Guide to the sounds and smells aboard

The SS Great Britain ended its working life in the Falkland Islands where it was used as a floating warehouse. All of the interior had been removed.

Everything we can see today inside the ship is a replica. This means it is built to look as it would have done in the past.

There are recorded sounds and artificial smells to help us imagine what life was like on the ship when it was sailing around the world in the 1840s and 50s.

This guide describes the smells and sounds you will find in different parts of the ship. Many sounds pass through the doorways and gaps in the floorboards, so you can hear them in more than one room.
Top Deck

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Chains rattling
- Cow mooing
- Pig oinking
Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Coughing
- Sneezing / Blowing nose
- Sniffing
- Hiccoughing
- Moaning
- Crying
- Heaving/vomiting
- Sound of water pouring into a can or jar
- Giggling—children or ladies
- Smacking a child
- Snoring
- Rustling of sheets/turning in bunks
- Humming a tune
- Tuning an instrument (accordion, fiddle)
- Tapping/drumming on the wood
- Whistling
- Squeaking of rats
- Paper rustling.
- Bottles rattling
- Liquid splashing/sloshing
- Sounds of washing clothes / bodies

You can also near a low machine humming sound in the background, which is the dehumidifier.

Artificial smells:

- Dirty linen
- Musty old inn
Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Yelp after pricking finger
- Light humming
- Creak of the bunk
- Boot tapping against the wood of the bunk
- Shuffling
- Whistling
Luggage cupboard

If you try to open the door, recorded voices will be triggered.

There are four recordings. Each time you try to open the door, a different one is played in a loop:

You best leave that be ay? I don’t recall your luggage bein’ stowed there friend.

I know what you’re about, move on. Do you think we Paddy’s are as dull as you’ve been told?

Oi gobernouch let that alone!

Hey you leave that be! And they call us thieves.
Cabin with newborn baby

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Crying baby
- Laughing baby
- Quieting voice of the mother
- Heavy breathing of the mother (exhausted)
Cabin with shoe shiner

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Deep sighs
- Rubbing of boots
- Coughing
- Light grumbling/muttering under breath
- Snifing
There are four recorded conversations which will play on a loop each time a sensor on the ceiling is triggered by movement:

Thomasine: Look who’s roused hisself! Out of his berth at last!

Margaret: (laughing) He looks green about the gills today, though. You got the morbs, mister?

Thomasine: The liquor he drank at the benjo last night! Pity, a steadier man might have made something of himself.

Margaret: Well look at that!

Thomasine: I’m surprised you’ll show your face after last night.

Margaret: (giggling) You still look half-rats to me.

Thomasine: And now you’ve a black eye to take to Melbourne. That’s going to give you a good character!

Margaret: Perhaps you’ll think twice, next time you take a goat as your dance partner! (both women burst out laughing)
Thomasine: Ugh! Look at her, have you ever seen such a driggle-draggle. And the way she behaved last night!

Margaret: Oh, but didn’t she dance well… I like to see a gay appearance.

Thomasine: I tell you Margaret, there are women of loose morals like her to be found in all ships, certain as the rats!

Margaret: What about the raffle today, Thomasine? There’s a lovely silver watch and a music box put up, I might have a throw.

Thomasine: I will have nothing to do with it and nor should you. The raffling, wagering and card playing that’s going on. You’d think they were all rich from the diggings already.

Margaret: Did your John get sold a dog then?

Thomasine: Did you say something dear?

Margaret: No Thomasine.
There are four recordings which will play on a loop each time a sensor on the ceiling is triggered by movement:

Get out of it! Stop loitering! Your shindy last night would have beaten bedlam! I’ve not slept two hours out of twenty-four!

I know you’re out there, boyo… and if you enter my cabin I’ll knock you in the head!

Be off, will you? I’m tired and sick of looking at your ugly face.

Oh, it’s you again, is it? Your conduct last night was the lowest in the ship. You need jacketing in the cow shed. Why must I suffer such drunkards, beasts and boobies?
The Galley

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- coals settling in the stoves and ovens
- crackling of fire behind closed oven doors
- swishing of the air being sucked into the coal fires
- occasional clattering of lid on one of the pots on the stove
- sizzling of fish on the grill
- cutting noise (gutting the fish)

Artificial smells:

- Smoky bacon

There is also a recorded, looping soundscape:

- A rat runs along one of the shelves - shuffling and patter of small feet
- The cook starts humming a sea song
- The cook shouts ‘Oi, Robert!’ and goes on mumbling to himself under his breath
- The rat runs along shelf again
- The cook continues humming to himself a
- Two rats run the along middle shelf
- The cat meows in frustration
- The cook turns on cat and shouts ‘Stupid cat, go after them!’ then goes on mumbling to himself
- The rats move along the shelf again towards cat. The cat hisses and the rats run away.
The Engine room

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Engine moving
- Stokers shovelling coal
- furnace crackling
- Shouts between the stokers

Artificial smells:

- Coal
The Ladies’ Boudoir

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Stewardess vomiting
- Someone flicking through a book behind the library door

Artificial smells:

- Vomit
The Promenade Saloon

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Sea Soundscape
- Ocean and the ship rolling a creaking through the waves
- Call of an albatross
- Sounds of crew working up on deck
- Dining Room Chatter (The skylight nearest the Ladies Boudoir)
- Barber Jones whistling
Robin Bright’s cabin

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Groaning

Artificial smells:

- Carbolic soap
William Jones the Barber

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Whistling
The Gambler’s cabin

A recording which will play each time the sensor is triggered by movement:

Ahhh I see you there…

So you’re the little “gent” whose been stealing my socks eh. Well you’ll not going to get away with it this time.

GRUNT AND SOUND OF A SHOE SMACKING AGAINST THE WALL FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY SOUND OF RAT SQUEAKING AND SCURRYING AWAY UNHARMED

Blast. That was my last pair.

Artificial smells:

- Rum
Next to Mr. Brunel

A recording which will play each time the sensor is triggered by movement:

Catherine: Mahala did you hear the news at breakfast this morning?

Mahala: No Catherine dear whatever happened?

Catherine: Well Mrs Wallcott had been called for her bath. But when she arrived she found someone had stepped in before her.

Mahala: No!

Catherine: Oh it get’s worse!

Mahala: Do tell…

Catherine: It was a man!

Mahala: But that side’s only for ladies! And gentlemen are to pump their own baths!

Catherine: That’s not even the most disagreeable part. He was from the… Fore Saloon

Mahala: You mean he wasn’t even First Class! Outrageous.

Catherine: It’s just as well the rogue locked the door, otherwise Mrs. Walcott would have been most poked up [Victorian slang for embarrassed].

Mahala: You can say that again! [both women burst into laughter].
The Dining Saloon—Lower Deck

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Sea Soundscape
- ocean and the ship rolling a creaking through the waves
- Dining chatter
- Laughter
- Shouts of exclamation
- Cutlery being used
- Glasses clinking
- Sound of plates crashing
- gasps from the ladies
- Tuning of instruments (scales and arpeggios)
- Stringed music
- Cards being shuffled

There are also three long conversations which play in a loop from speakers by the seated female mannequin, the cardbox and the musical instruments at the back.

Transcripts for these are at the end of the guide.
The Forward Hold

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Horses: neighing, whinnying, snorting
- You can also hear sounds from steerage above e.g. crying baby

Artificial smells:

- Horse manure
The Bakery

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- Crackling of the fire/ stove
- Cooking of bread

Artificial smells:

- Bread
Crew Cabin with a monkey

Recorded sounds you will hear:

- There is a motion sensor in the top left-hand corner of the doorway which will trigger the sound of the monkey glugging rum.
The Talking Toilet

If you try to open the door, a recorded voice will be triggered.

There are four recordings. Each time you try to open the door, a different one is played in a loop:

“Gazzuchs! This lavatory is occupied go away, push off!

“Would you mind going away? this lavatory is occupied already, just go away!”

“Excuse me this is occupied do you mind”

“Er would you mind I’m thinking”

Artificial smells:

- Urine
Transcripts of dining saloon conversations

Looping soundscape playing by the seated female mannequin:

BIDDULPH HENNING The roaring boys across the way are in lively form tonight, Mrs Robinson.

JOHN GRAY ...and then I was promoted to my present position...this ship is the future of seafaring and...

MRS ROBINSON I cannot share your indulgence, Mr Henning.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM That was a fine meal, sir...very fine.

MRS ROBINSON Is there no way to curb them, Mr Gray? As first mate your authority must surely count.

ANNIE HENNING Tut, tut, brother...I trust you do not look to them as a model for your life in Australia...that would never do! Whatever would Mama and Papa say?

JOHN GRAY Your concerns do tribute to your delicacy, ma’am...but they have yet to reach a level of inebriation that would require intervention.

BIDDULPH HENNING I have no doubt that they would mark it as a sign of my return to health...indeed, I do believe I should have taken this path sooner.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM Alcohol and the sea go hand in glove...the one calms the motions of the other...am I not right, doctor?

ANNIE HENNING Oh, my...then if I cannot reform you perhaps I shall be obliged to follow in your footsteps...and you believe Mama and Papa would approve? I cannot wait to reach land!

DR SICLER In moderation, Mr Higginbotham...in moderation ...as Democritus warned us, “Immoderate desire is the mark of a child, not a man”.

BIDDULPH HENNING Well, if the rumour is true, we shall all be waiting rather longer than planned, thanks to this dreadful weather.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM Democracy do you say? What has democracy to do with it? Democracy has no place at sea, I’ll be bound.

DR SICLER No, no...Democritus...the ancient Greek philosopher.

JOHN GRAY You’re right, Mr Higginbotham ...we do not vote on which course to take...one captain in firm command...that makes a happy ship...and Captain Matthews is a fine captain.

MRS ROBINSON I have heard that, too, Mr Henning...they say we may be a whole week late.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM A week late?
JOHN GRAY Please do not consider me discourteous ladies, but I could not help but overhear...I venture this has come from a passenger unversed in the ways of a ship of the modern age.

HE CLEARS HIS THROAT AND RAISES HIS VOICE

If I may have everyone’s attention...a moment if you would, gentlemen...

ROOM FALLS SILENT

I hear there is a rumour about our progress in the current heavy weather. The Great Britain is superior to any other ship afloat and I can assure you that we have been working hand aloft to keep her fine engine stocked. All being well we will reach Melbourne in less than 70 days. Thank you.

MRS ROBINSON Thank you, Mr Gray...I fear I have not the constitution for a life at sea...had I wings I would fly to our destination ...this turbulence is too much for me.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM Rumours and gossip, rumours and gossip...same on every ship...be a good fellow and pass the port, doctor.

BIDDULPH HENNING I wonder if Australia is as hot as they say...imagine having no winter coughs and colds.

DR SICLER If you are sure, Mr Higginbotham.

ANNIE HENNING My first purchase shall be a parasol...the one that blew overboard was so pretty.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM Sure? Of course I’m sure... damned fine port it is, too.

DR SICLER If you will excuse me, ladies and gentlemen...I have promised to spend an hour after dinner watching the gentlemen play cards at the table opposite.

JOHN GRAY By all means, doctor...but have a care...they are seasoned gamblers and there’s to be no wagering on the Great Britain...cards and alcohol together is one tradition for which I have no attachment...I’ve seen more than enough blood spilt...the company is right to ban gambling on board.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM I have not the patience myself for card games these days...it’s a fine bottle and lively company for me...now, when I was a young man you could not prise me away from the tables and...

MRS ROBINSON Oh! I’m going to be...please help me...this is insufferable.

BIDDULPH HENNING There, there, Mrs Robinson... breathe deeply.

MRS ROBINSON I should not have eaten the stewed pears.

JOHN GRAY Be assured, madam...this fine ship will outrun the storm in a few hours.

MR HIGGINBOTHAM I fear that it’s the pig’s head that may have done for you, madam...and those damnably excellent tartlets.

MRS ROBINSON A few hours!? Oh, but I am desperate...surely you can...oh, my dear Miss Henning.

BIDDULPH HENNING I do believe, Mr Higginbotham, that you take no little pleasure in the discomfort of others.
MR HIGGINBOTHAM I merely speak as I find, Mister Henning, with no...no thought of giving
oxence.

MRS ROBINSON Dr Sicler! Dr Sicler! Please come to my aid...oh dear me...

JOHN GRAY I recommend that you take to your cabin, ladies...dawn will find us in clearer
waters.

MRS ROBINSON But I cannot survive until dawn...I shall die...oh dear me...oh dear me...
Stewards table (box of napkins, cutlery and pigs head)

GEORGE LEWIS ...but you ’ouldn’t take one bite and leave it, ‘ould you, Tommy?

THOMAS GIBB I can’t imagine leaving anything.

GEORGE LEWIS Dip your finger in that...go on...no one’s watching.

THOMAS GIBB Whose plate is it? If it’s old Higginbotham’s I’ll not want his spit in my mouth.

GEORGE LEWIS It’s Miss High and Mighty’s ...way she carries on you’d think her sh...

THOMAS GIBB That’s alright, then... mmmm...why don’t we get vittles like this is what I’d li...

WILLIAM ELLAMS Have you seen Mr Hughes?

GEORGE LEWIS ‘e just come up wid more cases of champagne from the cold store, Mr
Ellams...they’re gettin’ through ‘em fast, tonight.

WILLIAM ELLAMS (To Tommy) What’s that in your mouth, Gibb?

RICHARD HUGHES Nothing, Mr Ellams...just a bit of bully stuck between my teeth.

THOMAS GIBB That was a close shave...he’s in a right lather today.

GEORGE LEWIS Don’t you worry ‘bout ‘e, my cocker...I knows fings ‘bout ‘e what ‘ould...

JOHN GRAY If I may have everyone’s attention...a moment if you would, gentlemen...

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in less than 70 days. Thank you.

GEORGE LEWIS Three more weeks it is, then.

THOMAS GIBB I can’t wait to see Australia, George...is it true what they say about kang...

GEORGE LEWIS Not ‘e again...thinks I’m ‘is own private skivvy, ‘e do...(He calls back) Two
bottles it is, sir!

GEORGE LEWIS Two bottles of champagne for table five, if you please, Mr Hughes.

RICHARD HUGHES. Two champagne, table five. George and Thomas continue clearing the
plates.

THOMAS GIBB What about the kangaroos? Are they really as tall as you and me?
GEORGE LEWIS Taller! They’re like damn gurt rabbits bouncin’ round, like... and there’s snakes and crocodiles, and spiders what’ll bite yer ‘and off ‘naw...still, wid aw that gold waitin’ to be dug up sgotta be werfit, annit?

RICHARD HUGHES Two bottles of champagne for the gentlemen on table five. He looks across at the gamblers’ table.

RICHARD HUGHES (QUIETLY) Another fresh pigeon for them to pluck...he’ll end up penniless like the others.

GEORGE LEWIS Get they a coupla clean glasses Tommy...no, make that free...

GEORGE LEWIS No...four...

DAVID HUGHES That one’s not clean, boy...give me another one.

THOMAS GIBB As you please, Mr Hughes.

DAVID HUGHES Duw!

WILLIAM ELLAMS Get up, man...(QUIETLY)...have you been drinking on duty again?

GEORGE LEWIS (ALSO QUIETLY) Not a drop, Mr Ellams, I swear...you ask Mr Hughes.

WILLIAM ELLAMS (QUIETLY) Let me smell your breath...right...I’m keeping my eye on you, Lewis.

WILLIAM ELLAMS Gibb! Fetch a cloth and bucket and clean this mess up before it’s trodden into the carpet.

THOMAS GIBB Right away, Mr Ellams.
MR WILLIAMS Forgive me for saying, Mr Wheat, but does not that A sound a tad flat to you?

MR WILLIAMS Would you not say, Mr Stevens, that Mr Wheat’s A is flat?

MR STEVENS It is my understanding, Mr Williams, that Mr Wheat’s hearing is less than perfect.

MR WILLIAMS How can it be possible for us to perform with dignity in such circumstances?

MR STEVENS At what time are we due to commence the entertainment, Mr Williams?

MR WILLIAMS I was given no precise time, sir...I believe it will be at the discretion of Mr Gray.

MR STEVENS Then I am sure we have time to prepare ourselves.

MR WILLIAMS Would you oblige me with an A, Mr Wheat? If you would be so kind...I fear that...

JOHN GRAY If I may have everyone’s attention...a moment if you would, gentlemen...

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MR WILLIAMS I would say that your A is somewhat flat, Mr Wheat.

MR STEVENS Now that it has my full attention I cannot help but admit that I find it on the sharp side.

MR WILLIAMS Sharp, Mr Stevens? In America, perhaps, sir. To an English ear there is no doubt that it wa... Suddenly, the ship lurches violently. They all let out cries of shock and alarm. Mr Williams grasps a pillar for support and drops his bow in the process.

MR WILLIAMS My bow! My bow! Don’t step on it, I beg you.

MR STEVENS Hold on tight, everyone. MR WILLIAMS Oh dear me...it’s the only one I have!

MR STEVENS Calm yourself, Mr Williams...I see your bow...all is well, sir...all is well
NELSON FEDDEN That is indeed a novel way of shuffling the deck, Mr Towle.

EDWARD TOWLE Most clever is it not, Mr Fedden?

JOE HODGETT Edward and I learned in when our business affairs took us to India this past year.

EDWARD TOWLE Are you well-travelled, young man? There’s money to be made in the East, is there not, Harry?

JOE HODGETT It’s what the empire is about... cotton cloth has made our fortunes.

NELSON FEDDEN And is Australia to be a new market for your wares?

JOE HODGETT If there’s a market there we’ll make it ours...we don’t wait for Fate to play its hand.

EDWARD TOWLE Will you join us in a round of whist, Mr Fedden? I always say nothing more befits a man of the world than a challenge to Lady Luck. JOE HODGETT These bottles are nearly empty.

NELSON FEDDEN I’m obliged to you for the kind offer, Mr Hodgett. It would give me great pleasure.

JOE HODGETT A few quiet rounds to begin... then we’ll make it a tad more interesting once the officers have left us for the night.

NELSON FEDDEN Why...why, of course.

EDWARD TOWLE Your guardian would not object, I trust?

JOHN GRAY If I may have everyone’s attention...a moment if you would, gentlemen...

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JOE HODGETT Can’t say I’d heard any such gossip...try sailing eastward round Cape Horn...then they'd know what heavy weather is... we’ve never known a ship this fast, have we, Eddie?

NELSON FEDDEN Mr Humpage is a friend of our family...he does not aspire to the role of guardian.

EDWARD TOWLE A penny a trick, then.

NELSON FEDDEN A penny.

JOE HODGETT Steward! Another bottle of champagne.

EDWARD TOWLE More, if it’s to your fancy.
JOE HODGETT Make that two bottles.

NELSON FEDDEN I’m sure a penny will suffice to bring colour to our cheeks.

JOE HODGETT Well said, young man. Now we need a fourth hand...that gentleman ...the German fellow you were talking to this morning, Eddie.

EDWARD TOWLE Dr Sicler...I invited him to join us at some point this evening.

JOE HODGETT Does he play? EDWARD TOWLE No...but we can teach him...if I can catch his eye I'll beckon him ac...ah...no sooner said than done.

JOE HODGETT I hear that you and your brother are men of business, too, Mr Fedden...you have letters of introduction, no doubt.

NELSON FEDDEN Our family have been merchants in Bristol for over 200 years.

EDWARD TOWLE Have they, now...well, manufacturing is the future, mark my words.

JOE HODGETT Strike out on your own, young man...we did and look at us now....our fathers thought they were rich, but we are the ones who live the high life.

EDWARD TOWLE Joe is right.

NELSON FEDDEN But we have no knowledge of factories or machines.

EDWARD TOWLE Then you could not find two finer teachers...and Australia will... ah, Dr Sicler!

JOE HODGETT Good evening, doctor.

NELSON FEDDEN Do join us, doctor.

DR SICLER Good evening, gentlemen.

DR SICLER Ach, mein Gott!

JOE HODGETT Hoorah! Hoorah!

EDWARD TOWLE Now bring on the dancing girls!

NELSON FEDDEN Jolly good show!

EDWARD TOWLE Just like the tornado in the Gulf of Mexico, Joe... remember?

JOE HODGETT Welcome aboard, doctor...do you play whist in Germany? We’ll show you how it’s done in England.

DR SICLER I shall be most interested to learn this game.

EDWARD TOWLE Well, first of all we begin with a shuffle.