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Chart of the North Polar Sea

Stock#: 58324
Map Maker: British Admiralty
Date: 1855
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 24 x 30 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare separately published map of the Polar regions, published in December 1855 in London by the British Admiralty.

Oriented with Greenwich meridian at the bottom, the map covers the Arctic Ocean and Arctic landmasses adjacent to it.

On the verso are photographs of three famous paintings, The Arctic Council and portraits of Captain Penny and Sir Robert McClure.

In the center of the Arctic Council painting, on the table, an earlier edition of this Admiralty Chart can be seen in the center.

The Arctic Council



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The Arctic Council planning a search for Sir John Franklin is an oil painting by Stephen Pearce, painted in 1851. The original hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London, with a note that it was "bequeathed by one of the sitters, John Barrow, 1899." The NPG website describes the painting as follows:

This group represents the officials, naval officers and explorers most active in the search for Sir John Franklin (1786-1847). An expedition, led by Franklin, was sent out by the Admiralty in May 1845 to try to penetrate a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. It consisted of two ships, HMS EREBUS and HMS TERROR. The ships were last seen on 26 July 1845 by a whaling ship from Aberdeen between Melville Sound and Lancaster Sound in Baffin's Bay.

In 1847 anxiety began to be felt about the fate of the expedition, as no news of it had been received, and the Admiralty, advised by the people represented in Pearce's picture, decided to organize a search. In 1848 three expeditions were sent out: one under Sir James Clark Ross and Captain Edward Bird; a second overland expedition under Sir John Richardson and Dr John Rae; and a third to Behring's Straits under Captain Henry Kellett and Captain Thomas Moore. No trace of Franklin or his party was found. More expeditions were organized in 1850, during which Captain Ommaney discovered traces of Franklin's first wintering station at Beechey Island. Although other expeditions were sent from England, both by the Admiralty and by Lady Franklin, it was not until 1854 that Dr Rae heard from the Eskimos of Boothia Felix that a party of about forty men had been seen off the coast of King William's Island, on their way to the Great Fish River, where they had all perished of starvation. Rae obtained relics of the ill-fated party from the Eskimos, and received the government reward of £10,000 for this discovery.

The Admiralty sent one more expedition to search for the remains of Franklin and his party, but it failed to reach King William's Island. Lady Franklin, however, was not satisfied that her husband was dead, and in 1857 she dispatched, at her own expense, the 'Fox' under Captain McClintock. This reached King William's Island, and discovered the last remains of Franklin and his men, together with a number of relics and a written record which established their fate.

This portrait does not depict an actual meeting, nor an official body, despite its full title, 'The Arctic Council Discussing a Plan of Search for Sir John Franklin'. It represents ten of the distinguished sailors and explorers on whom the Admiralty called for advice, when fears for Franklin's safety were first expressed in 1847. However, they did not constitute an official body, nor did they collectively organize the early search expeditions, though the reports which



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they submitted led directly to the expeditions organized by Ross and Richardson in 1848. [\[1\]](#) The Admiralty continued to rely on the advice of these experts, which apparently was tendered individually. Barrow, who was one of the secretaries at the Admiralty and directly concerned in the search for Franklin, decided to commission a group portrait to commemorate the various search efforts; he chose Stephen Pearce as the artist, an old friend (see Pearce's *Memories of the Past*, pp 17-18). The resulting group is a postscript to what had already been achieved, rather than a contemporaneous view of the various explorers at work. It shows them in a generalized interior, and represents from left to right:

- 1 [Sir George Back](#) (1796-1887); in the full-dress uniform of a naval captain.
- 2 [Sir William Parry](#) (1790-1855); in the full-dress uniform of a naval captain.
- 3 [Edward Joseph Bird](#) (1799-1881); in the full-dress uniform of a naval captain.
- 4 [Sir James Clark Ross](#) (1800-62).
- 5 [Sir Francis Beaufort](#) (1774-1857).
- 6 [John Barrow](#) (1808-98); the donor of the portrait.
- 7 [Sir Edward Sabine](#) (1788-1883); in the full-dress uniform of a colonel of the Royal Artillery.
- 8 [William Baillie Hamilton](#) (1803-81).
- 9 [Sir John Richardson](#) (1787-1865); in the full-dress uniform of a naval staff surgeon with the CB.
- 10 [Frederick Beechey](#) (1796-1856); in the full-dress uniform of a naval captain, with the Naval General Service Medal.

In the background are represented portraits of Sir John Franklin (possibly the painting by Pearce, after a drawing by Negelen, in the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge), Captain James FitzJames, Franklin's second-in-command (artist and location unknown), and Sir John Barrow (painting by J. Lucas, of which several versions exist). On the table is a large map of the Arctic region, and various other charts, a dispatch bag inscribed 'Admiralty', two letters of sympathy to Lady Franklin from the two Americans responsible for the American expedition in search of Franklin, Lieutenant Edwin de Haven (the leader of the expedition) and Henry Grinnell, and another map entitled 'Arctic America'.

Pearce executed studies of eight of the sitters for 'The Arctic Council', Barrow, Sabine, Hamilton, Richardson, Beechey, Parry, Ross and Beaufort, which are also in the NPG (NPG [905](#), [907](#), [908](#), [909](#), [911](#), [912](#), [913](#) and [918](#)). These were purchased from Colonel Barrow by Lady Franklin, and were bequeathed by her niece in 1892. The studies for 'The Arctic Council' show the sitters in the same poses as in the finished picture, though not always in identical costume, but they are finished portraits in an autonomous setting, rather than rough



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sketches. In a memorandum of c.1899 (NPG archives) Pearce lists seven of the eight studies as painted in 1850; the exception is Barrow painted in 1851, though the study of Hamilton also probably belongs to that year. Pearce wrote (Memories of the Past, pp 52-3):

'I found that some of the distinguished officers were unable to sit to me at my studio in London, and as my canvas was too large to take to the houses of Sir Edward Parry and Sir John Richardson at Haslar Hospital, there was only one plan to adopt - viz, to go to them, taking small canvases. This I did, and a most interesting and pleasant time I passed at Haslar.

Back and Bird, for whom no studies exist, were presumably painted direct on to the large canvas. Pearce made use of some of his studies (which are mainly on board, not on canvas) for further commissions.

The group was finished by July 1851, and was sent round to Buckingham Palace to be inspected by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. It was then exhibited with Graves & Co, before touring the country. It was engraved by J. Scott, published Graves, 1853 (example in NPG), the engraving dedicated to Lady Franklin. At the RA the painting was accompanied by a descriptive key, a historical sketch of the various expeditions which had searched for the North-West Passage, and biographical memoirs of the men represented prepared by W. R. O'Byrne. The picture was generally praised, and Pearce himself regarded it as one of his best works (see for instance his letter to Scharf of 16 December 1871, NPG archives).

Sir Robert McClure

Sir Robert John Le Mesurier McClure (1807 - 1873) was an Irish explorer of the Arctic. In 1854, he was the first to transit the Northwest Passage (by boat and sledge), as well as the first to circumnavigate the Americas.

Captain William Penny

William Penny (1809 - 1892) was a Scottish sea captain. He undertook the first maritime search for the ships of Sir John Franklin.

In 1840 Penny established the first whaling station in the Cumberland Sound area on Kekerten Island, today Kekerten Territorial Park.



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Detailed Condition:

Several minor marginal tears and some soiling. Three photographs on the verso, signed in facsimile.