

## THE GENESTA

In 1886 the London directors of the Falkland Islands Company Limited decided to purchase a schooner to replace the *Nimrod*.

Despatch 676 dated 24 August 1886: *“The Board has purchased the Schooner Genesta 99 tons Register built in a superior manner for the Newfoundland and fruit trade by Mr Shilston of Plymouth for himself, but there not being much trade now he has sold her at a moderate price, a few matters have to be done to her at Plymouth which ought not to take more than a week then she will go round to Cardiff for 150 or more tons Coals Steam and fill up with building Timber, we understand that though a fast vessel she will carry a large cargo for her register tonnage. Captain Smith will take her out and the Directors wish him to remain in charge of her as his family is to join him hereafter. You will now be able to arrange for selling the Nimrod as the Genesta ought certainly to be away by the middle of next month if not before”*

Frederick Cobb, the Stanley manager, was not impressed. In despatch 423 dated 30 September 1886 he wrote: *“I doubt the Genesta being large enough, or having sufficient cabin accommodation. I wanted a schooner of 120 tons with a good cabin, and it will be unfortunate if she is a top sail schooner. He was also not impressed with their decision regarding a captain as he went on to write: “If Captain Smith is George Smith nephew of Mr Dyer he is an ass who is totally unfit for the position of master of a coaster. I don’t know that it is possible to adequately express my disgust, you say that the Directors wish him to remain in charge as his family is to join him, - a very curious reason. I should have thought that it would be better to consult me, rather than thrust upon me an individual for whom I have a personal aversion.”*

On 27 November 1886 he went on to say *“Who is Captain Smith that he is to have the privilege of a house rent free an indulgence never granted in my time to any of the Company’s masters? Even the masters of the Black Hawk when running the mail had to find their own accommodation when on shore. I have no house for this valuable individual, and shall have to build one. The crew I see are to be discharged and sent home on full pay at the Company’s expense—this is a new departure, and a wasteful one; I looked forward to having a cheap crew as usual for 12 or 18 months but everything seems to be done nowadays with a view to spending as much money as possible.”*

The Directors reported in despatch 677 dated 18 September 1886 that the *Genesta* had been delayed at Plymouth for various matters and that they had put up two extra cabins for Island service.

In despatch 678 dated 27 September 1886 the Directors reported that the *Genesta* was ready for sea and that they trusted that she would have a quick passage out.

The *Genesta* arrived in Stanley 19 December 1886 under Captain G S SMITH with 7 crew and was recorded as a seal schooner.

Frederick Cobb wrote back to the directors in despatch 427 dated 27 December 1886 *“ I have seen her from my windows, and heard a good deal about her, and I hve no doubt whatever that she is a splendid vessel; strong, faithfully built of the best materials, a good sailer, and in every respect admirably adapted for the pig iron trade; in fact for any trade in which weight carrying is the principal object. But, unhappily I feel bound to add that in every respect, for this coast, where a heavy cargo is about unknown, she promises to be a dead failure...”* He then went on to describe in great length why she was not suitable ending with *“I asked for a vessel of 120 tons, she is 99, and when she has got the ballast on board I shall be agreeably surprised if she carries more wool than the Nimrod.”* He then went on at further length about the unsuitability of the *Genesta*’s rigging and passenger accommodation for the trade around the Falkland Islands

and how fore and aft schooners such as the American and Nova Scotia schooners were most suitable for the local conditions. Captain Smith was also the subject of scathing comments about his sailing abilities, especially after grounding the *Genesta* on the north shore while manoeuvring in the harbour. *"I have made up my mind to given Captain Smith a fair trial, and still will do so, but I have few hopes of his turning out a success as a coaster. A man who has been accustomed to large ships and steamers is out of his element in narrow waters...I pinned him the other day to the admission that his trips to the Falklands consisted of three or four voyages in the Matilda, one in the Elizabeth Brown in 1868, and two in the Vicar. That is to say he knows Stanley and Darwin Harbour and the coast between, of the rest of the islands his knowledge is an absolute blank."*

By despatch 426 dated 30 January 1887 Captain Smith troubles had increased as Frederick Cobb could not supply him with a local experienced first mate and his relative, Captain Hoodless on board the *Selembria* at Port Howard, described him as *"the greatest liar that ever walked the ground."*

The *Genesta* fared no better once Cobb had been on board with him stating *"find her exactly what I expected. She has over 100 tons of stone and shingle on board, and yet she floats like a bladder on the water...She is nearly useless as she is"*

Captain Smith came under fire again in despatch 430 of 21 February 1887: *"...this superior creature is not satisfied with the food I give the schooner, but wants jams, fruits, apples, macaroni and bacon. He suffers from African fever, and rather expects to be laid up all the winter"*

The local weather proved too much for Captain Smith and he resigned and his agreement was cancelled as from 26 February 1887 and he was sent home in the *Selembria*. The same despatch mentioned that the *Genesta* had to have a new galley as the one supplied had already burnt out and the whole plan was too small.

Captain Rowlands took over command of the *Genesta* at £12 a month if for a short time, £11 for longer. Cobb described him as *"quite the best man in the wash now, and I am very fortunate in getting him."* On her return from a trip to North Arm Captain Rowlands report on the *Genesta* was not favourable.

In March 1887 the Directors gave permission for Frederick Cobb to part with the *Genesta* if to the Company's advantage.

In July 1887 the *Genesta* and the *Nimrod*, along with the *Chance*, were sent to Pebble Island to put across 3,000 sheep for John Dean after which the vessels were to go to Saunders Island.

On 7 May 1888 the *Genesta* was waiting to leave for Hill Cove to load for London Holmested and Blakes wool insured for £5,000.

On 5 June Frederick Langdon wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting a board of Trade enquiry held into the circumstances of the loss of the *Genesta* on her voyage to London from Stanley via West Falkland ports. The *Genesta* was totally lost 24 May 1888 on her voyage on with cargo for Holmested & Blake worth over £300. He reported in despatch 461 dated 7 June 1888 *"...an enquiry to be held into the cause of the wreck, which took place yesterday and resulted in a judgement that she was lost through an error on the part of the Pilot. I was present and must say cannot agree with the decision, four out of five men examined asserted that she struck on a rock not on the Chart at the least a mile off the Port Egmont Cays..."*

London Office replied 7 August 1888 in despatch 707: *“The wreck of the Genesta is most unfortunate as there will be a loss on her accounts as the insurance had been reduced: we regret that Messrs Holmsted & Blake have lost their Stores, you are to tell them that on Mr Cobb’s return he will endeavour to make some compensation to them on our behalf: you did right to have an Enquiry into the cause of the wreck as Captain Collard was not to blame we have allowed him £20 for the loss of his effects.”* They went on to say that they had purchased the yacht Castalia and were fitting her out for Islands service and that she would be brought down by Captain Collard.

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