

Woodcut ticket.

PRINTED UPON THE ICE

[Souvenir ticket from the Frost Fair of 1814].

Author
[SAMUEL, George; after]

Publication date
Feb, 5, 1814.

Publisher
William Russell Birch and T. Thornton],

Publication place
[London,

Physical description
Woodcut ticket.

Dimensions
55 by 90mm (2.25 by 3.5 inches).

Notes
From one of the presses working on the ice this small ticket was printed as a souvenir commemorating the Frost Fair of 1814:

“Printed upon the Ice,
During the Fair,

on the River Thames,
in commemoration of the
Hard Frost, Feb. 5, 1814
In the Fifty-Fourth Year of the Reign of King
George the Third; and Third of the Regency”

The River Thames has been known to freeze over on several occasions, especially during the “Little Ice Age” of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, upon which the inhabitants of London took to the solid ice for business and pleasure. The most important of these “Frost Fairs” occurred in 695, 1608, 1683-4, 1716, 1739–40, 1789, and 1814. In 1684, during the Great Freeze of 1683-4, which was the longest in London’s history and during which the ice reached depths of around 28cm, the diarist John Evelyn recorded the attractions of the Frost Fair:

“Streetes of Boothes were set upon the Thames… all sorts of Trades and shops furnished, & full of Commodities… Coaches plied from Westminster to the Temple, and from several other stairs too and fro, as in the streets, sleds, sliding with skates, bull-baiting, horse and coach races, puppet plays and interludes, cooks, tippling and other lewd places, so that it seemed to be a bacchanalian triumph, or a carnival on water”.

Many of London’s printmakers capitalized on this carnival atmosphere by producing souvenirs of the great event. These included engraved scenes, portraits, poems and, perhaps most prolifically, personalized tickets, which gave attendees the opportunity to commemorate their trip onto the ice with a print bearing their own name.

During the fair of 1814, some printmakers actually installed their presses on the ice; their souvenirs, “printed on the River Thames”, were extremely popular. These tickets are all similar in style: they make clear that they were produced on the river itself, and several contain short verses to commemorate the event.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 18212

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