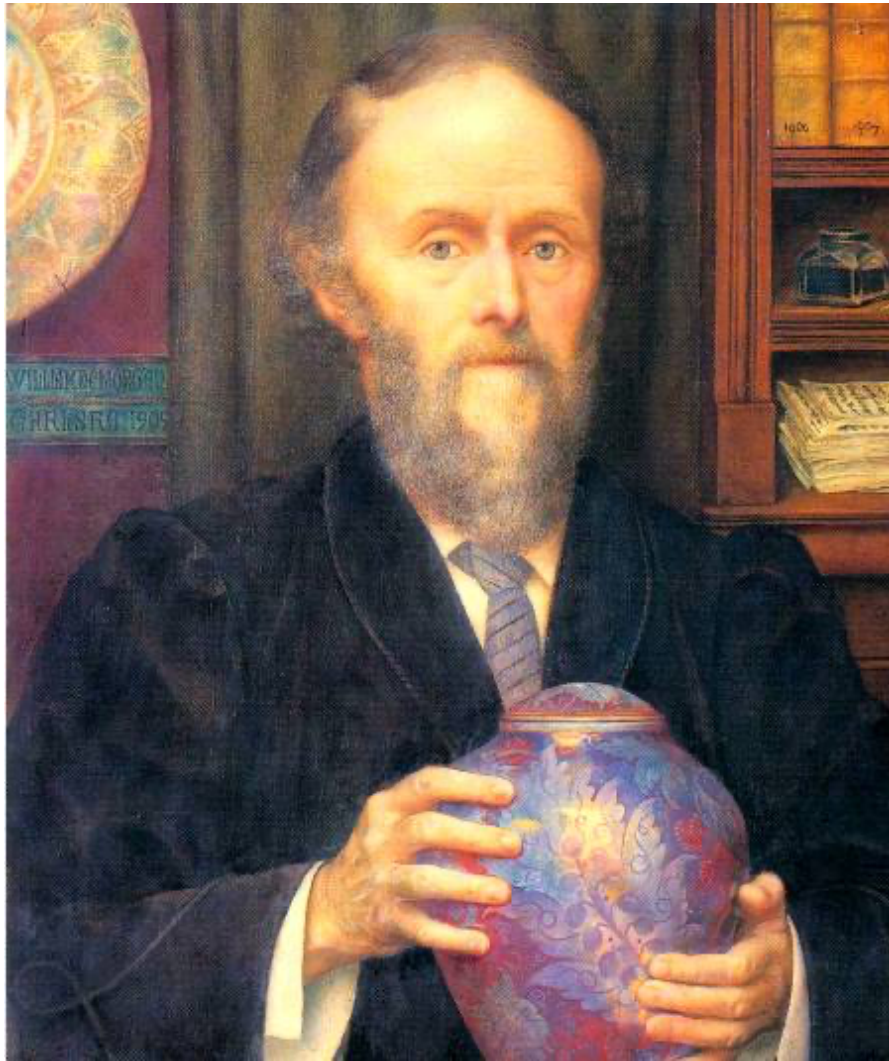
A companionway aboard the ss Arabia, the Egypt's sister-ship, designed by T E Calcutt, with tiles by De Morgan.

Between 1882 and 1900, De Morgan designed schemes and produced tiles for twelve P&O liners.



The De Morgan Centre purchased this spectacular galleon panel at auction on the 4th October 2006 (Sotheby's Lot No.6) with the generous assistance of The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund and Mr John Scott. Measuring 2ft by 5ft, the panel consist of 40, 6 inch square tiles and represents a colourful and exotic scene of sailing ships, birds and sea creatures - all favourite De Morgan motifs. The design of the galleon panel was originally created for De Morgan's commissions with P&O, and was installed aboard the *ss Malta* by her builders Caird and Co in 1895.

It comes as no surprise that the leading designers and craftspeople of the day were commissioned to provide decoration for these luxurious 'homes from homes'. Thomas Collcutt commissioned De Morgan and Company to produce tiles for P&O steamships, including the *Sutlej* (1882), *Britannia* (1887), *Oceana* (1888), *Nubia* (1895), *Malta* (1895), *Sumatra* (1895), *China* (1896) *India* (1896), *Egypt* (1897) *Arabia* (1898) and *Persia* (1900).



William De Morgan

William De Morgan (1839 - 1917) was one of the greatest ceramicists of his age and his brilliant lustre-ware pots and decorative tiles are still much in demand by collectors. His rediscovery of lustre was a significant technical contribution to the decorative arts of the nineteenth century.

The success of the P&O contract, over which the P&O board kept tight control over the look and quality of the interiors of their liners, contributed greatly to the reputation of De Morgan. His schemes were repeated, with only slight variation in several ships. His designs included wall panels of repeat floral patterns such as Arabia and India friezes, which he designed specifically for their namesake ships. He also designed many panels which portrayed evocative landmarks on the ship's ports of call.

Note: Three other large tile panels on display at the De Morgan Centre (on loan from the South London Gallery) are also thought to be designed for P&O liners - although it is not clear for which. These three are comparable in scale and in construction techniques to the Galleon panel, and are again typical of the atmospheric schemes chosen by De Morgan. One shows an Islamic city with a mosque set between two minarets, another depicts a fanciful Italianate fountain with dolphins spouting water into a vast marble urn, and the third, another fountain scene set against a classical Italianate city.

In addition to De Morgan and Company's work for P&O, he also designed schemes for several other ships and yachts - perhaps most notable of all for the Royal Steam Yacht Livadia - designed for Czar Alexander II of Russia.

The De Morgan Centre is at 38 West Hill, London SW18 1RX .



Thomas E. Colcutt

Thomas Colcott's interior design for the five ships of the Egypt class followed the same basic layout, which emulated the deck plan of the Oceanic, with six decks in total. The first to be launched, the SS India, was built by Caird & Co. of Greenock and was 7,911 gross tons, over 3,000 more than the Kaiser-i-Hind. It was 500 feet in length and 54 feet in width, and could accommodate 314 passengers in first saloon class and 212 in second. The first class passengers were situated amidships, and the second class accommodation was placed towards the front of the ship. The interiors were decorated to Colcutt's designs by a specialist firm; in the case of the Egypt it was George Jackson Ltd, with the shipbuilders' Caird & Co.'s carpenters. The first class dining room of the Egypt was in fashionable taste and bears striking similarity to London's Holborn Restaurant.



The King's Hall, Holborn Restaurant. by Thomas E. Colcutt (1895). Source: Academy Architecture and Sculpture.

It was furnished with mahogany furniture with long tables and carpet runners, to ease floor cleaning. The dining chairs had solid, carved wooden backs and arms with decorative, patterned squab. The chairs were also fixed to the floor to avoid movement during rough weather, but rotated around for passenger convenience. The pattern on the textiles was reflected in the swirling, decorative plasterwork on the ceiling and the walls were panelled in wood to dado rail height by the shipbuilders, with decorative plasterwork friezes above by Jacksons. The room was lit on either side by windows, dressed with plain, dark curtains. The overall colour scheme was white and gold for the wood and plasterwork. Despite the colour scheme, designed to create a feeling of spaciousness, the room appeared cramped, given the low ceiling height, the punctuation of the space by a central row of columns and the heavy decoration on the ceiling and beams, The second class dining room was similar in style, only the plasterwork decoration on the walls was replaced by Tynecastle tapestry panels. Tynecastle tapestry was a heavy wallpaper, produced by the firm of Scott Morgan, which was cheaper than Jackson's alternative of plasterwork.



An imitation leather paper, c1890, embossed with metal foil.



Tynecastle Tapestry wallpaper design by William Scott Morton

Both the Egypt and Arabia had a hurricane deck above the first class dining room and the first class lounge/music room, which enables a stained glass skylight to add more illumination and decoration. The lounge/music room had a capacious bookshelf running along one wall and the woodwork was African mahogany with ceiling decoration again by Jacksons. There were built-in sofas, freestanding sumptuous armchairs and a piano stool upholstered in heavily patterned moquette with heavily patterned carpet to match. Collcutt subcontracted a range of decorative tiles from the up market Arts and Crafts ceramicist, William Frend De Morgan (1839 1917). De Morgan tiles were more expensive than the mass produced, transfer printed variety, but Collcutt obviously thought the extra cost was worth it for the added kudos and quality of appearance (Catleugh 1983: 114). He used lustreware to create a shimmering surface for the tiles, derived from Italian majolica and Hispano-

Moresque examples. His colour range was distinctive and inspired by that of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Isnik ware, or Persian ware as De Morgan called it. This consisted of dark blue, turquoise, manganese purple, green, Indian red and lemon yellow. This formal inspiration, coupled with the depiction of near Eastern scenes in ceramic made De Morgan's work a perfect match for P&O ships, destined for the East in the service of the British Empire- an appropriation of Eastern decorative styles to decorate vehicles of Western modernity. It is worth stressing that the tiles were used for passageways and smoking rooms, not first class sitting rooms or saloons, which were decorated in historicist Western styles.

By this date De Morgan had undertaken some prestigious commissions, including the supply of Islamic tiles for the Arab Hall at Leighton House for the Victorian painter, Frederick (later Lord) Leighton, and supplied panels of tiles for the Czar of Russia's yacht, Livadia. He had supplied tiles for other P&O ships before Colcutt's commissions, possibly due to the publicity which the Czar's luxury yacht attracted: the Sulej (1882); Britannia (1887); Oceana (1888); Nubia (1895) Malta (1895); Palawam (1895) and Sumatra (1895) The tiling provided cool and robust wall decoration, essential for the tropical heat and able to withstand the wear and tear of passenger use, while ensuring cleanable surfaces for areas such as the smoking saloon. For companionways on the India, De Morgan provided two 11 by 32" panels and 88 9" frieze tiles. The smoking saloon, situated on the hurricane deck aft was decorated by De Morgan tiles in panels of 41" by 32" and 42" by 32", drawn from designs already used on the Sumatra and Palawam. Described by The Glasgow Herald as: 'The first-saloon smoking room is perhaps the prettiest room in the vessel It is fitted up with oak panels, stained green, and art decoration in the shape of handsome seascapes and landscapes are placed all around' (14.10.1896). De Morgan's tilework provided a utilitarian and fittingly exotic decoration for the walls of the public spaces. However, De Morgan found the experience of working with P&O to be very different from the client designer relationship he was accustomed to for land based design. He wrote to his business partner Halsey Ricardo, describing the P&O Chairman and Board as:.. 'a highly meddlesome pragmatic body' (18.2.1895). No records can be traced of P&O's opinion of De Morgan, but the system whereby the commissioning architect responsible for the interior design of the ship would present design ideas to the board in great detail for approval, was a pattern which characterised the interior design of ships from this period and throughout the following century.

*This is a work in progress - if you
have photographs or editorial
regarding the Egypt,*

I would love to hear from you!

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