

Via Marseille

Contract Steamship

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

Double 3d ship fee



Paid 2 x 3d ship fee
 P&O Chusan
 Melbourne 25 March
 Hindostan, Simla, and
 Valetta to Suez, Malta
 and Marseille
 London 4/6 due:
 2 x 1/5 British rate
 4 x 5d French transit
 3/4 to 1 oz.
 Received 31 May 1854
 73 days

Melbourne, 20 March 1854

Victoria Quadruples the Ship Fee

On 1 May 1854 Victoria raised the 3d ship fee to 1/-, a burden for senders, especially for letters sent via Marseilles.

Single 1/- ship fee

Paid 1/- ship fee
 Madras to Galle
 20 Oct
 Bengal, Indus,
 Valetta to Suez, Malta
 & Marseille
 Mails at London
 28 November
 54¢ debit to U.S.
 Collins Line Pacific to
 Boston: 75¢ due
 for debit, packet
 and inland
 Rec'd 14 December
 83 days



Melbourne, 23 September 1854

The Clipper Ship Era During the Crimean War

The Loss of Steam Packet Service

Great Britain and France declared war against Russia in March 1854. In November 1854 General Screw Steamship Co. and P&O withdrew from their mail contracts when their ships were commandeered by the Admiralty for war use.

Clipper ships filled the need for a reversion to sail. They were fast, and reliable enough to take advantage of the continuous gales below 40°S - the "roaring forties." They were spacious enough to carry large cargos and many passengers.

Clippers departed from Liverpool, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and called at Melbourne for the mail bags from South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, and New Zealand. The return trip was via Cape Horn, so every voyage was thus a global circumnavigation.

Last steamship from Australia after packet service terminated by war



London



Melbourne, 16 February 1856

Prepaid 1/4 for via Marseilles, but endorsed per General Screw *Hellespont*, bound for Singapore.

P&O *Norma* : Singapore 22 March, Galle 29 March

P&O *Bombay* to Suez, arr. 29 March

P&O *Valetta* to Marseilles, arr. 26 April

Mails in London on 28 April, where rated 4^d due for Far East mail: "MORE TO PAY"

73 days

Finest of 3 covers recorded from this voyage

Hellespont was the last remaining steamship on the Australian route. She sailed on this route only because she was sold for scrap by General Screw to a buyer in Singapore. She sailed west from Sydney on 11 February, was at Melbourne on 18 February, King George's Sound on the 27th to 29th, Batavia (now Jakarta) on 14 March, Singapore on the 16th.

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Single-Voyage British Contracts, Black Ball Line

When the Admiralty requisitioned steamships as war transports, no one knew how long the conflict would last, so the Post office issued only single-voyage contracts, as subcontracts to the two existing steamship company contracts.

First contract clipper ship to sail from Australia



Subcontract voyage of General Screw SS Co.

Paid 4/-
quadruple ship-letter fee
1-2 oz.

Black Ball *James Baines*
Melbourne 11 March
Liverpool 20 May

Liverpool rated 2/- due
quadruple 6^d uniform rate

70 days

**Fastest voyage to England
by any sailing packet**



Castlemaine, 9 March 1855

Maiden return voyage of Black Ball *Lightning*

Subcontract voyage of P&O Steam Nav. Co.

Paid 1/- ship-letter fee

Black Ball *Lightning*
Melbourne 11 April
Liverpool 29 June

Liverpool rated 1/- due,
retaliatory rate

79 days

**First Australian mail
subject to the
British retaliatory rate**



Melbourne, 11 April 1855

Monthly British Contracts, Black Ball Line

First homeward packet under the British uniform rate

Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melbourne credited 5^d
to U.K.

Black Ball *Marco Polo*
Melbourne 22 July
Liverpool 20 October

Liverpool marked paid

Rec'd 22 October

90 days



Melbourne, 21 July 1855

Landed at Queenstown due to unfavorable winds



Geelong, 21 August 1855

Paid 1/- double uniform rate, Melbourne 10^d credit to U.K.
Black Ball *Oliver Lang*, Melbourne 23 August, Queenstown Ireland 26 November
Liverpool marked paid on 28 November, London the same day 97 days

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Monthly British Contracts, Black Ball Line

Carried more than 12,000 letters, 6,000 newspapers, and four tons of gold

Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melbourne credited 5^d
to U.K.

Black Ball *Donald McKay*
Melbourne 2 October
Liverpool 28 December

Liverpool marked paid

Rec'd 29 December

89 days



Melbourne, 29 September 1855

Delayed by calms off Cape Horn



Geelong, 20 November 1855

Paid 1^d newspaper rate to Melbourne;
No postage for conveyance to U.K.

Black Ball *James Baines*
Melbourne 28 November
Liverpool 2 March

Loaded bags in Melbourne from
New Zealand, Adelaide, and Sydney

Ireland arrival unknown

Made Liverpool in 95 days

**Three Victorian wrappers
from this decade are recorded**

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Monthly British Contracts, Black Ball Line

Mails landed at Queenstown due to unfavorable winds



Paid 6^d uniform rate
 Melbourne 5^d credit to U.K.
 Black Ball *Oliver Lang*
 Melbourne 23 August
 Queenstown 26 November
 Rec'd 28 November 96 days

3 clipper sailings landed
 mail in Ireland

Geelong, 20 August 1855

Late fee paid to ensure conveyance by clipper

Paid 6^d uniform rate,
 6^d late fee
 Melbourne 5^d credit to U.K.
 Carried mails from Hobart,
 Sydney & Adelaide
 Black Ball *Champion of the Seas*
 Melbourne 27 October
 Liverpool 25 January
 91 days

Finest of 8
 foreign-mail covers
 bearing the world's first
TOO LATE stamp



Melbourne, 26 October 1855

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Continuous Contracts, Black Ball Line

British Contract—Sent unpaid

Sent unpaid

Melbourne debited 5d to U.K.

Black Ball *Lightning*
Melbourne 28 Aug.
Liverpool 20 Nov.

Liverpool rated 6d due

Received 21 November

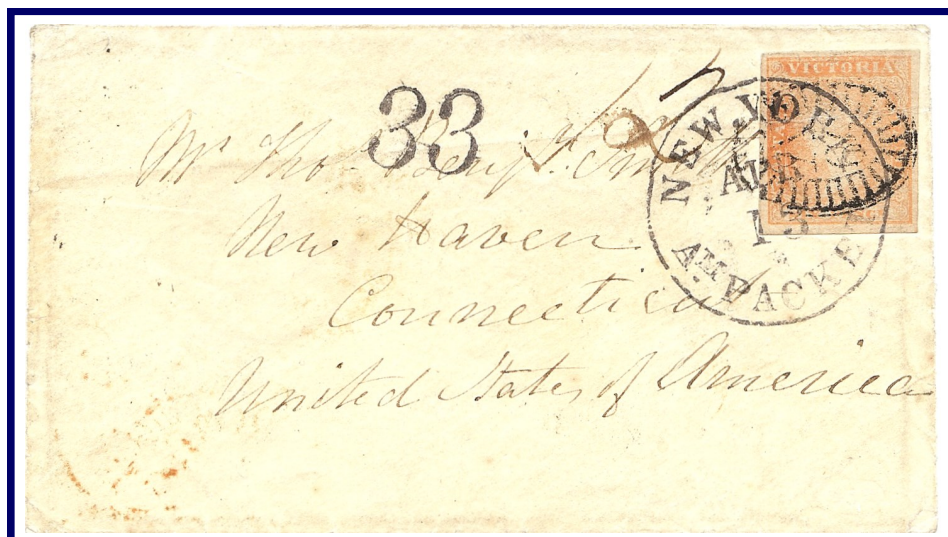
87 days

Prepayment was
not required until
1 January 1857



Geelong, 26 August 1856

Victoria Contract— American packet unpaid



Prahran, 25 December 1856

Paid 6^d uniform rate; sent without 1d credit to UK

Black Ball *Lightning* :
Melbourne 27 December
Liverpool 24 March

Liverpool 12¢ debit to U.S

Ocean Line *Washington* :
Southampton 26 April
New York 12 March

New York rated 33¢ due for British debit, Am. Pkt., and U.S. inland

The 1856 Clipper Ship Contracts

Monthly sailings were required, and contractors had to pay for transport of mail from Melbourne to other colonies. Contractors received 50% of postage and ½ penny per newspaper. A £100/day penalty was levied for late departure from Liverpool, and £20/ day for Melbourne arrival after the 78-day limit. A £20/day bonus was to be paid for beating the 78-day limit.

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Continuous British Contracts, White Star Line

Wired to Melbourne, where posted from the GPO



Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melbourne 5^d credit to U.K.

White Star *Red Jacket*
Melbourne 10 January
Liverpool 8 April

Rec'd 9 April

From 1854, messages could be wired to the GPO for posting. Fewer than ten examples are recorded.

Melbourne, 9 January 1856

Registration applied only to departure point



Paid 6d uniform rate,
1/- registered,

Melbourne 5d,
credit to U.K.

White Star *Mermaid*,
Melbourne 13 March,
Liverpool 9 June

Liverpool rated 6d due
for registration

98 days

Melbourne, 7 March 1856

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Colonial Contracts, White Star Line /Black Ball Line

Shipped to Melbourne for the packet sailing

Paid 8^d double Tasmanian
packet rate to U.K.

Steamer *Lady Bird*
Launceston 8 January
Melbourne 9 January

White Star *Red Jacket*
Melbourne 10 January
Liverpool 8 April

London rated 1/- due,
double 6^d uniform rate

Rec'd 9 April 89 days

UK treated as unpaid, as
Tasmania was not a party
to the 6d uniform rate



Hobart, 4 January 1856

Carried 4.3 tons of gold, 47 mail bags, 28,000 newspapers



Geelong, 23 August 1856

Paid 6^d uniform rate, Melbourne 1^d credit to U.K.
Victoria contract clipper Black Ball *Lightning*, Melbourne 28 August, Liverpool 20 November
84 days

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Colonial Contracts

Landed at Gravesend instead of Liverpool



Echuca, 29 August 1856

Paid 1/-, double uniform rate

Melbourne 2d credit to U.K.

Private clipper *True Briton*

Melbourne 13 September

Gravesend 8 December

Received 10 December

102 days

Eight of these 2d credit postmarks are recorded



White Star's first ship, built by Donald Mackay in Boston as an "extreme clipper"

Paid 6d uniform rate

Melbourne 1d credit to Great Britain

White Star *Red Jacket*
Melbourne 2 Oct
Liverpool 19 Dec

Ocean Line *Washington*
Southampton 31 Dec
New York 20 Jan

New York rated 21 due
16¢ transatlantic
5¢ inland

111 days



Sandhurst, 14 September 1856

When adverse winds prevented landing at Liverpool, ships were required by law to land the mails at the nearest port, from where mail bags were then conveyed overland to London.

Via Ceylon, Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

Colonial Contracts

The only clipper sailing via the Indian Ocean

Paid 11^d: 6^d uniform rate,
5^d French transit, <1/4 oz.

Melbourne retained 5^d
6^d credit to U.K., French transit
and British inland

Formosa, Melbourne 31 July
Galle 1 September

P&O Colombo to Marseille

Rail via Paris to Calais

Rec'd 14 October 99 days

**The only Victorian cover
paying the 11^d rate**



Melbourne 28 July 1856

To Prussia via Liverpool and Aachen



Melbourne, 27 September 1856

Paid only to the U.K., 6^d uniform rate, Melbourne 1^d credit to U.K.

White Star Red Jacket, Melbourne 2 October, Liverpool 29 December

Unpaid to Prussia via Ostend and Aachen at 8^d (7 Sgr) rate effective July 1852

Aachen exchange office mistakenly added the 1d credit, and rated 8 Sgr due

94 days

Four covers are recorded as paying this rate to Prussia

Via Cape Horn

Contract Clipper Ship

British Contract / Non Contract

Maiden voyage, and the record homeward voyage



Paid 1/- ship fee

Black Ball *James Baines*
Melbourne 11 March
Liverpool 20 May

Liverpool rated 6d due,
absent Victoria's credit
for British packet

69 days

**Brought 45,162 ounces of
Victorian gold**

Melbourne, 10 March 1855

Earliest shipment of Australian wines to England



Melbourne, 16 May 1855

Paid 2/- double ship-letter fee, 1/2-1 oz.

Private clipper ship *George Marshall*, Melbourne 16 May, London 6 August
London rated 1/4 due, double the 8^d ship fee for an unpaid letter

86 days

Via Cape Horn

Non-Contract Clipper Ship

Unable to land at Liverpool

Towed into Liverpool amid strong easterlies



Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melbourne 3^d
credit to U.K.

White Star Line *White Star*
Melbourne 29 August
Liverpool 27 November

91 days

Melbourne, 29 August 1855

Strong north-easterlies force landing in Ireland, towed to Liverpool

Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melb. 3^d credit to UK

Eagle Line *Albatross*
Melbourne 18 January
Crookhaven 2 May

Inland to Dublin

115 days



Dublin

2 recorded by Tabcart



Melbourne, 16 January 1856

12 May 1856, *London Daily News*: "The Eagle Line ship Albatross, Captain Allen, which for the last fortnight has been beating about the channel owing to adverse winds, was towed into the Mersey on Saturday evening [10 May]. She left Melbourne on the 18th of January and has 18,000 ounces of gold."

Via Cape Horn

Non-Contract Clipper Ship

The Wigram Line of London

Paid 6^d uniform rate
1/- registered

Melbourne 3^d credit to U.K.

Wigram Line *Kent*
Melbourne 11 June
London 2 September

London rated 6^d due for
UK registration

98 days

**One of only two
Wigram Line sailings**



Maryborough, 31 May 1856

The Eagle Line of Liverpool



Geelong, 26 February 1856

Paid 6^d uniform rate, Melbourne 3^d credit to U.K.

Eagle Line *Eagle*, Melbourne 28 February, Gravesend 22 May

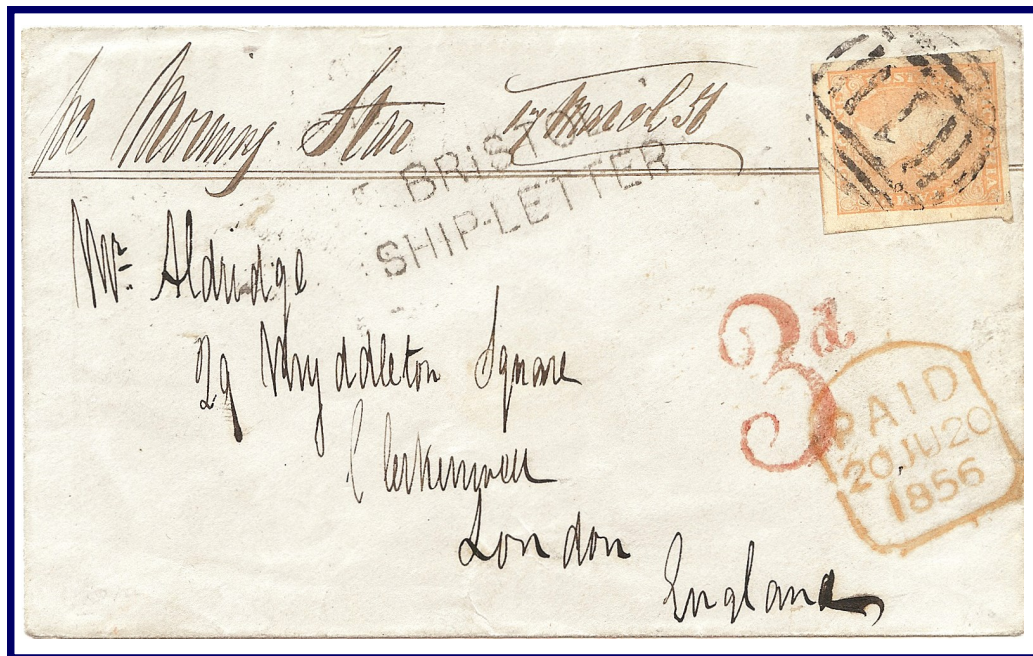
86 days

One of only two Eagle line sailings; not listed in Tabcart

Via Cape Horn

Non-Contract Clipper Ship

Landed at Bristol



Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melbourne 3^d credit to U.K.

Morning Star
Melbourne 20 March
Bristol 19 June
Liverpool 20 June

Rec'd 20 June

94 days

BRISTOL
SHIP-LETTER

Earliest recorded use

Melbourne, 18 March 1856

To New Hampshire via London

Paid 6^d uniform rate

Melbourne 3^d credit to U.K.

Sydenham
Melbourne 6 February
Gravesend 3 June

London 3^c debit to U.S.

Havre Line *Fulton*
Southampton 3 June
New York 16 June

New York rated 24^c due

137 days



Melbourne, 31 January 1857

As from 1 Jan 57 the sending country kept all postage, with no accounting. The above 3^d credit (red) to GB was an error.

Black Ball's first non-contract sailing after termination of their mail contract



Geelong, 26 November 1856

Paid 6^d uniform rate, Melbourne 3^d credit to U.K.
Black Ball *Ocean Chief*, 26 November, Liverpool 23 February 1857

90 days

She walks the water like a thing of life

And seems to dare the elements to strife.

Lord Byron, on clipper ships

Beginning of the end of British contract clipper service

The Treaty of Paris, formally ending the Crimean War, was signed in March 1856. The Admiralty advertised for renewal of steamship service to Australia, planned to begin in early 1857. In August 1856 Admiralty contracts with the Black Ball and White Star lines were terminated. The last British contract clipper was Black Ball's Donald Mackay, which left Liverpool on 5 October 1856. All six clipper-ship packets after September 1856 were under colonial contracts; another five sailed as private ships.