

THE BIDSTON HILL

The *Bidston Hill* was a four-masted iron ship built in 1886 by T Royden & Sons, Liverpool, England for W Price & Co of Liverpool. She measured 91.89 x 12.82 x 7.48 metres with a Gross Registered Tonnage of 2519 and a Net Registered Tonnage of 2434 and was rigged with royal sails over double top and topgallant sails. She was launched from the shipyard November 1886.

According to the Shipping Registers, the 2433 ton English ship *Bidston Hill*, port of registry Liverpool, called into Stanley 28 April 1887 for repairs. The *Bidston Hill* was en route to Wilmington, California from Cardiff and had a crew of 38 under Captain LAMBERT.

In a despatch to London Office dated 22 May 1887 Frederick Cobb, Colonial Manager of the FIC Ltd, wrote "*The Bidston Hill, a new four masted ship on her first voyage has put in with the loss of nearly all her spars, that is to say she has lost the topmasts and most of her yards with sails and rigging. This a remarkable smash; I send you a photograph of her from the deck of the Great Britain. The expense of refitting will be enormous, and the Captain has put himself in Dean's hands under circumstances that I hope will be the subject of enquiry...I contented myself with selling the four sticks, as they lay, without guaranteeing their soundness, for £500. Then they wanted one of the Great Britain's iron topsail yards and her mizzen lower topsail yard, wood, for these I asked £100 and £60 respectively, at which they drew off for some days, but returned eventually for the wooden one, and unless I am much mistaken, they will take the other in time...It is a large affair, probably over £6000...It is a curious coincidence that the Aphrodite belonging to the managing owners of the Bidston Hill came in a few days later with their plates carried away and rigging damaged.*"



Dean's Jetty with Bidston Hill, Talisman & Gem - December 1887 - FIC Collection, JCNA

The vessel loaded with cargo moored at the jetty is most likely the *Gem*; *Bidston Hill* will be the four masted ship second from the left. I am unsure which vessel is the *Talisman*. Other vessels which were in at same time and may also be in the photograph are the yacht *Nyarza*, the *Ascalon*, the *Ocean Rover*, and possibly the *Cambrian* and HMS *Swallow* and the hulk *Great Britain*.

The *Bidston Hill* finally cleared Stanley 5 December 1887. Frederick Cobb wrote to London Office 19 December 1887 "*The Bidston Hill has left, after advertising for £9500, of course on Bottomy, the Company's supplies to her exceeded £830, a very small proportion of this enormous sum. It is necessary to be cautious in speaking to outsiders of such affairs; but I may say to you, unreservedly, that when a Captain comes in here absolutely devoid of the scruples that usually accompany honesty his business is one that the Company cannot touch.*" [FIC/D7 P553]

There is no record of her calling into the Falkland Islands again however she appears to have continued working the South American route, eventually coming to her demise off Staten Island. Letter received by Mr Harding, Colonial Manager, Falkland Islands Company Ltd (NB: as written):

Weddell Island

Oct 28 05

Mr Harden

Dear Sir

On October 2nd there was a life buoy picked up here with the name Pitlochry Hamburg and another i picked up on Oct 13th with the name Bidstonhill Liverpool.

There iss a lot of other wood coming up but brook very small but no sine of any cargo nor pieces of boxes of eny sort.

It was on the 26 of July the first sines we seen of it here.

I do no know if i orto report the life buoys to you or who i orto but you been the insurance agent so i thought it would be you.

I am ever yours

James Stewart

NB: The Pitlochry was a four-masted steel barque built in 1894. On 24-25 September 1905 she lost main topmast, and mizzen topgallant mast in a hurricane off Cape Horn and sailed under jury rig back to Montevideo.

The *Bidston Hill* was wrecked 31 July 1905 at Cape Furneaux, Staten Island. The chief officer, steward, four younger apprentices, an ordinary seaman, four sailors and the master, who had been injured by a fall from the deckhouse, went in the starboard boat. The second officer and the remainder of the crew were lost when the topmast yards and rigging came down on them when they were attempting to launch the port boat. According to the finding of a Naval Court held at the British consulate at Buenos Aires 20 and 21 September 1905 the immediate cause of the wreck was the failing of the wind when the ship was in a critical position on a lee shore. The captain, Captain Kendall was suspended for three calendar months for not having sufficient charts on board.