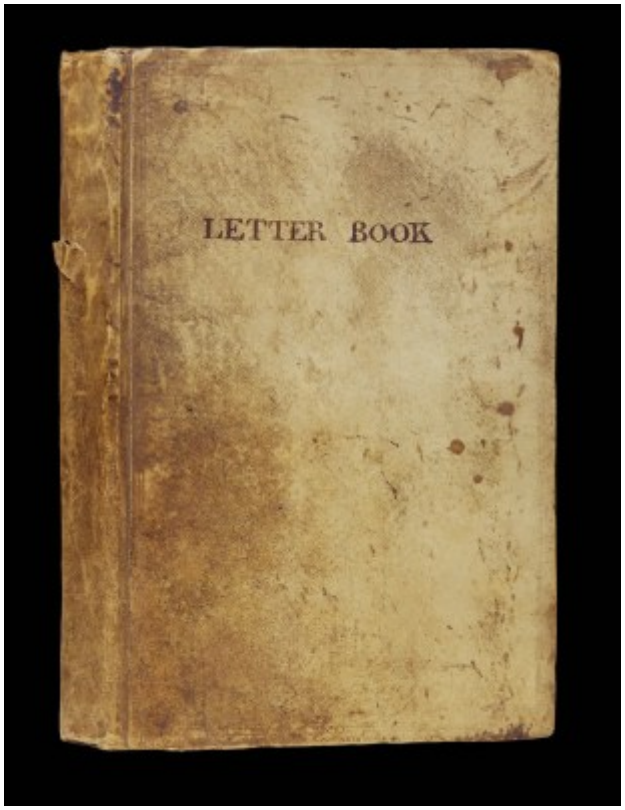


Folio (320 by 205mm), 175ff., the first 43 leaves containing manuscript copies of letters sent by Horsburgh and then, after his death in 1836, his daughter, Elizabeth Horsburgh (later Lane) to agents in Britain, China, India, Mauritius, and the Far East between the years 1817 and 1841, manuscript list of charts and quantities sent out to India and China between 1825 and 1835 to upper pastedown, original vellum over boards with flat spine, soiled, upper cover with simple double line roll tool borders, small tear to spine, ‘Letter Book’ in stencilled iron-gall ink manuscript to upper cover.

AN INVALUABLE INSIGHT INTO THE MAP TRADE AND DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OF JAMES HORBURGH, CHIEF HYDROGRAPHER OF THE HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY

[Copy Letter Book]

Author
HORSBURGH, James.

Publication date
[1816-1841].

Publisher

Publication place

Physical description
Folio (320 by 205mm), 175ff., the first 43 leaves containing manuscript copies of letters sent by Horsburgh and then, after his death in 1836, his daughter, Elizabeth Horsburgh (later Lane) to agents in Britain, China, India, Mauritius, and the Far East between the years 1817 and 1841, manuscript list of charts and quantities sent out to India and China between 1825 and 1835 to upper

pastedown, original vellum over boards with flat spine, soiled, upper cover with simple double line roll tool borders, small tear to spine, ‘Letter Book’ in stencilled iron-gall ink manuscript to upper cover.

Dimensions

Notes
A fascinating work containing copies of James Horsburgh’s correspondence regarding the trade in East India Company charts, between 1817 and 1841.

Upper pastedown lists the number of each chart, directory and atlas sent to China and India between the years 1825 and 1835, and the recipient of each. During this period Horsburgh sent well over 1500 charts, and in excess of 120 directories and atlases.

correspondence recording replies deals with the dedication of the silver plaque inscribed to James Horsburgh from grateful East Indiamen captains pp. ; correspondence Robert Wise (1834)

James Horsburgh (1762-1836) was born and raised in the coastal town of Elie in the county of Fife, on the 28th September 1762. At the age of 16 he entered the naval profession as a humble cabin boy. He returned from the Far East to London in 1806, and was encouraged by several noblemen, to publish his work independently.

The chart is based upon Horsburgh’s copious notes and surveys, which he had gathered over the previous 20 years. Many of his findings had been published in his ‘Memoirs: comprising the navigation to and from China…’ of the previous year. In both the chart and the memoir he clearly sets out his views on the vagaries of both surveys as, “only approximations towards perfection”, and the calculation of latitude: “An opinion predominates among nautical men, that latitude observations, when carefully made, are not liable to error. This opinion seems to be fallacious: for, in comparing the latitudes of various places, carefully observed by different persons, a disagreement of two or three miles is frequently perceived.” This scepticism was borne from personal experience when in 1786 he had been aboard the ‘Atlas’ as first mate, which ran a ground due to the poor quality of the charts on board.

James Drummond, head of the East India Company’s factory in Canton, and to whom the present chart is dedicated, was one such gentleman.

“I have recently received a letter from Mr Robert Berry at Port Louis Mauritius stating that he has some of my charts and Directories on hand which he fears will remain unsold as few ships touch there since the Island suffered so much by Fire, Hurricanes, and a Troublesome Governor” (Port Louis, Mauritius 28 Feb – 2 Mar 1818 one of over forty vessels which were sunk or went ashore in the harbour during a hurricane)

The text includes reference to a large piece of plate silver awarded to Horsburgh at Canton on 20th October 1818 by “the Commanders of the Country Ships now lying in this Port” (Canton) to the staggering value of 150 Guineas. A list of 20 Captains, together with the following inscription was to be engraved on the plate:

“James Horsburgh Esq F.R.S., Hydrographer to the Hon.ble. East India Company as a memorial of the respect and esteem they entertain for the vast utility he has rendered Navigation and Commerce by the energy and skill exhibited in Correcting the Charts and compiling the Directory for the Oriental Seas.”

Also included is a letter from Horsburgh to be presented in the event of his death, by Peter Auber,

“Secretary, E.I. House” to the Directors of the Honourable East India Company requesting that his wife and children be permitted to print impressions of charts engraved by him in order to complete the series of charts offered privately by Mssrs Parbury and Allen.

30th October 1823 – Letter to Nicolaus Fuss, Secretary to the Imperial Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg thanking the academy for the diploma and Honorary Membership bestowed upon Horsburgh, The news of the honour was relayed to Horsburgh by “My friend Commodore Krusenstern [via] Capt. Kotzebue”.

Bibliography

Provenance
Provenance: From the family of James Horsburgh.

Price:

Inventory reference: 2268

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