

Engraved chart on four sheets, mounted on blue paper.

## **STEEL'S RARE CHART OF THE INDIAN OCEAN**

**To the Honourable the Court of Directors of the United Company of Merchants, Trading to the East Indies. Steel's New Chart of the Indian and Pacific Oceans; from the Cape of Good Hope to Canton and New Zeeland**

### **Author**

STEEL, [Penelope]; NORIE, J[ohn] W[illiam]

### **Publication date**

July 1832; Corrected to 1833.

### **Publisher**

J. W. Norie and Co.,

### **Publication place**

London,

### **Physical description**

Engraved chart on four sheets, mounted on blue paper.

### **Dimensions**

1330 by 1000mm (52.25 by 39.25 inches).

### **Notes**

During the nineteenth century, the British Empire was approaching its peak, with territories and subjects spanning the entire globe. As such, this period saw a huge surge in the production and purchase of nautical instruments and navigational charts. To meet this demand, British mapmakers and sellers began to publish charts backed on distinctive blue manila paper, which strengthened them for practical use aboard a ship, as well as cutting costs, as the charts could be printed on lower-quality paper and then inexpensively reinforced with the ubiquitous blue backing. These charts came to be known as 'Bluebacks', and remained popular until the late nineteenth century, when the British Admiralty began issuing superior, uniform charts on high-quality paper.

One of the lesser known producers of 'Bluebacks' was Penelope Steel, the widow of noted publisher, engraver, instrument-seller, bookseller and bookbinder, David Steel, who continued his business after his death. Shortly after, Penelope married William Mason and moved the business to Tower Hill. During the 1810s a lack of new charts and the loss of a valuable employee to the rival Laurie and Whittle firm, Penelope entered into a new partnership with Stanley Goddard who later became her third husband. By 1819, however, Steel and Goddard went bankrupts and their stock was acquired by John Norie. Norie (1772-1843) was an important hydrographer, chartmaker and publisher, as also a writer on navigation and publisher of nautical manuals, as well as selling globes and all manner of nautical instruments. He was agent for the sale of Admiralty charts, and chart seller to the East India Company and Trinity House.

Norie continued to publish Steel's charts including the present four-sheet blueback chart of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, focusing on the trading routes from the east coast of Africa to Canton and

New Zealand. Depth soundings and toponyms are given across the map; underwater obstacles are also identified and there are warnings about “little known” areas. It also includes an early label of “Town” at Singapore. Extremely rare: the National Library of Australia holds an examples of the 1813 edition of 1813 and also the upper half of the 1844 edition, but no other institutional copies have been located.

## **Bibliography**

## **Provenance**

**Price:** £2000

**Inventory reference:** 15775

© Daniel Crouch Rare Books Ltd | 2025