

Mismanagement of Troops Transported on the SS *Great Britain*, September 1855

By Dr. Mike Hinton

A case of apparent mismanagement of troops on *Great Britain* during the Crimean War was revealed by the chance finding of a bundle of four letters in an un-indexed box of hand-written reports and correspondence in The National Archives (TNA) at Kew.¹ Additional enquiries have revealed further details of the voyage and together these form the basis of this essay.

The SS Great Britain Trust's loyal Member community is filled with supporters who are passionate about the history of the SS Great Britain. One such Member, Dr Mike Hinton, has recently published a book entitled 'Victory over Disease: Resolving the Medical Crisis in the Crimean War' (Helion & Co.). While researching, he learned of a cholera outbreak on the SS Great Britain which was chronicled in issue 12 of the *Great Britain Gazette*. Further investigations at The National Archives led to the discovery of a bundle of four letters in a box of hand-written documents which provide a glimpse into the mismanagement of troops and the unsatisfactory conditions on board *Great Britain* during her second voyage to the Crimea.

Introduction

Great Britain sailed from Melbourne, Australia on 22 November 1854 and on arrival at Liverpool was refitted out as a troopship. The accommodation provided for 162 officers, 1,650 men, for whom there were 1,359 hammocks, and 30 horses.² *Great Britain*, Captain Gray, now designated screw steam transport No. 187, sailed to the East on 7 March 1855. A small outbreak of cholera occurred among the crew when she stopped over in the Bosphorus to embark invalids on the return voyage to England.³ She arrived at Portsmouth on 8 August, with the *Saldanha* (sailing transport No. 209) in tow.⁴ The invalids were disembarked and she sailed on to Liverpool, arriving there on 16 August.⁵ She underwent an 'overhaul of her fittings' and after leaving the dock for the river Mersey on 30 August⁶ took on board infantry and cavalry officers and men, ammunition and huts (Table 1, Nos 1 & 2).

The Voyage

The key components of the voyage were recorded in the ship's log but apart from one reference to the 94th Regiment there are no details of the other passengers or the cargo.⁷

Great Britain sailed from Liverpool for the Crimea on 4 September. She arrived at Gibraltar on the 9th, where she: 'took in coals and water' and 'disembarked 200 men of the 94th Regiment.' A Garrison Order issued on 10th required: 'the under-mentioned persons will embark for the Crimea on board *Great Britain* steam ship from the new mole wharf this afternoon at four o'clock: Asst Surgeon Roe [who had embarked in Liverpool], Purveyor's Clerk Mr Griffith, Pte Thomas [illegible] R.S. & Miners left behind on the embarkation of the Company to which he belongs.'⁸

Great Britain 'got into Malta' on the 14th, and this was reported in the *Malta Times and Il Mediterraneo*.⁹ Four infantry officers disembarked and Captain T. Venables, 97th Regiment, amongst others embarked for the Crimea. After sailing the next day, she was anchored in the Bosphorus from 20th–22nd. The *Daily Journal* of the Department of the Quartermaster General (QMG) at Scutari recorded that there were '600 dismounted cavalry and 150 artillery' on board.¹⁰ The vessel was inspected the next day by Major J. Hackett, a Deputy Assistant QMG (DAQMG) attached to Transport Office in Constantinople, and he found it in an unsatisfactory condition (See below for his report and further correspondence). *Great Britain* crossed the Black Sea and on the 23rd 'stopped engines and dropped anchor' off Balaklava. Her arrival was noted the next day by the Army authorities merely as: '*Great Britain*, huts and drafts, England.'¹¹

Major K.D. MacKenzie, the AQMG located in Balaklava, sent a disembarkation report to the QMG, Lieutenant General R. Airey, and noted there were eleven officers and 656 men on board.¹² Airey annotated the document: 'Let these drafts disembark when convenient,' and it was confirmed that arrangements for this had been made the following day.

A Disembarkation Return, prepared by Captain Venables on 27 September, was forwarded to the Adjutant General (AG), Colonel the Hon. W.L. Pakenham. The conduct had been 'Good' during the voyage though there had been two courts martial, while the health of the troops, who were under the care of Assistant Surgeon A.K. Drysdale, 79th Regiment, had been good. There were no deaths, but one sick man was left behind at Malta. The section entitled 'Other remarks which may be necessary in reference to the various "*Duties of troops on board ship*," as detailed in General Regulations and Orders for the Army' was left blank.¹³

In his regular despatch W.H. Russell, *The Times* correspondent in the Crimea, noted wryly: 'Just as the cavalry are going to Constantinople draughts arrive for them here. The *Great Britain* now exhibits her huge hulk in Balaklava.'¹⁴ On the 6 October the QMG sent the disembarkation returns for *Europa* (see below), *Furious*, *Great Britain*, and *Medway* to Major General J. Freeth, the QMG of the Army at Horse Guards in London,¹⁵ and on the 9th, after nearly a fortnight in Balaklava, *Great Britain* left on the next phase of her war service: 'for Souchoum Kaleh [in Georgia] with Turkish troops.'¹⁶

Passengers

94th Regiment: The regiment was stationed at Windsor – where it had been on duty since the previous Christmas, under the command of Colonel Dennis. Orders were received on 28 August to proceed to Gibraltar,¹⁷ where the regiment was expected to remain for two months before 'proceeding to the Seat of War.'¹⁸ A later report provided further details: 'Two companies of the 94th Regiment, under the command of Captain Bruce, left Windsor yesterday [2 September] morning at 7 o'clock per the South-Western Railway for Liverpool, whence they will sail for Gibraltar by the transport steam ship *Great Britain*.¹⁹ At 9 a.m. the remainder of the regiment, – six companies, under the command of Colonel Dennis – [...] proceeded to Portsmouth, whence they will sail for the same destination by the ship *Perseverance*.'²⁰

HMS *Perseverance*, an iron screw steam troopship,²¹ arrived first at Gibraltar. A Garrison Order was issued on 9 September: 'The [66th] Regiment will prepare its dinners in Barracks tomorrow to be carried out to the camp and will afterwards hand over the Barracks. The 94th Regiment having arrived from England on board Her Majesty's Ship *Perseverance* will disembark at the new mole wharf at six o'clock on Tuesday morning next [11 September].'²² *Great Britain* arrived on 9 September and a report penned the next day recorded the occasion: 'The two companies of the 94th Regiment, under the orders of Captain Brice, landed at the new mole on the 10th inst. from on board the *Great Britain*, steam transport, and, after forming into line marched down to [...] the grand Casement Barracks, preceded by the band of the 3rd Royal Lancashire Militia; two hours after the *Great Britain* left the harbour for Malta and the Crimea with the remainder of her gallant freight (detachments of cavalry and infantry), amid great cheering by their brethren in arms, and the sailors on board ships of war and transports lying at anchor off the mole.'²³

The Cavalry: The depots of the regiments selected to provide the drafts for the Crimea were in Brighton, Canterbury, and Preston in England, and in Limerick and Newbridge in Ireland (Table 2). The departure of the cavalry detachments from Ireland was reported in the papers, albeit with a number of errors: 'About 5 o'clock p.m. [on 30 August], 5 officers and 270 men from dragoon regiments embarked at North Wall, [Dublin] for Liverpool, *en route* for the Crimea. The drafts consisted of 30 to 50 men each from the 2nd [*sic*: 2nd Dragoons], 4th, and 5th Dragoon Guards, 6th Dragoons, 8th and 11th Hussars, and 17th Lancers. [...] The troops were enthusiastically cheered by the populace.'²⁴

Other Infantry Regiments: The infantry regiments whose personnel were destined for the Crimea are given in contemporary newspapers reports are summarized in Table 1, Nos 2, 3, 5–8 and 10–12. Inconsistencies and errors can be identified and some of these have been perpetuated by one journal copying an inaccurate report from another. The infantry regiments referred to were the 1st, 9th, 17th, 18th, 30th, 33rd, and 49th Regiments, and the officers, who left their depots towards the end of August or early in September, travelled to Liverpool, presumably by train and if necessary by sea, in time to embark on *Great Britain* by 4 September (Table 2).

Two reports recorded that between 300 and 400 infantrymen in seven regiments embarked at Liverpool (Table 1, Nos 5 & 8). With the exception of the two companies of the 94th Regiment that left the ship at Gibraltar, no information about these men leaving their depots or of them disembarking at Valetta, Scutari, or Balaklava has been located in appropriate regimental muster rolls in WO 12 and 14. Nevertheless, a return of the strength of the Malta garrison for September recorded that 529 men joined from England during September, although no details of the regiments involved or when the men arrived were given.²⁵

Following arrival at Malta a General Order dated Valetta, 15 September directed that following infantry officers to 'remain on board *Great Britain* to join their corps in the Crimea.' Ensigns Darvell, Fry, & Hutchings, 18th Foot; Lieutenants Cumming & Grubbe, 9th Foot; Assistant Surgeon Rae [*sic*: Roe], 92nd Regiment; Ensigns Field, Astley, & Cresswell, 49th Foot; Ensigns Elwyn, Smith, & Allardice, 30th Foot; Lieutenants Graham, Forbes, Twining, & Banwell and Ensigns Vaughan, Bally, & Statham, 33rd Foot; and Ensign Townsend [*sic*: Townshend], 1st Foot, while the following will 'land and join their depots at Malta.' Ensigns McGill [*sic*: Magill, who actually remained on board and proceeded to the Crimea], & Shaw, 18th Foot; Scott, 49th Foot; Little, 17th Foot; and

Bayliffe, 30th Foot. There was no mention of any infantry soldiers either on board or landing at Malta.²⁶ A similar list, which omitted Ensign Little, and also contained errors, was published in the *Malta Times* (Table 1, No. 12).

Captain T. Venables, 97th Regiment, embarked at Malta. He had left the regimental depot in Colchester for Malta on 2 July,²⁷ and had been attached to Light (Malta) Reserve Battalion. A General Order issued in Valetta on 15 September directed him, together with Assistant Surgeon Sinclair, 93rd Regiment, and Sergeant A. Reid and Bombardiers W. Perriman and J. Hamill of the Royal Artillery, to embark on *Great Britain* for 'service with the respective corps in the Crimea.'²⁸ Venables thus became the senior military officer for the remainder of the voyage.

Surgeons: Assistant Surgeon A.K. Drysdale, 79th (Cameron Highlanders), who was attached to the Cavalry, and Acting Assistant Surgeon S.B. Roe, were ordered to 'proceed' from the General Hospital, Fort Pitt, Chatham, to Liverpool, and 'there to embark in the *Great Britain* steamer for the East.'²⁹ On arrival at Gibraltar a Garrison Order required Roe to stay on board and this was also the case at Malta.³⁰ As mentioned previously Assistant Surgeon W. Sinclair, 93rd Regiment, joined the *Great Britain* at Malta for the Crimea.

Cargo

Wooden Huts: A hundred huts manufactured from Baltic timber by Messrs J.M. and H.A. Bennett, Hyde Road, Manchester with a capacity for 2,960 men were sent to provide accommodation for the second winter in the Crimea.³¹ Their loading on *Great Britain* and *Europa* was inefficiently done as two officials from London 'on going aboard *Europa* [...] found only one side and the top of each separate hut on board, and on making further enquiries they ascertained that the remaining portions had been put on board the *Great Britain*;' (Table 1, No. 9) Some days later a newspaper report of the incident had the apposite headline: 'The way huts are sent to the Crimea.'³²

Europa (paddle steam transport, No. 55) sailed on the same day as *Great Britain*. She had been expected to leave on 1 September but was delayed by an order from headquarters that required several more officers to embark. The 'detention cost the country £150' (Table 1, No. 9). *Europa* arrived at Balaklava 'from Malta with drafts' on 21 September.³³

13-Inch Mortar Shells: *Great Britain* and *Europa* conveyed shells to the Crimea; about 500 tons in the case of *Great Britain*.³⁴ However, the siege ended on the 9 September and none would have been used in anger. Nevertheless, the British fired nearly 40,000 into the city during the campaign, together with about 210,000 other types of shot and shell.³⁵

The Mismanagement Issue:

The episode was recorded in a report written on 22 September following a routine inspection of *Great Britain* by Major J. Hackett, a DAQMG attached to Transport Office in Constantinople. The recipient was Brigadier General H.K. Storcks, commanding on the Bosphorus, and he referred the report to Headquarters in the Crimea with a covering letter. The final document in the collection is the explanation made by Captain Venables of what took place.

Letter 1: 'I regret to have to report the state in which I found the *Gt Britain* steam transport when I visited that vessel shortly after her arrival on the 20th inst. [...] I found that the hammocks were not lashed up and on enquiry I found that they had been slung during the whole voyage. The decks used by the troops were dirty, and in two of those the filth swept into the middle of the floor left there. As the commanding officer had given instructions to the Orderly Officer to have the decks properly cleaned, and that officer had neglected his duty, I gave instructions that he [Lieutenant Winstanley, 4th Light Dragoons] should be placed in arrest and reported on the arrival of the transport on Balaklava. The men generally were dirty both in their persons and clothes, the sentries negligent in their duty, and inattentive and disrespectful when officers passed them. There were upwards of 700 men on board this vessel, and the command was at first in the hands of a Captain. At Gibraltar this officer left the ship, and a Lieutenant took command as far as Malta [probably Lieutenant Macneill, 13th Light Dragoons], when another Captain came on board [Captain T. Venables, 97th Regiment]. This frequent change could not but have a prejudicial effect upon the discipline of young soldiers and I would respectively beg to suggest that necessity of a field officer [major or above] being embarked with such a large number of troops and also that when drafts are sent out the men should be quartered and mess by regiments, and not allowed, as was the case in the *Gt Britain*, to be mixed up and separated from their non-commissioned officers, who has control over them, thus making the maintenance of discipline and cleanliness a more difficult task than it need to have been.'

Letter 2: On the 24 September Storks forwarded Hackett's letter to the AG in the Crimea with the following observations: 'I [enclose a] letter from Major Hackett, DAQMG, reporting the state of the troops on board the steam transport *Great Britain*. I would submit for the favourable consideration of His Excellency the Commander of the Forces [General J. Simpson], the importance of bringing this subject before the authorities at home; as I have reason to believe, that this is not a solitary instance of irregularity, and want of discipline on board transport ships; and it is important that large drafts like those on board the *Great Britain* should be under the command of an officer of standing and experience.'

Letter 3: Following the arrival of *Great Britain* at Balaklava Pakenham, the AG, wrote on 30 September to Lieutenant General Sir W. Codrington, KCB, who commanded the Light Division: 'I have the honour by the direction of the Commander of the Forces to request that Captain Venables, 97th Regiment, may be called upon to report the state of the *Great Britain* steamer, and the conduct of the troops on board during the passage to Balaklava. His disembarkation report mentions no irregularity [as referred to earlier]; and it is only on the receipt of the enclosed letters from Scutari that it was discovered that the state of the ship was considered so unsatisfactory that the staff officer appointed to inspect it found it necessary to place an officer in arrest for neglect of duty when at Constantinople. Captain Venables has had an opportunity of reading the letters from General Storks and Major Hackett and is aware that an explanation from him will be required.'

Letter 4: Codrington referred the matter to Lieutenant Colonel J.S. Brownrigg, CB, the Assistant AG in the Light Division,³⁶ and Venables provided him with his explanation of events on the 1 October: 'I have the honour to state for the information of the Commander of the Forces, in reply to the letters here enclosed, that I embarked as a passenger on board the *Great Britain* steam ship at Malta on the 15th September last. I found myself the only captain on board. On the ships arrival at Constantinople, Major Hackett, staff officer, came on board to inspect the ship, and found fault with decks being dirty; they were so on that occasion, but I had desired the subaltern on duty, Lieutenant Winstanley, 4th Light Dragoons, to see that they were properly cleaned, as I had found them in the state reported by Major Hackett on my morning tour between decks. It was not done and Lieutenant Winstanley was placed under arrest for neglect of duty. I verbally reported the circumstances to the Assistant Quarter Master General at Balaklava on the ships arrival outside the harbour and in writing to the commander of the 4th Light Dragoons. I beg most respectfully to call attention to the fact, that the drafts with very few exceptions, were commanded by very young officers, the non commission officers and men had been but lately enlisted and many of them were unacquainted with their officers, they appear to have been put on aboard on a hurried manner at their places of embarkation, no arrangement made in putting by safely their arms and accoutrements which they had in their possession and mostly stowed away in the hammocks. The blankets were constantly brought on deck. The ship being divided into different compartments it was difficult to arrange that each draft should have a portion of the ship to itself, and these drafts being mixed in these compartments caused the irregularity complained of, as no officer could be made responsible for the cleanliness of these places. The portion of the upper deck apportioned for the troops being limited; many of the men had to clean their appointments on the lower deck thereby adding to the difficulty of the cleanliness of the lower decks. Had the passage been a longer duration I should have considered it my duty to have made a fresh arrangement for the regularity of the ship, but knowing that it was only for a few days I used by best endeavours to keep the ship in a clean a state as possible, and I trust that my explanation may be deemed satisfactory to the Commander of the Forces.' An annotation on the letter by Codrington indicated that it was forwarded, presumably to Headquarters.

Discussion:

The departure of *Great Britain* from Liverpool was widely reported in several newspapers. Errors and inconsistencies could be identified in these and in some instances, they were perpetuated by one journal copying a report published previously in another (Table 1). In the event, the large draft of NCOs and men from nine cavalry regiments was accompanied by too few officers and NCOs, viz. eleven junior officers, six sergeants and twenty corporals. The ratio of officers to the other ranks ranged from 1:32 to 1:130, with the largest draft (17th Lancers) being commanded by a cornet who had been commissioned only four months before sailing for the Crimea. In contrast, in September 1855, the Cavalry Division in the Crimea comprised 271 regimental officers and 5,565 NCOs and men; giving an overall ratio of officers to other ranks close to 1:20 with a range of 1:16 to 1:26 if the 11th Hussars is excluded (Table 3).

Hackett's report indicated that there was a want of organization during the whole voyage and that the problems encountered on *Great Britain* were not unusual. This suggests that it was not

infrequent for troop ships travelling to and from the East having insufficient experienced senior officers and NCOs on board who could more easily maintain discipline, and who would have been better able to assist the men in adapting to the challenges of living in cramped, poorly lit and ill-ventilated conditions below deck.

Venables, an infantry officer of eleven years experience, embarked at Malta as a passenger and assumed command as he was the senior military officer on board. The trip to Constantinople was less than a week and as he pointed out in his letter of explanation there had been little time for him to have effected any worthwhile changes in the way the troops were managed, even though he stressed that he had good intentions in that regard.

Given that the voyage to Constantinople had taken nearly three weeks the prevention of the deterioration of the conditions below deck should have been the collective responsibility in some measure of the nine cavalry officers. It is perhaps unfortunate that it was Winstanley's turn to be on duty when Halkett made his tour of inspection and placed him under arrest. No evidence has yet been found that he was formally disciplined. He was assigned to the Cavalry Depot at Scutari soon afterwards and remained on duty there from 26 October until 3 May 1856.

Following his return from the East Winstanley was involved in an unsavoury bullying incident at the Barracks at Brighton on 21 September 1856. Briefly, he and two other officers (Cornets Lord E. McD Vane Tempest and W.J. Birt) maltreated Cornet T.H. Ames. The incident, which was reported in extenso in the press,³⁷ was followed by their arrest and a court martial. Vane Tempest and Birt, who were the principal miscreants, were dismissed from the service,³⁸ while Winstanley, who, surprisingly perhaps, escaped censure. He retired from the Army during the following year.³⁹

Afterword:

It is unlikely the problem of mismanagement was due to over crowding as *Great Britain* was a large vessel and the next year conveyed '60 officers, 1,400 men, and their baggage etc.' to England.⁴⁰ A letter written on 28 May 1856 by Captain William Barnston, 55th Regiment, during the voyage home suggests that life on board was satisfactory: 'We left the Crimea all in a hurry – had only a few hours' notice. We have had a most beautiful passage. This *Great Britain* is an immense steamer; of course, you have heard all about her. There are two entire regiments on board – the 30th and ourselves; the most comfortable vessel I ever was in.'⁴¹

Great Britain arrived in the Crimea after the decision had been taken to over-winter the Cavalry Division in Turkey. Briefly, Lord Panmure, the Minister for War, had instructed Storks on 8 September to prepare accommodation for 4,000 horses in Turkey.⁴² On 20 September *The Times* correspondent reported that: 'The whole of the British cavalry now in the Crimea is shortly to be transferred to this neighbourhood.'⁴³ General Storks has been busy for some days past seeking quarters for them in the vicinity of the Sea of Marmora. [...] General Storks is taking quarters for 4,000 horses.'⁴⁴

Colonel E.C. Hodge, 4th Dragoon Guards, noted on 22 October that 'some of the cavalry are to embark almost immediately for Scutari.' On the same day he wrote in a letter that 'The *Himalaya* arrived here today and is to take away 340 horses of the Heavy Brigade. The sick and dismounted men will, of course, go first.'⁴⁵

Given that all the NCOs and men who arrived on *Great Britain* were 'dismounted' it is likely a proportion of them would have stayed as such, given the run down of the Cavalry, and some may have been sent to join the newly formed Cavalry depot in Scutari after their arrival. At the end of October this depot comprised 632 NCOs and men.⁴⁶ Lieutenant Colonel L. Fyler, 12th Lancers, arrived at Scutari to take command on 2 November⁴⁷ and during the month a further 597 men joined the unit, while in this time thirty died,⁴⁸ ten were sent to England and 139 rejoined their regiments, leaving 1,039 men in the depot at the end of the month (Table 4).

Thirteen of the fourteen regiments in the Cavalry Division had relocated to Turkey by the end of 1855. They did not return to the Crimea and were transported to other locations following the ratification of the Peace Treaty on 27 April 1856.

Acknowledgement: I am grateful to Tony Margrave for additional information on the officers, and the incident at Brighton, to which reference has been made.

Table 1: Details of the troops conveyed to the East on *Great Britain*, 3–23 September 1855

No.	Date*	Abstract (Reference) [Comments, correction, or omissions]
1	30	WAR MOVEMENTS – LIVERPOOL, THURSDAY: The <i>Europa</i> – paddle – and <i>Great Britain</i> – screw- transports leave dock today [30 August], and will sail in a few days for the Crimea, calling at Malta. The former will carry out a large quantity of shells, and the latter will be laden with wooden huts. Both vessels will carry troops. (<i>Daily News</i> , 31 August & <i>Lancashire Gazette</i> , 1 September)
2	31	MILITARY MOVEMENTS – LIVERPOOL, Friday – The <i>Great Britain</i> , steam-ship, which went into the river yesterday [30 August], this forenoon took on board detachments of cavalry, 700 in aggregate, belonging to the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, 17th Lancers, 8th and 11th Hussars, 2nd, 4th, 5th Dragoon Guards, and 6th Dragoons; and also detachments – 300 in number, of the 1st, 9th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 33rd, and 49th Regiments; together with about 35 horses. The <i>Great Britain</i> has also on board about 500 tons of 13-inch shells, and a large quantity of huts. She is expected to sail at noon tomorrow [1 September]. The <i>Europa</i> steam-ship is also in the river, and will speedily sail for the East, with warlike stores, and a number of officers belonging to the 55th, 68th, 89th, and 93rd Regiments. (<i>Morning News</i> , 1 September)
3	31	REINFORCEMENT AND SUPPLIES FOR THE CRIMEA: Yesterday [Friday] afternoon the screw steamer <i>Great Britain</i> embarked about 1,000 troops of the line composed of draughts from the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th. Dragoons Guards [<i>sic</i> : 2nd and 6th Dragoons], 8th and 11th Hussars, and 17th Lancers, besides about 52 officers of the 9th, 17th, 18th, 13th [<i>sic</i> : 30th], 33rd, and 49th Foot. She has on board a large quantity of 13-inch shells, and a considerable number of huts. At the same time the <i>Europa</i> , steamer, took on board 13-inch shell and huts and a number of officers of the 55th, 68th, and 89th Regiments. They were both to sail this morning [<i>sic</i> : Actually departed on 4 September] for the Crimea, calling at Gibraltar and Malta. (<i>Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle</i> , 1 September 1855)
4	31	NAVAL AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE: On Friday the <i>Great Britain</i> embarked about 1,000 troops of the line at Liverpool. She has on board a large quantity of 13-inch shells, and a considerable number of huts. At the same time <i>Europa</i> steamer took onboard 13-inch shells and huts, and a number of officers. They both sailed on Saturday [<i>sic</i> : Actually departed on 4 September] for the Crimea, calling at Gibraltar and Malta. (<i>Essex Standard</i> , 5 September)
5	31	LIVERPOOL CORRESPONDENT: The tokens of a winter campaign are gathering fast. The <i>Great Britain</i> , screw steamer, and <i>Europa</i> Cunard paddle steamer (both government transports), have taken on board at this port large quantities of huts and shell for the army. [...] Today, upwards of 900 soldiers embarked on the <i>Great Britain</i> . The cavalry consisted of troops of the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons; 2nd and 6th Dragoons; 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards; 8th and 11th Hussars; and 17th Lancers, numbering altogether 720 men, 20 officers, and 30 horses. The infantry comprised 30 officers, and between 300 and 400 of the 1st, 9th, 17th, 18th, 30th, 33rd, and 49th infantry. The <i>Europa</i> has embarked, in addition to huts and shell, 24 officers of the 55th, 68th, and 89th infantry. (<i>Manchester Times</i> , 1 September)
6	1	WAR MOVEMENTS IN LIVERPOOL: The screw steamer <i>Great Britain</i> , Captain Gray, went out of dock yesterday at noon, and embarked in the river about 950 men and 56 horses, comprising detachments of the 9th, 17th, 18th, 30th, 33rd, and 49th Foot; and the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, and the 9th [<i>sic</i> : presumably 11th Hussars] and 17th Lancers, 8th Hussars, 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Dragoon Guards [<i>sic</i> : 2nd and 6th Dragoons]. The <i>Great Britain</i> has on board a large quantity of huts and stores. (<i>Daily News</i> , 1 September but from the <i>Liverpool Chronicle</i>)
7	1	WAR MOVEMENTS IN LIVERPOOL: The Cunard screw steamer [presumably <i>Europa</i>] will sail in a day or two with huts and shell for the Crimea. She takes out the following officers of the 57th, 93rd, 41st, and 18th Regiments:- Captain Woodall, Lieutenants Russell, Wood, Lo?ecy [<i>sic</i> : Losack], and Wilton; Ensigns Mills, Haverson, Howell, Britton, Burgoyne, McPherson, and Grieg; Staff surgeon C. Cowan, and Paymaster Grant, and the detachments of the 55th, 68th, and 89th Foot. (<i>Daily News</i> , 1 September but from the <i>Liverpool Chronicle</i>)
8	3	NAVAL AND MILITARY NEWS, LIVERPOOL: The <i>Great Britain</i> steam-ship has taken on board detachments of cavalry, 700 in the aggregate, belonging to the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, 17th Lancers, 8 & 11 Hussars, 2nd [<i>sic</i> : 2nd Dragoons] 4th, and 5th Dragoon Guards, and 6th Dragoons; and also detachments – 300 in number – of the 1st, 9th, 17th, 18th, 30th, 33rd, and 49th Regiments of Foot. The <i>Great Britain</i> has also on board about 500 tons of 13-inch shell, and a large number of huts. The <i>Europa</i> steam-ship will shortly leave for the East with warlike stores, and a number of officers belonging to the 55th, 68th, 89th, and 93rd Regiments. (<i>Morning Chronicle</i> , 3 September 1855)
9	4	FROM THE LIVERPOOL ALBION: The steamer <i>Europa</i> took on board at this port, the other day, a large quantity of thirteen-inch shell, together with a considerable number of huts; that on Friday [31 August] she embarked some troops and officers; and that she was expected to sail for her destination on Saturday. [...] an order was received from head-quarters that she was to be detained until the 3rd instant [...] for several officers [...] This detention cost the country £150. On Saturday, two officials came down from London, and on going aboard <i>Europa</i> they found only one side and the top of each separate hut on board, and on making further enquiries they ascertained that the remaining portions had been put on board the <i>Great Britain</i> . (<i>Daily News</i> , <i>Freeman's Journal</i> , and <i>Bristol Mercury</i> , 4, 6, & 8 September 1855 respectively, and other newspapers)
10	6	WAR ITEMS: On Friday afternoon the large iron screw steamer <i>Great Britain</i> embarked about 1,000 troops of the line at Liverpool, composed of draughts of the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, 2nd, 4th 5th, and 6th Dragoon Guards [<i>sic</i> : 2nd and 6th Dragoons], 8th and 11th Hussars, and 17th Lancers, beside about 52

		officers of the 9th, 17th, 18th, 13th [<i>sic</i> : 30th], 33rd, and 49th Foot. She has also on board a large quantity of 13-inch shells, and a considerable number of huts. At the same time the <i>Europa</i> steamer took on board 13-inch shell and huts, and a number of officers on the 55th, 68th, and 89th Regiments. They both sailed on Saturday morning [<i>sic</i> : the left on the following Tuesday] for the Crimea calling at Gibraltar and Malta. (<i>Bury and Norwich Post and Nottinghamshire Guardian</i> , 5 & 6 September)
11	8	ARMY AND NAVY: The large iron screw steamer <i>Great Britain</i> embarked about 1000 troops of the line at Liverpool on Friday afternoon composed of draughts from the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Dragoon Guards (<i>sic</i> : 2nd and 6th Dragoons), 8th and 11th Hussars, and 17th Lancers, besides about 52 officers of the 9th, 17th, 18th, 13th [<i>sic</i> : 30th], 33rd, and 49th Foot. She also had on board a large quantity of 13-inch shells, and a considerable number of huts. At the same time, the <i>Europa</i> steamer took on board 13-inch shells and huts, a number of officers of the 55th, 68th, and 89th Regiments. They were both to sail the next morning for the Crimea, calling at Gibraltar and Malta. (<i>Bristol Mercury</i> , 8 September)
12	15	<i>Great Britain</i> transport, (187), arrived on Saturday [15 September] from Liverpool and Gibraltar, with the following: – <i>For Malta</i> – Ensigns: Darvell, Irm [<i>sic</i> : Fry], Hutchings, McGill [<i>sic</i> : Magill], Shaw, and 4 soldiers of the 18th Regt., Assist-Surg Rae [<i>sic</i> : Roe], 92nd. Lieuts: Cumming and Grubbe, 9th. Lieuts Graham, Forbes, and Twining, Ensigns Baily [<i>sic</i> : Bally], Vaughan, Bayliff, Benwell, and Stratham [<i>sic</i> : Statham], 33rd. Lieut Cresswell, Ensigns Scott, Astley, and Field, 49th. Ensigns Elwyn, Smith, and Allardice, 30th. Ensign Townsend [<i>sic</i> : Townshend], 1st Royals. – <i>For the Crimea</i> – Lieut. De Bourbell, Cornets: Wynstanley, 4th Light Drgs, Cockburn, 11th Hussars. Webster, 8th do., Travers, 5th Dragoon Gds., Parr, 2nd Drgs., Marshall, 17th Lancers, Assist-Surg Drysdale, 79th, Lieut. McNeil, 13th Light Dragoons, and 613 soldiers of different regiments. She left the following day for the Crimea. (<i>Malta Times</i> , 18 September 1855; CO 163/38)

* August or September 1855.

Notes and references

The year for all dates is 1855, unless otherwise stated. The references prefixed BT, CO, and WO are in the National Archives, Kew.

- 1 WO 28/186.
- 2 N. Fogg, *The Voyages of the Great Britain. Life at Sea in the World's First Liner*, (London, Chatham Publishing, 2002), p. 77
- 3 This tragic incident is described in an essay on the Brunel Institute website: <ssgreatbritain.org/brunel-institute/research-articles-papers>.
- 4 Naval and Military Intelligence, *The Times*, 9 Aug. The *Saldanha* was a sailing clipper fitted out to transport invalids. She made two round trips to the Crimea and was paid off on 7 Apr. 1856.
- 5 BT 98/4096. The voyage to Liverpool was noted in *The Times*, 23 Aug. The proposed date of departure from the port was given as the 5 or 6 Sep. The arrival of invalids from *Great Britain* at Chatham was reported in the *Daily Chronicle*, 27 Aug.
- 6 *Derby Mercury*, 22 Aug.
- 7 Ship's log; National Maritime Museum: LOG/M/30 & SCD/2 and *The Times*, 5 Sep. The size of *Great Britain* determined that she could only leave on a spring tide.
- 8 WO 284/72.
- 9 *Malta Times* and *Il Mediterraneo Gazzetta di Malta*, 18 & 19 Sep. respectively; CO 163/38 & CO 163/14.
- 10 WO 28/144. No other reference to confirm that there were artillery men being on board has yet been found.
- 11 WO 28/142.
- 12 WO 28/159. This return made no reference to the 150 artillery men noted in WO 28/144. It is possible they disembarked from *Great Britain* at Scutari and joined an artillery depot on the European side of the Bosphorus. Given the siege was over there would have been little need for them in the Crimea.
- 13 WO 28/186.
- 14 *The Times*, 11 Oct.
- 15 WO 28/138. The original documents have yet to be found.
- 16 WO 28/142.
- 17 *The Standard and Morning Post*, 29 Aug. These reports gave the destination of Bruce's command incorrectly as Portsmouth.
- 18 *The Examiner*, 1 Sep. In the event this proved unnecessary as Sevastopol fell on the 9 Sep.
- 19 The other officers in the contingent were Lieutenant J. Buchanan, Ensigns J.M. Aytoun and P. Ridgeway, and Assistant Surgeon J. Watts; WO 12/9492.

- 20 *Morning Post*, 3 Sep., and other newspapers.
- 21 HMS *Perseverance*, Captain H. Harris, was owned by the government but manned and operated by the P & O Steam Navigation Company.
- 22 WO 284/72.
- 23 Own Correspondent, Gibraltar; *The Times*, 25 Sep.
- 24 *Daily News*, 31 Aug. The depots of the 6th Dragoons and 17th Lancers were in Canterbury and Brighton suggesting that the reference to these regiments may be an error.
- 25 WO 17/1261.
- 26 WO 28/185.
- 27 WO 12/4702.
- 28 WO 28/185.
- 29 *Morning Chronicle*, 5 Sep., and other newspapers.
- 30 WO 284/72 and WO 12/4702.
- 31 *Morning Chronicle* and *Daily News*, 27 & 28 Aug. The *York Herald*, 1 Sep. noted the report was copied from the *Manchester Guardian*.
- 32 *Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 13 Sep.
- 33 WO 28/142.
- 34 *Morning Chronicle*, 3 Sep. An empty 13-inch shell weighed 190lbs which means the *Great Britain* was loaded with nearly 6,000.
- 35 B. Cooke, *The Grand Crimean Central Railway*, (2nd edition) (Knutsford: Cavalier House, 1997), pp. 173–4.
- 36 Roger Fenton took a photograph of Brownrigg, together with two Russian boys; see S. Gordon, *Shadows of War: Roger Fenton's Photographs of the Crimea, 1855*, (Royal Collection Trust, 2018), pp. 132-3 and other sources.
- 37 *The Times*, 9, 13, 17, & 18 October 1856, and widely in other newspapers.
- 38 *London Gazette*, 17 October 1856.
- 39 *London Gazette*, 30 June 1857.
- 40 Rear Admiral C. Fremantle to Colonel the Hon. P. Herbert, QMG, 19 May; WO 28/184.
- 41 M. Trevor-Barnston (ed.) *Letters from the Crimea and India*, (Whitchurch: Herald Printers, 1998), p. 27.
- 42 Panmure to Storks, 8 Sep.; WO 1/377/f. 237 & WO 6/71/f. 261.
- 43 At the time the 2nd (Light) Brigade of the Cavalry Division under the command of Brigadier Lord George Paget were located at Eupatoria, viz. 6th Dragoon Guards, 4th Light Dragoons, 12th Lancers, and 13th Light Dragoons plus a troop of RHA. In all there were 'about eleven hundred sabres;' WO 28/142.
- 44 *The Times*, 2 Oct.
- 45 Marquess of Anglesey (ed.), '*Little Hodge*', (London: Leo Cooper, 1971), p. 137.
- 46 The monthly return for November was signed off by Fyler on 1 Dec.; WO 28/181
- 47 Scutari District Order, 2 Nov.; WO 28/103.
- 48 There was a short-lived epidemic of cholera in the district around Scutari at this time. For further details see M. Hinton, *Soldiers of the Queen*, No. 171, pp. 23–8 (2018).