

THE BLACK HAWK

The *Black Hawk* was built at Camper & Nicholson's, Gosport in 1872 and operated the mail service between the Falkland Islands and Montevideo, Uruguay until she was wrecked at Back Harbour, Staten Island while on a sealing voyage in 1881.



The *Black Hawk* in 1872 in Gosport—framed photograph, FIC Collection, JCNA

The Shipping Register records: Black Hawk 110 ton British schooner under Captain J CAMPBELL, arrived from London 29 November 1872, British register with general cargo, 8 crew and 8 passengers. 62 Days out, "Company's (*Falkland Islands Company Limited*) new schooner to replace the Lotus lost 1 October 1872".

On 7 November 1875 three crew were accidentally drowned; the informant for the first two was Peller JANSEN, seaman on board the *Black Hawk* and it appears that their bodies were never recovered as there is no burial or grave record for them. The third crewman had a coroner's certificate and was buried 10 November 1875:

Thomas GLAVIN, seaman & native of Ireland.

George WILLERS, steward & native of Bremen.

William BULL, age 27, seaman & native of Exeter, England, buried 10 November 1875.

Despatch 209, paragraph 19, dated 12 November 1875 from Frederick E Cobb to F Coleman, Secretary, FIC, London states:

"I much regret to report that one of the Black Hawk's boats with a party of 4 men on a shooting party, capsized in Port William a few days ago, and three of the party, William Bull, boatswain,

G Willers, steward, and Thomas Glavin, AB, were drowned. Bull's body alone having been recovered."

Stanley to LO Desp 239, par 2 dated 14 July 1877 to F Coleman, Secretary, London from Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley

"I regret to say that principally owing to very bad weather the Black Hawk has been delayed longer than I expected. I look for her return from Darwin harbour above the 17th inst. and hope to get her away finally by this day week."

Notes on Black Hawk

The Hold. *This having been encroached upon, I make the following suggestions for its enlargement. The galley to be permanently placed on deck. The forecabin to be just large enough for six men. The second class accommodation immediately abaft the forecabin, and to consist of two two-berth cabins on each side, table and settees buckheaded off from the hold, lighted by a skylight and approached by a companion. But the galley would be in the way. Put the winch from abaft to before the hatch, and reduce the hatch, which is a large one, by a foot or so, so as to allow the galley, a smaller one if necessary, to stand abaft the hatch and clear of the fore-sheet hawed. The passengers must not have access to the hold, robbery has been the natural consequence hitherto. It is almost impossible at all times to provide accommodation for both passengers and cargo; the former when necessary must be limited in number.*

The Cabin. *The Sparrow Hawk's arrangement is more comfortable. The present companion and W.C. of the Black Hawk take up a lot of room in the body of the cabin, and the W.C. should not be for health's and decency's sake in the very center of the cabins. The after sofas are very uncomfortable at sea. I would suggest that you should explain what is wanted to an experienced cabin fitter, and get his suggestions. The number of staterooms required may be judged by perusing the voyage returns, and seeing how many passengers are carried. The two cabins on the starboard side are about the right width; the opposite ones perhaps a trifle large.*

W.C. *The water supply should be from an overhead tank, not direct from the side as in the Sparrow Hawk, because (1) a careless passenger may leave the water turned on, and sink the ship, and (2) as is the case in the S.H. when she heels over on one tack the water supply fails altogether.*

Bath. *Could one cabin have a bath under a berth which should turn up when not used as a cabin, inlet from side, and waste water to run into the timbers? The want of a bath is to me one of the greatest privations on board a schooner.*

Ballast. *If not too straining could she be ballasted with iron, so as to give increase cargo room?*

Ventilation. *I recommend a screw up scuttle in each cabin at the side which open in harbour would keep the berths dry, sweet, and wholesome.*

Bowsprit. *As this runs out very straight and she dives into a sea, it is suggested that it should be raised some inches in the knight-heads, this would necessitate the outwater also being raised to fill up the gap.*

Topgallant rail. *She is so built that when 16 inches by the stern she looks absurdly down by the head, this is caused by the great rise she has aft, while forward she is low and straight; the small rise in the bowsprit also adds to this. It has been suggested, and by Captain Dixon among others, that a topgallant sail & bulwark would be put on forward, tapering off to nothing at the fore rigging. This, it is said, will make her drier at sea.*

Spars &c. *Capt Dixon suggests double topsails, others recommend Cunningham's patent, which close reefs from the deck, and Pickney's, which rolls up altogether. Double topsails cause extra*

weight aloft, and two sails are not equal to one whole one. On the other hand the patent gear might get out of order, and perhaps could not be repaired or replaced here. The present fore topmast will do, but the main topmast might be a little longer, to carry a larger jib headed gaff topsail.

Lighters in Montevideo cause some damage to the vessel by bumping against her when rolling in the outer roads; can any thing be provided to guard against this?

Crockery. This even gets broken in the mail steamer, much more so in our little vessels. I should suggest your sending out several gross of good strong plates dishes cups &c with the Company's flag upon them, for use in all our schooners.

Ornament. Can a Hawk figure head be afforded? I hope the copper will be put on in a straighter line than before, as I put all the schooners in uniform with a narrow white line above the copper, and a rise in the middle looks bad.

When the schooner came out it was not certain that she was to be the mail boat; as she is now to be refitted specially for this service I hope all the cabin fittings will be put in as tastefully and well as the Company can afford.'

The *Black Hawk* departed for London, under Captain Dixon, 30 July 1877. [FIC/D4; 240]

Frederick Cobb 29 March 1878

Notes on Black Hawk

Much of the work on board has been stopped and has had to be done over again here in a substantial manner. It was not wonderful that the side scuttles leaked, they were put in in the most disgraceful way. In some the glasses actually rattled for want of packing, and the brass frames themselves were only partly bedded with white lead. I had two put to rights for a trial, and in a strong breeze during which they were constantly under water they were as tight as a bottle, so I opened the other two in the after cabins, and will let her go a voyage before touching the others. The scuttles themselves are not of the best kind, they should have been fitted with dead doors like those in Ridsdale's catalogue—plate 8 figure 15. It is most stupidly arranged so that every drop both of seawater or condensed moisture can run nowhere but into the bed, this I have altered by providing scuppers inside the scuttle. The consequence of cramming her with salt right up to the deck has been that a quantity above the level of the berths has been running out all the passage in the form of salt water, and has ruined a lot of the bedding. The pillows are almost as hard as the lumps of cocoanut with which she was first fitted out, was anyone ever known to be really comfortable with his head on a hair pillow? The fore cabin companion was very well in harbour, but utterly out of place at sea, where it is constantly under water in bad weather; no sailor can ever have suggested its being put where it is. The bath is I fear a failure for want of head room and the berths; one it is too small the upper one for any but the tiniest of human beings to squeeze into it. The cabins are too small for luggage, and the companion is so compacted that a medium size portmanteau has to be let down through the skylight. The skylights are badly fitted and leak all over, and the same remark applies to the deck lights some of which are put in without any white lead whatever. The extremes of extravagance and meanness meet in the supply of an utterly unnecessary awning at £15-10/- with stanchions extra, and of painted tin basins and chamber utensils! The foregoing are the chief criticisms that have occurred to me, in other respects the vessel is vastly improved as indeed she ought to be with an expenditure of £17 per register ton, more, I understand, than the price that ordinary commercial people pay for a new vessel of the highest class. [FIC/D5; 11]

Stanley to LO Desp 305, par 11 dated 11 February 1881 to F Coleman, Secretary, London from Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley [FIC/D5; 610]

The Black Hawk has returned from sealing with moderate success, having got 326 furs and a

few hair sealskins; she left five men on Staten Island, and has just gone to fetch them away; they may have some hundreds more, as they are on a pretty good rookery. Captain Campbell is strongly of opinion that the schooner would be undermasted if rigged according to Lafehorne's draft; this would be a pity, and you might consult Nicholson again on the point; the masts can be made here, and it would be better to make them too long rather than too short; as they and the rigging could be shortened if necessary, but not lengthened.

Stanley to LO Desp 306, par 9 dated 9 March 1881 to F Coleman, Secretary, London from Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley [FIC/D5; 618]:

9. You will have heard from Capt Campbell of the disastrous loss of the Black Hawk, a misfortune that I feel very much. It occurred through a total disregard of my orders, and I shall presently explain. Last spring received an order from Stickney Bros for a load of wood from Sandy Pt which I sent Mr Reynard, asking him to have it ready by 1st Decr. I arranged to send the Black Hawk to Sandy Point on the date, to call on her return at Spring Point, deliver the wood, and bring in a first load of their wool in time for the Ramses. As previously explained I gave Capt Campbell permission to look for seals between September and December, his schooner being at no expense, beyond wear and tear, and on receipt of a letter from Mr Reynard asking me to delay her, I extended this time for sealing in a letter of which I enclose copy. Campbell returned early in January, but to my great annoyance I found he had left 5 men on Staten Island rendering it incumbent on us to send him again to fetch them, in the middle of the busy season. In the first place he went to Staten Island entirely without leave, and in the second leaving these men was quite inexcusable. Making the best of a bad job I took Mr Harvey to Darwin on the 30th of Jany, and from there sent the schooner away with stringent orders to return as soon as the men were relieved, promising Mr Harvey, as he was so averse to riding, that she should at the earliest possible moment be at this disposal for a trip to North Arm. The rest you know: a desperate gale struck the schooner at 9pm on the 10th of February, and smashed her to pieces on the rocks, the same gale overtaking the Ibis between Sandy Point and Stanley at 11pm, and bursting over Stanley at 2am the next morning carrying away the Fairy's sails, as mentioned in my last despatch. Campbell's subsequent proceedings almost justify the supposition that his senses left him altogether. The idea of leaving 5 men on a desert island for the purpose of collecting spars, sails, and bedding, on wages, and making outrageous terms of payment for being landed at North Arm with a portion of the crew when he could have taken them all to Monte Video for nothing, was simply the act of a madman. The value of the property saved cannot be more than £20 when put up at auction, and to ?????? these men, a duty which will be passed upon me, will probably cost double that sum. I have gone through the form of advertising for tenders for wrecking, and of putting the vessel up to auction, but with no success in either case, and although I have as yet received no offer to go for the men under £100, I am in hopes of being able to report an arrangement before closing this despatch. If not, I shall be fairly at a loss what to do, as the Fairy & Perseverance are both fully employed.

10. I need scarcely say that I shall, under no circumstances whatever, place Campbell again in a position of confidence under me.

22. I have engaged the Felis at £1 per day to go to Staten Island, finding crew (4) and provisions. On her return the protest will be extended.

Despatch 583, par 8 dated 5 April 1881 to Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley from F Coleman, Secretary, London Office [FIC/C1]:

We can now understand how the Black Hawk was at Staten Island when she was wrecked, yesterday we received through Mr Humphrey's Capt'n Campbell's letter written at North Arm on 20th February (copy enclosed) detailing that the wreck took place at Back Harbour on the night of 10th Feb, he had left a boats crew for salvage purposes for whom you will have to send a vessel: Campbell was brought to North Arm by the American Schooner Adela Chase, on arrival at Stanley you will of course take care that he made a full & proper protest to be sent here as

soon as possible to enable the insurance to be recovered. The General Registrar of Seaman has sent notice that we are to furnish list of the Crew on the form herewith. The Board decided yesterday to build a Steamer, somewhat larger than the one proposed by Captn Seemann.

8 April 1881 to Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley from John Wright Collins, Acting Colonial Secretary [FIC/EG; 1#11]

With reference to the private message of the Governor to you this morning enquiring what steps are being taken by you to rescue the shipwrecked seamen of the "Black Hawk", who were abandoned on Staten Island, I am directed by His Excellency to express the hope that you have by this time made arrangements for sending a vessel to bring them away.

His Excellency is informed that the provisions left with these men must have long ago been consumed, and I am to say that any avoidable delay on your part to succour them will, in the event of loss of life, most probably result in a charge of manslaughter against you as the agent and manager of the owners of the "Black Hawk"

Desp 310, par 15 dated 16 April 1881 to F Coleman, Secretary, London from Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley [FIC/D5; 659]

I regret to say that Capt Campbell has returned from his cruise in the Felis without being able to reach Staten Island, and I have been obliged to charter the Foam, as per correspondence enclosed, to fetch the crew whom he with incredible folly left there. Not a moment was lost in doing this; but you will see by enclosed letter from the Governor that he was probably misled into believing that I was not moving in the matter, and I therefore may mention that I saw HE afterwards ad completely satisfied him, extracting from him the admission that it was through interference of another person that he wrote as he did. Of course until the men arrive the Black Hawk's papers are unavoidably kept open.

22 April 1881 to Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley from John Wright Collins, Acting Colonial Secretary [FIC/EG; 1#11]

I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to inform you that a formal investigation into the circumstances attending the loss of the Schooner "Black Hawk" and subsequent loss of life on Staten Island will be held at the Courthouse, at 11 o'clock forenoon to-morrow the 23rd April.

Police Office, Saturday April 23rd 1881

An Inquiry held by desire of His Excellency the Governor into the circumstances of wreck of the Schooner Black Hawk at Back Harbour Staten Island on the night of the 10th of February last and the loss of life attending the same.

Present Arthur Bailey, Police Magistrate
 Capt R C Packe, JP
 Capt Seamen, Nautical Assessor

33 pages of evidence taken from Saturday 23 April to Saturday 30 April 1881

Evidence given by:

Captain John CAMPBELL, master
William BERNARD, steward of Black Hawk
Edmond SIMON, mate of Black Hawk
Julius LUNDQUIST, seaman of Black Hawk, Swede
James M BOIDE, crew of Schooner Felis
William WILLIAMS (arrived intoxicated), seaman Felis
Frederick E COBB, manager, FIC
Captain Charles HANSEN, master & owner of schooner Foam
Dr HAMILTON, Colonial Surgeon

John ANDERSON, of Black Hawk, died.

[H36; 158o, 165]

A scan of the inquiry into the wreck of the Black Hawk is available on the Archives website at :
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/downloads/Shipping%20casualties%20wrecks/Black%20Hawk%201881%20-%20H36.pdf>

Despatch 584, par 9 dated 10 May 1881 to Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley from F Coleman, Secretary, London Office [FIC/C1]:

The loss of the Black Hawk is certainly most unfortunate, Capt Campbell appears to have behaved most stupidly and against your orders, the Directors quite approve therefore of your decision not to employ him again, we trust to receive the Protest as soon as possible to submit to Underwriters for recovery of the Insurance and hope the men will be fetched from Staten Island and the affair settled as economically as possible.

Despatch 585, par 3 dated 7 June 1881 to Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley from F Coleman, Secretary, London Office [FIC/C1]:

It is most unfortunate that Capt Campbell could not reach Staten Island in the Schooner Felis to bring away the men left there ex Black Hawk, we trust the Schooner Foam has accomplished this and that the next Despatch will bring Campbell's Protest &c to enable the claim on the Underwriters for total loss to be made.

Despatch 591, par 13 dated 11 October 1881 to Frederick E Cobb, Colonial Manager, Stanley from F Coleman, Secretary, London Office [FIC/C1]:

We have been troubled by applications from the Board of Trade for Returns of the Black Hawk's crew and an account of the wages and effects of the deceased Seaman, they are now attended to, but the circumstances mentioned as the Shipping Master at Stanley ought to have furnished all this information to the proper quarters here.