

ON FLAGS. I see from a recent edition of *Flagmaster*, the journal of the Flag Institute that the P&O flag, *Blue to the mast and white to the sky; Yellow to the deck and red to the fly*, has all but disappeared from the company's assets, with rebranding following the takeover of P&O by Dubai Ports World some months back. Originally named after its founders, Willcox and Anderson, the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company was created in 1840, with much of its trade conducted with Spain and Portugal, and thus the Iberian Peninsula provided the first part of its name although, in the 1830s, its activities spread to Asia, hence the Oriental in its name.

These colours were derived from the national flags of Portugal and Spain of 1840.

Apparently in 1822, the King of Portugal was in Brazil, a Portuguese possession after his family had escaped there from Napoleon. The King gave Brazil her independence and left the Portuguese throne to his infant daughter.

The King's brother, Miguel, attempted to gain the Portuguese throne and the King's daughter, Maria da Gloria, and her supporters fled to the Azores, and planned their return and adopted the Portuguese national flag of blue and white with their arms in the centre.

Willcox and Anderson provided ships to assist Maria's supporters, and the company also provided a loan from London and ammunition for Maria's Constitutionalist Party. After the Constitutionalist won and Miguel was forced into exile, Willcox and Anderson were on the winning side.

Other aid was provided to Isabella, Queen Regent of Spain, who was faced with what was known as the First Carlist War, an insurrection by her uncle Don Carlos and again, Willcox and Anderson provided loans, vessels and ammunition, once more choosing the winning side.

It was reported that the two Queens, Maria da Gloria and Isabella, granted the company the right to use the colours of Portugal and Spain, respectively, as their house flag. As the Portuguese colours had precedence, they appear first from the mast, hence the lines of the mnemonic, "*Blue to the mast ... red to the fly*".

Perhaps this is the best known house flag around the globe, flown by one of the largest merchant fleets, and which became used as the corporate logo on the company's vehicles, containers, depots, as well as its vessels.