



## Top 10 Facts about... Illness and Injury on the SS Great Britain



- 1) There were many different diseases and illnesses recorded on the SS Great Britain, including typhoid, tuberculosis, measles, and smallpox, but the most common was sea sickness!
- 2) On the voyage to India in 1857 the sea sickness was so bad amongst the soldiers on board, that the decks had to be washed clean with lime chloride, a type of bleach.
- 3) 140 people died whilst travelling on the SS Great Britain but there were also over 50 babies born.

4) The most common cause of death on the ship was tuberculosis with 16 deaths recorded. There was no successful treatment for the disease in the Victorian times.

5) On every voyage there was a ship's surgeon who looked after everyone onboard. They would treat illnesses, prescribe medicines, and carry out operations. During its working lifetime the ship had twelve different surgeons.

6) Victorian treatments used on the ship included giving patients alcohol, bleeding them, and even using mustard powder to treat those who had nearly drowned.



7) The ship carried a supply of smallpox vaccines, so when the disease broke out onboard in January 1865 Captain Gray ordered a vaccination session to prevent more people from catching it.

8) On a moving ship, injuries were common, with those working up in the rigging particularly at risk. On the 7 October 1875 a sailor fell 12 metres from the second yardarm and survived. A passenger wrote that he "walked away as if but little or nothing had happened to be alarmed about."

9) Not even the captain could escape injury. In November 1863, Captain Grey fell down a flight of steps on the ship and damaged his nose.

10) More unusual injuries recorded onboard include a storeman who accidentally cut off his ring finger opening a tin of herrings and a passenger who broke their arm throwing a piece of bread!