Early voyages of the Orient Line between England and Australia, 1877-1879, by Colin Tabeart

Background

John Maber's excellent treatment of the early days of this famous Line shows how it began with the freighting by Messrs Anderson & Anderson of three redundant vessels of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, plus one chartered vessel, each for a single experimental voyage between England and Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney in 1877.[1] They carried passengers, general cargo, and some mail in the form of ship letters, and clearly made money, as the Line was continued, to grow into the biggest competitor on the route that the P&O had to contend with.

GP Molnar's fine monograph on the Line[2] does not, for some reason, tabulate sailings data for the ships until late 1878 outbound and early 1879 homebound. Trawling through *The Times* in preparation for a forthcoming book on the 19th century packet mails between England and Australia I found and made notes on these earlier voyages so, having collected some incomplete, but useful data on them, felt that some SPH members might find the information helpful.

Preparations

The Pacific Steam Navigation Company had laid up a number of ships since 1874, a consequence of over-ambitious expansion in the early 1870s. Messrs Anderson, Anderson & Company, who already ran a line of sailing ships to Australia, approached the Pacific Company's Directors early in 1877, with a view to employing some of the ships on a passenger and emigrant service to Australia via the Cape. It was agreed that four ships should be freighted at monthly intervals on a trial basis, with an option to purchase the ships if successful.

Advertisements appeared in the major newspapers from March 1877 onwards, in the name of the Orient Line, the first departure to be the *Lusitania* from Gravesend on 26 June, via Plymouth on the 28th, and expected to make the passage to Melbourne in 40 days, thence on to Sydney. The same advertisements also named the next two steamers as *Chimborazo* and *Cuzco*, with a call at Glenelg for Adelaide if required, this call being indeed implemented, for which South Australia was most grateful.

A typical advertisement is that of 1 May 1877 in *The Times*:

"Steam to Melbourne and Sydney from London. - ORIENT LINE. - The magnificent full-powered steam ship *Lusitania*, 3825 tons register, 3000 HP effective, belonging to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, will be despatched punctually from the South West India Docks London, on 25 June, under command of Capt C Curtis Brough, embarking passengers by steam tender at Gravesend on the 26th, and at Plymouth on the 28th of June. Passengers will also be taken for Tasmania and all the Australian & New Zealand ports. This steamer is specially constructed for long ocean voyages and from her past performances is confidently expected to make the voyage in 40 days. The whole accommodation is beneath a spar deck, securing protection from the weather, with thorough ventilation. The first saloon is supplied with steam heating apparatus, and the arrangements generally (including smoking room, ice-house, &c) are such as to ensure the greatest comfort for an Australian voyage. Both first and second saloon cabins are furnished with every requisite, including bedding, linen, &c. A free table supplied daily with fresh meat, poultry &c, will be provided for each of these classes. An experienced surgeon and a stewardess will be carried. Fares from 15 to 70 guineas. For plans, and particulars, apply to Grindlay &Co, 55 Parliament Street, SW, or to Anderson, Anderson & Co, 1 Billiter Court, London EC." The Captain's name changed to WF Hewison in later adverts.

Just before she sailed on 26 June, the paper of 25 June advertised: "*Lusitania*, steam ship for Melbourne & Sydney. A steam tender will leave Brunswick Pier, Blackwall, at 1000 on Tuesday 26 inst, to convey passengers to Gravesend, or passengers can embark at Gravesend up to 2 p.m. or at Plymouth until noon on 28th inst. A few 1st class berths are still disengaged."

For some reason the fourth steamer was not immediately forthcoming from Pacific Steam, so the *Stad Amsterdam* was chartered from the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company for one return voyage.

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[1] John M Maber: *North Star to Southern Cross*; Stephenson & Sons, Prescot, 1967
[2] GP Molnar: *Ship Letters of Australia, Volume 2, The Orient Line*; Royal Sydney Philatelic Club, 1992

The route outward was London to Plymouth, then St Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands to top with coal, on to Cape Town and then via the Roaring Forties to Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. *Lusitania* does not appear to have called off Adelaide outbound on her first voyage, but all subsequent ships did. The return voyage was Sydney-Melbourne-Adelaide, Aden, Suez, and via the Canal to Plymouth and London.

Adelaide, or rather Glenelg, was added to the itinerary from the second sailing onwards: "Steam to Melbourne and Sydney from London, calling off Glenelg for Adelaide, to land passengers and light freight only. - ORIENT LINE. - The magnificent full powered steamship *Chimborazo*, JV Hall Commander, will be despatched as above on 10 August punctually from the SW India Docks, embarking passengers by steam tender at Gravesend on the 11th, and again at Plymouth on the 13th."

For the period covered by this article there was no mail contract; so all letters carried were treated as ship letters.

Postal Arrangements

The Post Office does not appear to have noticed the first sailing by *Lusitania*, but from *Chimborazo* onwards all outbound ships carried mails. These had to be specially addressed "per *Name of Ship* via Plymouth" and were made up in London the day before the ship sailed from Plymouth. Before long the Postmaster General was actively advertising the departure of the ships and the mail arrangements.

On the return voyages mails to go via Europe were landed at Suez, whence they travelled via Brindisi in conjunction with the P&O service from Alexandria to that port. The all-sea letters remained aboard the Orient liner, and were landed at Plymouth when she stopped briefly in the Sound to land those passengers who did not wish to go on to London. The mails were then put onto a train for London, in common with much of the mail of this period, it being quicker to go overland by rail than to remain with the ship.

The Ships

Name	Tonnage	Horsepower	Built
Lusitania	3825 [3877]	3000	1871, Birkenhead
Chimborazo	3847 [3847]	3000	1871, Glasgow
Cuzco	3845 [3898]	3000	1871, Glasgow
Stad Amsterdam	[2714]	?	1874, Glasgow
Garonne	[3876]	?	1871, Glasgow
Aconcagua	[4510]	?	1872, Glasgow

Notes

1. Tonnage figures quoted with no brackets are those that appeared in adverts. Those in square brackets are those given by Maber.[3]

Sailings Data

Outbound

Unless otherwise stated newspaper quotes are from *The Times*. Dates are either those quoted directly by the relevant newspaper, or those that the newspaper reports are believed to have meant. As examples: *The Times* dated 26 September 1877 reported: "Adelaide 20 September. The Pacific Steam Navigation Co's ss *Lusitania* left here today for London via the Suez Canal." Here there is no doubt as to what is intended. However, the following report is ambiguous: "Melbourne 4 September. The ss *Lusitania*, the 1st vessel of the new Orient Line, has made the fastest passage yet between London & this port." When did she arrive? The report goes on to specify that she arrived in 40 days 6 ½ hours from Plymouth. Assuming that a definitive departure date is known the arrival date should be derived easily, but unless the actual time of departure is also known, there is a built-in ambiguity of a day in the arrival date. As far as can be ascertained *Lusitania* left London on 26 June, and Plymouth on the 28th, but no definite statement has been found.

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[3] *North Star to Southern Cross,* op cit

Dates at Cape Town are rarely reported, but the ships did call there. Dates outbound for the Australian ports other than Adelaide are rarely to be found in *The Times*, and dates for St Vincent are quite elusive. Homebound dates are reported much better, usually with a round up when the ship arrived at Plymouth, giving her main itinerary dates.

If any readers can fill in any of the gaps I would be very pleased to hear from them.

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Lusitania	28 Jun?				7 Aug?	

Notes
1. "Melbourne 4 September. The ss *Lusitania*, the 1st vessel of the new Orient Line, has made the fastest passage yet between London & this port. The voyage was performed in 40 days 6 & ½ hours inclusive of a stop of 31 hours at St Vincent for coaling. When Messrs Green's offer of a service via the Cape of Good Hope was received in Melbourne about a year ago it received very little attention, but renewed interest has lately sprung up on the subject of direct steam communication with England by this route. The matter will shortly be brought before Parliament, and the splendid passages made by *Lusitania* and others of her class are accepted as evidence strongly in favour of subsidising the Cape in preference to the overland line for mails as well as passengers. The last mail delivered by our excellent servants the P&O Co came 6 days before the contract time, but was only 1 day less in the transit than if it had been carried by the *Lusitania*." This Melbourne report is deceptive – it suggests that she arrived on, or about, 4 September, but the dates given in the table are closer to the truth. More evidence needed – this first voyage was barely reported other that in Company advertisements. She probably left London on 26 June.

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Chimborazo	13 Aug **1877**			26 Sep		

Notes
1. *The Times* dated 14 August 1877: *"Chimborazo*, Capt Vine Hall, left Plymouth yesterday at 9.20 p.m. for Adelaide, Melbourne, & Sydney sailing under the auspices of Messrs Anderson, Anderson & Co's Orient Line of packets for Melbourne and Adelaide. She takes out 143 saloon passengers and 194 2nd & 3rd class passengers, mails, and a full general cargo. She will call at St Vincent for coals &c."
2. *The Times* dated 5 October: "Adelaide 26 September. The Pacific Steam Navigation Co's ss *Chimborazo* arrived here today after a passage of 42 days from Plymouth, including 29 hours at St Vincent."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Cuzco	27 Sep	4/5 Oct		7 Nov		

Notes
1. "Steam to Melbourne and Sydney from London, calling at Adelaide to land passengers and light freight only. ORIENT LINE. Steam ship *Cuzco*, 3845 tons register, 3000 hp effective, Captain Conlan, will be despatched from the SW India Docks on 24 September, embarking passengers by steam tender at Gravesend on 26 September and at Plymouth on 27 September. The *Cuzco* is a sister ship to the *Lusitania*, which has just made the passage from Plymouth to Melbourne in 40 days."
2. "Plymouth 27 September. Cuzco arrived here this a.m. from London, & after embarking passengers & mails, left at 3.20 p.m. for Adelaide, pabourne [sic] and Sydney."

3. St Vincent 4 October. *Cuzco* arrived here today at 8 p.m. after a passage of 7 days & 4 hours from Plymouth. She sails tomorrow (Friday) for Adelaide direct [the 5th].” NB sailing on the 5th confirmed in next day's paper.
4. “Adelaide 7 November. The Pacific Steam Navigation Co's *Cuzco* arrived here today after a 40 day passage including 24 hours' detention at St Vincent.”

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Stad Amsterdam	31 Oct **1877**	9 Nov		18 Dec		

Notes
1. *The Times* dated 22 October: “The Royal Netherlands Steamship Co's *Stad Amsterdam*, GJ Boon, sailing under the auspices of the Orient Line, will embark passengers and mails for Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, and will leave Plymouth on Saturday [the 27th]. Mails will be made up in London on 26 October - letters to be marked "Per SS *Stad Amsterdam*".”
2. *The Times* dated 29 October: “SS *Stad Amsterdam* arrived Plymouth on Saturday [the 27th]. She took mails onboard, but will be delayed about 4 days replacing her crankshaft.”
3. *The Times* dated 1 November confirmed her sailing on 31 October.
4. “St Vincent Cape Verde Islands 9 November. *Stad Amsterdam* arrived here yesterday & leaves today for Australia, all well.”
5. “Adelaide 18 December. The steamer *Stad Amsterdam* arrived here today from London.”

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Lusitania	8 Dec **1877**	16/17 Dec		19 Jan **1878**		

Notes
1. *“Lusitania*, bound for Adelaide, arrived at Plymouth on the 8th of December from London, embarked passengers & mails, & proceeded at 5 p.m. the same day. She calls at St Vincent for coals &c.”
2. “St Vincent 16 December. *Lusitania* arrived here at 5 o'clock this morning & sails tomorrow for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney.”
3. “Adelaide 19 January. The Orient liner *Lusitania* from London arrived today.”

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Chimborazo	25 Jan **1878**	1 - 2 Feb		8 Mar		1 Apr

Notes
1. “Gravesend 23 January. The Orient liner *Chimborazo* left here today for Plymouth to embark passengers for Adelaide, with Australian & New Zealand mails.”
2. *“Chimborazo*, J Vine Hall, left Plymouth yesterday [25th January] sailing as one of Messrs Anderson, Anderson & Co's Orient Line of packets for Adelaide Melbourne & Sydney. She has 20 sacks of mail.”
3. “St Vincent 2 February. The Orient liner *Chimborazo* arrived here at 10 p.m. yesterday from Plymouth & leaves today for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney.”
4. “Adelaide11 March. The Orient liner *Chimborazo* arrived off here the 8th inst from London.”
5. “Sydney 1 April. The Pacific SNCO (Orient line) Chimborazo arrived here today from London.”

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Garonne	8 Mar **1878**			21 Apr		

1. "The Orient liner *Garonne* will leave Plymouth on 8 March for Adelaide Melbourne & Sydney, & will take letters for all the Australian colonies if specially addressed "Per *Garonne* via Plymouth" & posted in London on or before 7 March."
2. "The Orient liner *Garonne*, R de Steiger, RNR, arrived at Plymouth yesterday [the 8th], embarked passengers & 13 sacks mail & left at 9.30 p.m. She takes out 164 first class & 233 other passengers and will call at the Cape of Good Hope."
3. "The Orient liner *Garonne* arrived at Adelaide on 21st inst [April] with mails & passengers from England."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Cuzco	20 Apr **1878**					

Notes

1. "The Orient liner *Cuzco*, J Murdoch, from London for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney, arrived at Plymouth at 2.30 on Saturday afternoon [the 20th] & left at 6.15 p.m. She had 193 first and 230 other passengers, and 21 sacks of mail. She calls at the Cape of Good Hope for provisions coals &c."
2.

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Aconcagua	20 May **1878**	27 May		1 Jul		

Notes

1. "The Postmaster General has notified that the ss *Aconcagua* (Orient Steam Navigation Co) will leave Plymouth on 20th inst [May] for Adelaide Melbourne & Sydney, & will carry letters, newspapers &c if specifically addressed "per *Aconcagua* via Plymouth" [sic] and posted in London on or before the evening of Saturday, the 18th inst."
2. "The Orient Steam Navigation Company's Mail steamer *Aconcagua*, 4105 tons, Capt. Conlan, from London for Adelaide, arrived at Plymouth yesterday [20 May] at 1.30 p.m. Embarked passengers and 17 sacks of mail & left at 5 p.m. She goes via St Vincent for coal, & the Cape of Good Hope for fresh provisions. She has 171 first & second, and 232 third class passengers."
3. "St Vincent 27 May. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's Mail steamer *Aconcagua* for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney, arrived here today at 4.30 p.m."
4. "*Aconcagua* arrived at Adelaide on the 1st inst. [July] in 41 days from Plymouth."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Lusitania	[1 Jul **1878]**			14 Aug		

Notes

1. "The Postmaster General has notified that the ss *Lusitania* (Orient Steam Navigation Co) will leave Plymouth on 1 July for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney, & will carry letters & newspapers &c if specially addressed "per ss Lusitania via Plymouth" & posted in London no later than the 30th inst."
2. "Adelaide 14 August. The Orient liner *Lusitania* from London arrived here today."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Garonne	1 Aug			14 Sep		

Notes

1. "Plymouth 1 August. The Orient liner *Garonne* left here today for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney with mails, passengers & a full general cargo."

2. "The Orient liner *Garonne* arrived at Adelaide on the 14th inst."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Chimborazo	2 Sep **1878**		24 Sep	14 Oct		

Notes

1. "The Orient liner *Chimborazo* left Plymouth yesterday [2 September] with mails & passengers for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney."
2. "The Orient liner *Chimborazo* arrived at the Cape of Good Hope on 24 September."
3. "Adelaide 14 October. The *Chimborazo* arrived here today."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Cuzco	30 Sep **1878**			12 Nov		

Notes

1. "The Postmaster General announces that *Cuzco* will leave Plymouth on 30 September and will take letters &c for all the Australian & New Zealand colonies if specially addressed "Per Ss *Cuzco* via Plymouth" and posted in London on or before Saturday 28 September."
2. "Plymouth 30 September. The Orient liner *Cuzco* from London arrived here today & left for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney."
3. "Adelaide 12 November. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Cuzco* from London arrived here today."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Aconcagua	28 Oct **1878**	4/6 Nov		10 Dec		

Notes

1. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Aconcagua* leaves Plymouth on 28 October for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney and takes letters and newspapers for all the Australian & New Zealand colonies if specially addressed "Per Aconcagua via Plymouth" and posted in London on or before Saturday 26 October."
2. "St Vincent 5 November. The Orient liner *Aconcagua* arrived here at 10 p.m. yesterday." Later paper says she left at 6 p.m. on 6 November.
3. "The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Aconcagua* arrived at Adelaide on Tuesday [December the 10th]."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Lusitania	29 Nov **1878**		24 Dec/	15 Jan		

Notes

1. This is the first outbound voyage reported by Molnar.
2. The Postmaster General advertised in *The Times* for mails per Orient liner *Lusitania* from Plymouth 29 November for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney. Must be specially addressed "per Lusitania via Plymouth" & posted not later than evening of 28 November.
3. "Plymouth 29 November. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Lusitania* left here today for Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney."
4. "Cape of Good Hope 24 December. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Lusitania* from London for Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, arrived here today."
5. "Adelaide 15 January. *Lusitania* from London arrived here today."

Ship	Dep Plymouth	St Vincent	Cape Town	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney
Garonne	31 Dec?	9/10 Jan	25/27 Jan	16 Feb	20 Feb	

Notes

1. "St Vincent 10 January. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer Garonne from London and Plymouth arrived here yesterday morning and will leave this morning for Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney."
2. "Cape of Good Hope 25 January. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Garonne* arrived here today & was to leave on 27 January for Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney."

The next ship to leave was the *John Elder*, as covered by Molnar. She was also advertised to take mails by the British Postmaster General, if specially addressed "per *John Elder* via Plymouth", so ship letters should exist.

Homebound

The dates in the (Brindisi) column, where noted, are extracted from the works of that great postal Historian, Reg Kirk, who did so much for those interested in how their letters were carried. The dates are of arrival of what is considered the most likely P&O ship at Brindisi. The mail usually arrived at London one, or at most two, days later.

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Lusitania	1 Sep **1877**	15 Sep	20 Sep	17 Oct	?	19 Oct	30 Oct

Notes

1. *The Times* dated 26 September 1877: "Adelaide 20 September. The Pacific SNCo's ss *Lusitania* left here today for London via the Suez Canal."
2. Suez 17 October. *Lusitania* arrived here today after a passage of 26 days 12 hours from Adelaide.
3. *The Times* dated 31 October: "The Pacific Steam Navigation Co's ss *Lusitania,* Hewison, sailing under the auspices of Messrs Anderson, Anderson & Co's Orient line of packets, arrived at Plymouth at 4 p.m. yesterday from Sydney 1 September, Melbourne 15th, Adelaide evening of the 20th, Aden 12 October, Suez 17th, Port Said 19th. She made the passage from Adelaide in the unprecedented time of 40 days. 48 first class, 71 2nd & 131 3rd class passengers, 11 sacks of mail, £204,375 in specie & a full general cargo. The bulk of the mails on the *Lusitania* were transferred at Suez to the P&O steamer, conveyed to England via Brindisi, & delivered in London on Monday last [29th or 22nd?]. Mails landed at Plymouth were forwarded by the 7.45 p.m. train to London. The *Lusitania* is the first vessel of this Line to arrive home."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Chimborazo	20 Oct **1877**	5 Nov	9 Nov	7 Dec	(13Dec)	11/13 Dec	24 Dec

Notes

1. "Suez 7 December. The Pacific Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Chimborazo* arrived here this morning from Adelaide, all well, and proceeded immediately for Port Said & Plymouth."
2. "*Chimborazo*, J Vine Hall, sailing as one of the Orient Line of packets, arrived at Plymouth on Monday [24th December] from Sydney 20 October, Melbourne 5 November, Adelaide 9 November, Aden 2 December, Port Said the 13th of December. She had 226 passengers & a large number of mails, which were landed at Suez and sent home via Brindisi. She was detained 2 days at Port Said repairing damage caused by collision with another steamer."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Cuzco			23 Dec **1877**	31 Jan	(7 Feb)		22 Feb

Notes

1. "Adelaide 23 December. The Pacific Steam Navigation Co's *Cuzco* left here today for London via the Canal."
2. "Suez 31 January. The Orient liner *Cuzco* from Adelaide arrived here today."
3. "Gibraltar 18 February. *Cuzco* passed here on 16 February for Plymouth."
4. "*Cuzco* arrived at Plymouth on Friday at 11 pm [22nd February]. She left Adelaide 25 December [sic]. When a few days out one of her engines became disabled and she was obliged to proceed on one engine only, thus delaying her considerably. She carried 225 passengers and 3 sacks mail (the remainder of the mail having been landed at Suez and forwarded overland). Landed mails & 70 passengers at Plymouth & proceeded for London at 4 a.m. on Saturday." She arrived at London on 25 February.

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Stad Amsterdam			14 Feb **1878**	17 Mar	?		3 Apr

Notes

1. "Adelaide 14 February. *Stad Amsterdam* left here today for London via the Canal."
2. "Suez Canal 17 March. The Orient liner *Stad Amsterdam* from Australia & Aden for London arrived here at 6 a.m. & entered the canal."
3. "*Stad Amsterdam* arrived at Plymouth at 5 p.m. yesterday [3 April] from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide (15 February [sic]). She called at Lisbon last Saturday for coals. 232 passengers, 50 sacks of mail. The mails were forwarded from Plymouth by 7.45 p.m. train."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Lusitania			6 Mar **1878**	2 Apr	?	3 Apr	

Notes

1. "Aden 27 March. The Pacific SNCO's *Lusitania* with dates from Adelaide to 6th inst, arrived here today & left for Plymouth & London."
2. "Suez 2 April. *Lusitania* from Adelaide etc arrived in the canal this a.m. en route for Plymouth & London." The paper of 5 April says she left Port Said 10 p.m. on 3 April.

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Garonne			15 May	18 Jun	(27 Jun)	19 Jun	[2 Jul?]

Notes

1. "The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Garonne* left Adelaide for London via the Suez canal on the 15th inst."
2. "Aden 11 June. The Orient liner *Garonne* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide, arrived here today." Paper of 14 June says she "put in here after being ashore at Ras Hafoon, left at 10 a.m. today [13 June] all well."
3. "Suez Canal 18 June. The Orient liner *Garonne* has arrived at Suez from Adelaide &c."
4. "Suez Canal 19 June. The Orient liner *Garonne* left Port Said at 6.30 p.m. for London."
5. "Gravesend 3 July. The Orient liner *Garonne* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide passed here today on her way to the docks."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Chimborazo			2 Jul **1878**	29 Jul	?	30 Jul	10 Aug

Notes

1. "*Chimborazo* left Adelaide on 2 July for Plymouth & London."

2. "Aden 23 July. *Chimborazo* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide arrived here today 20 days & 20 hours from Adelaide & left at Midnight for Plymouth & London."
3. "Suez 29 July. The Orient liner *Chimborazo* arrived here at 11 a.m. today & left immediately for Plymouth & London. She left Port Said on 30 July."
4. "Plymouth 10 August. *Chimborazo* from Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney arrived here this afternoon, landed mails & some passengers & proceeded for London."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Cuzco			22 Jul **1878**	21 Aug	?	21 Aug	

Notes
1. "Adelaide 22 July. The Orient liner *Cuzco* sailed today for London via the Suez Canal."
2. "Suez Canal 21 August. The Orient liner *Cuzco* from Australia for London has arrived. She left Port Said at 7 p.m. on 21 August."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Aconcagua	3 Aug **1878**	12 Aug	15 Aug **1878**	11/12 Sep	(17 Sep)	13 Sep	24 Sep

Notes
1. "Adelaide 15 August. The Orient liner *Aconcagua* from Sydney & Melbourne left here today for London."
2. "Suez Canal 12 September. The Orient liner *Aconcagua* arrived at Suez yesterday from Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney."
3. "*Aconcagua* passed Gibraltar on 21 September, all well."
4. "The Orient liner *Aconcagua* arrived at Plymouth Sound at 7 a.m. yesterday [24 September]. Her dates were: Sydney 3 August, Melbourne 12th, Adelaide 15th, Suez 12 September, Port Said 13th, Gibraltar the 20th, Lisbon 21st. The passage from Adelaide took 39 days. She brings mails (the bulk of letters were landed at Suez), and 155 passengers."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Lusitania	4 Sep		19 Sep **1878**		?	20 Oct	31 Oct

Notes
1. "The Orient liner *Lusitania* left Adelaide on 19 September."
2. "Port Said 20 October. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Lusitania* from Adelaide, Melbourne & Sydney, left here today at 5 p.m. for London. Expected at Plymouth 31st inst."
3. "The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Lusitania*, Hewison, which left Sydney on 4 September, reaching Aden on 14 October, arrived in Plymouth Sound at midnight on Thursday [31 October]. 198 passengers. Landed 55 passengers & 15 bags of mail at Plymouth & proceeded for London at 3 a.m. on 1 November."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Garonne	5 Oct	12 Oct	17 Oct **1878**	20 Nov	?	22 Nov	6 Dec

Notes
1. "Adelaide 17 October. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Garonne* left here today for London."
2. "Aden 13 November. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Garonne* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide, arrived here this a.m."
3. "Suez 20 November. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Garonne* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide entered the canal at 11.20 today."
4. "The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Garonne* left Port Said the evening of 22nd inst & is expected at Plymouth on 4 December."

5. "The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Garonne* arrived in Plymouth Sound yesterday [6 December] from Sydney 5 October, Melbourne 12th, Adelaide the 16th [sic]." Nine bags mails landed at Plymouth.

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Chimborazo	8 Nov	15 Nov	20 Nov **1878**	17 Dec	?	19 Dec	30 Dec

Notes
1. "Adelaide 20 November. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Chimborazo* left here today for London."
2. "Port Said 19 December. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Chimborazo* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide, left here at 2 a.m. today for London.
3. "*Chimborazo*, Capt Trench, arrived at Plymouth yesterday [30 December] from Sydney 8 November, Melbourne the 15th, Adelaide the 20th, Aden 12 December, Suez the 17th, & Port Said 19 December." She had 155 passengers & 20 bags mails. 53 passengers & the mails were landed at Plymouth.

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Cuzco	7 Dec **1878**	17 Dec	24 Dec	19/20 Jan		21 Jan	1 Feb

Notes
1. "Adelaide 27 December. The Orient Steam Navigation Co's steamer *Cuzco* sailed for London on 24 December."
2. "Suez 20 January. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Cuzco* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide arrived here at midnight yesterday and proceeded at 8 a.m. today for London."
3. "Port Said 21 January. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Cuzco* left here at 6 p.m. today for London, all well."
4. "The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Cuzco*, Murdoch, arrived at Plymouth at noon on Saturday [1 February]. She left Sydney 7 December, Melbourne the 17th, Adelaide the 24th at 2 p.m., Suez 19 January, Port Said 21st. She has made the run from Australia to England in the shortest time on record, the length of the passage being 38 days, 22 hours, including stoppages. She brought 150 passengers, 15 bags of mails, and a full general cargo. Landed 40 passengers & the mails at Plymouth."

Ship	Dep Sydney	Melbourne	Adelaide	Suez	(Brindisi)	Port Said	Plymouth
Aconcagua	4 Jan **1879**	14 Jan	19 Jan	16/17 Feb		17 Feb	2 Mar

Notes
1. This was the first homeward sailing recorded by Molnar. However, he has a Sydney date of 11 January, which may be the date the last letters left Sydney to catch the ship at Melbourne. *The Times* for 3 March specifically says she left Sydney on the 4th of January. Since the voyage to Melbourne rarely exceeded 2 days, this gave a stay at Melbourne of some 7 or 8 days, comparable with earlier voyages.
2. "Suez Canal 17 February. The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Aconcagua* from Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide arrived at Suez yesterday at 7 a.m. and left at 9 a.m. for Plymouth & London."
3. "Port Said 18 February. *Aconcagua* arrived here yesterday & left at 6.20 p.m. for Plymouth - expect about the 28th."
4. "The Orient Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Aconcagua*, Conlan, left Sydney 4 January, Melbourne the 14th, Adelaide the 19th, and Port Said 17 February, arrived at Plymouth yesterday at 10 p.m. [2 March]." She had 190 passengers, and 24 bags of mail. Another 8 bags of mail were landed at Suez and forwarded via Brindisi. Plymouth mails were to be forwarded by the 8.35 a.m. train on 3 March to London.

Conclusion

This sketchy outline of the early days of the Orient Line attempts to fill a gap in the record readily available to postal historians interested in the services between the UK and Australia. South African enthusiasts may also find the outbound call at Cape Town of interest, although sadly no data was found in *The Times* concerning dates at that place.

Molnar's treatment continues from here on, including coverage of the period when the Line had achieved postal contract status.

The service depicted above seems to have been reported most fully for Adelaide; that may possibly mean that the Line was used more by South Australia than the other Colonies, although I have seen nothing to support this suggestion elsewhere.

The Line was well run, and fast, as shown by the last homeward voyage of the *Cuzco* reported above. Outbound the ships provided comfortable accommodation all the way to the major Australian ports without the need to change ships at least once, as required by P&O passengers. Homebound they also provided a through passage, again unlike P&O at this period, where a change had to be made at Galle. The Orient Line soon became a major challenger on the Australian route. For the remainder of the story see Molnar.

The lack of cover illustrations is because I have not seen any of this period! If any members have covers that were carried on these early sailings I would be very grateful for photocopies.

References:
1. [1] John M Maber: *North Star to Southern Cross*; Stephenson & Sons, Prescot, 1967
2. [1] GP Molnar: *Ship Letters of Australia, Volume 2, The Orient Line*; Royal Sydney Philatelic Club, 1992

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