

Shetland Archives

Customs and Excise Register of Fishing Boats

CE 85/11

Num	4723
Name	Petrel
1st Class	141
2nd Class	
3rd Class	
Volume	CE 85/11/7
Page	198
Date	18:03:1887
No	
Place	Lerwick
Owner	Peter Garriock, & others
Master	Peter Hawick
Fishing	Lines
Rig etc.	Dandy rig. Decked boat.
Keel	62
Built	
Length	
Breadth	
Depth	
Tonnage	52
Gross Tonnage	
Net Tonnage	
Men	10
Boys	4
Remarks	Cancelled 12:12:1888. Vessel wrecked on coast of Norway. [See also Petrel . -- Register of Shipping]

Shetland Times, December 08, 1888
PERILOUS VOYAGE OF THE SMACK PETREL
WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE OF THE CREW

ON Saturday week past we chronicled the fact that the Lerwick smack Petrel--Hawick master--for which grave fears had been entertained, had arrived at Bremangerpoll, on the coast of Norway, almost a total wreck, but with the crew all alive. By the last mail the following graphic letter was received by the owner from the skipper, from which it will be seen that the experience of the crew has been one of the most remarkable in recent times, and that their escape falls little short of the miraculous. The remains of the vessel, as may well be

supposed, has been adjudged a total wreck, and the mast and crew are expected to reach home by the mail steamer to-day.

DEAR SIR. ♦ I am happy to be able to write you once more, for at one time I did not think to do so. We got a foul wind after leaving, turning away till we made Udsire, and up by that we could not get, the wind being SE by S. and SSE., and blowing strong. We had been seven days under close-reefs. On Wednesday, the 14th, when we got our damage, we were hove too on our port tack when the sea broke on board and turned her right round about, bottom up, and righted us again, and took every- thing away, and left only the hull of the vessel. Both the masts were broken off by the deck; bow- sprit by the stem; stanchions and bulwarks away; hatches tore from the deck and away; deck beams broke, and part of the deck broke in, and all our provisions and water gone; and the pump was broke in two, half-way between the deck and keel, so that we could only get the water out by baling with buckets. The matches were all wet, so that we could not get a fire on, and all that kept us alive was a few raw potatoes and a piece of raw port, which we found. The bottom of the vessel is not making much water, now that she is lying in smooth water; but all the topsides and sternpost are sprung. As soon as we got sails over the hatches, and part of the deck broken, nailed down and made as tight as we could get it, and all the wreckage cleared away, all that we could do was to drift before wind and sea, the wind being SE by S. at the time. We came on for Shetland first, then the wind shifted to the westward, and continued at the W. and NW. until we got in here, on Monday the 19th. It could not have been long that we could have stood it, for, with the wet and cold, and nothing to eat, we were about the last of it when we got in. Everything belonging to us was destroyed with water; my bed clothes were found in the forecandle coal locker!

Shetland Times, December 13, 1888.

THE VOYAGE OF THE SMACK

PETREL.

**FIVE DAYS WITHOUT FOOD.
TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.**

ON Sunday last, the crew of the Lerwick smack Petrel arrived at Lerwick per the s.s. St. Rognvald. Since they left this port for Norway, the men have gone through a most terrible experience ♦ an experience which rarely falls to the chequered lot of a seaman. The crew consisted of Peter Hawick, master; James Hawick, mate; and Robert Mail, and Robert Irvine, able seamen. The crew, with the exception of the skipper, are all young men, and consequently upon him the anxiety and perils of the voyage have had a more telling effect. As we have formerly stated, no better seaman than Hawick leaves the Islands-- strong and fearless, with a cool judgement, and nerves like steel, he is a splendid specimen of the race to which he belongs, and it is undoubtedly owing to his skill and perseverance that the crew are alive to-day to tell their tale. Although scraps of information have been previously presented to our readers, we publish the following details of the voyage from the time the Petrel left Lerwick until she reached Bremangerpoll. No language of ours, however, can adequately describe the sufferings of the crew, nor can they themselves put them in words. It is

sufficient to say that it is the most trying ordeal through which any crew of Shetlanders has passed in recent years:--

On Friday, the 2nd November, the smack Petrel left Lerwick for Lynger, in ballast, and was to return with a cargo of ice. Moderate weather was experienced until Thursday, the 8th, when the wind steadily freshened into a gale. At that time the greater part of the voyage had been accomplished, and they were abreast of Jadderens Point, off the Norwegian coast. The wind continued to increase until Friday morning, when it was found necessary to put the vessel under close reefs. In this condition the vessel was tossed about until the morning of Wednesday, the 14th. Sometime she had been hove to, and at other times she was "ratching" ahead, first on one tack then on the other. Although the crew were taxed to their utmost, up till this time their vessel had behaved remarkably well, and they were able to get for a sleep occasionally, and they had a fire on board, and judging by their subsequent experience this was comparative comfort. On Wednesday, however, the sea was running extremely high, while the wind blew with terrific force. About noon, the dinner having been got ready, three of the men went below, while Robert Mail was left in charge of the vessel, which was then on the port tack, under close reefed main trisail, mizzen, and storm jib. They were then about seventy miles off Udsire. Shortly after the men had gone below, several very heavy seas were encountered, and then a huge wave right alongside. It was the largest sea, Mail says, he ever saw, and feeling that to stand above the companion was simply throwing away his life, he sprang down the cabin stairs, closing the companion after him. What followed was the work of an instant. The captain was sitting on the starboard side, and one of the crew was seated opposite him on the port side. The sea fell with a crash like thunder on the vessel, and in an instant the crew were in darkness. The skipper was thrown back over, and the man opposite him was thrown on top of him, while they were almost suffocated for the want of air, and the cabin commenced to fill about them with dirty muddy water. With a supreme effort the skipper got to his feet, and then realised that they were resting on the roof of the cabin, and that the vessel had turned over. Scarcely had he realised this when the stove and whole fittings fell upon him, injuring his back severely and rendering him unconscious for the time being. In fact, all the crew were more or less injured by the vessel turning over, and it was only through sheer necessity that they were enabled afterwards to do any work. Presently the vessel righted, although how she got on her keel again is a matter of pure conjecture. As soon as she righted, all hands made for the deck, and the spectacle which presented itself to them was enough to have made the stoutest heart quail. Both masts were broken off close to the deck, the bowsprit broken off at the stem-head, the bulwarks carried away, companion gone, hatches off, part of the deck broken in—in short, there was nothing visible above the decks except the windlass, and a portion of the winch. Everything was hanging a mass of tangled wreckage alongside, and the vessel was more than half full of water. It looked as though they had only escaped out of the cabin, where they would have been smothered in a very short time, to be swept away with the angry sea. But "life is sweet," and with an energy begotten of despair, the men fell to work. On finding that the pump had been broken, and would not work, two of the crew commenced to bail out with buckets, while the other two cut away the wreckage, which was threatening to knock the weather side of the vessel in. One of the anchors had become entangled in the wreckage

and was hanging alongside with fifteen fathoms of chain attached to it. Sails were then nailed over the broken part of the deck, and all hands commenced to bail out water. A quantity of oil having got among the water, the master is of the opinion that this was the means of saving the vessel, as during the operation of bailing the sea was comparatively smooth around them. To add to the misery of the situation, darkness set in, and there was no means of getting a light up, as the matches were all wet, the fires had gone out and to crown all the whole provisions had been lost. In such a position the men wrought on, with their vessel almost a complete wreck, nothing remaining but the hull, and that half full of water, without food or fire, or a place to lay them down, or even to sit upon, with a dark cloud-racked sky overhead, and the storm-maddened seas lashed to fury with the force of the wind all around them, they wrought on doggedly fighting seemingly against fate, until morning broke. They were then able to see that they had rather gained on the water, and during the forenoon they had succeeded in drying the floor of the forecastle and cabin. About noon the wind fell away, and the crew set about to let go the wreckage and the anchor, but they discovered that the port and starboard anchor chains had got "buckled" together, and they had to go below and clear the chains, which took some considerable time. However, that task was accomplished, and the hull of the vessel was then put before the wind, which had sprung up from a westerly direction. It was now over twenty-four hours since the crew had tasted either food or drink, and the pangs both of hunger and thirst were being felt. A search was now made when they found a few raw potatoes, a piece of pork, about one pound of material, and half a tine of preserved milk. A little water was also found, but it was principally composed of salt water. Only a small quantity of the raw potatoes could be consumed at a time, as it had a very sickening effect on the crew; but it was all they had and they were glad to chew a small piece now and again. When the wind freshened from the west, the skipper had hopes of being able to reach some Norway port or else to be picked up by some passing vessel. The manner in which the crew slept was as follows:--Each man was allowed an hour below in turn, and some of the other members of the crew went down along with him, assisted him to take off his clothes, wring the water out of it, and put it on again, and then lie down, or sit, anyway that could be managed for an hour. The skipper was of opinion that if anyone had been allowed longer than an hour below, in the wet and cold, death would have ensued, and the only thing which kept them alive was bailing out the water. Thus for five days they lived on from Wednesday the 14th until the afternoon of Monday the 19th cold, wet, and hungry, driving before the wind, and almost every sea striking the hull of the vessel at the stern and rolling out over the bows. Without fire, and with about five hours' daylight, and the rest of the time the sky and sea alike one mass of inky blackness, they struggled on, hoping against hope, and their sufferings during that time can only be imagined they cannot be described. On Sunday morning rain fell heavily, and an attempt was made to catch some rain water, but the spray from the sea destroyed it. On Sunday afternoon land was sighted, and keeping the vessel right before the wind, Bremangerpoll was made on Monday afternoon. By that time the men were about played out, and it is questionable whether they could have held out much longer. On entering the fjord, the pilot came on board, followed by Mr A. Hanger, the master of a Norwegian vessel, who took the storm-tossed crew ashore to his own house, gave them food, a glass of brandy each, and put them to bed. "If we had come into our own houses, or if Mr Hanger had been our

father," added the skipper, "he could not have treated us more kindly and tenderly than he did. We were cared for in every fashion, and such great kindness we can never repay." When they arrived at Bremangerpoll, the men had swollen very much, while with the constant baling the whole skin was worn off their armpits, while their hands, feet, and legs, had been slightly frost bitten, and the skipper's right hand had swollen until it had split in two places up the back, and the skin is now coming off his hands, arms and feet, and legs.

Captain Hawick has been at sea for over twenty-two years, and during that time he has had his share of bad weather and unfortunate voyages, but never before has he experienced anything like this: nor has he ever sailed with anyone who had ever gone through such an ordeal as they have passed through on this voyage.

The hull of the Petrel was left an Bremangerpoll, to be sold, and as soon as they were in a fit state to undertake the voyage, the crew proceeded to Bergen, sailing from there in the steamer Norge, for South Shields, where they arrived on Monday last week. They there proceeded to Leith, and took passage in s.s. St. Rognvald for Lerwick where they arrived as stated above, on Saturday evening, thirty-seven days from the time of their leaving.

[Register of Fishing Boats](#)