



Engraved chart hand-coloured in outline, extensive manuscript annotations, mounted on linen, edged in blue silk, ownership inscription to verso.

CHARTING VOYAGES TO INDIA AND CHINA

To the Officers in the Honourable East India Company's Service This Outline Chart Intended for their Use to Prick Off a Ship's Track Is most respectfully dedicated by their Obligated and Grateful Servant, W. Heather. A New Edition, 1815, Revised and Corrected by J.W. Norie.

Author

HEATHER, William [and], J[ames] W[illiam] NORIE

Publication date

Sept. 12th, 1812. [but] 1815.

Publisher

Published, as the Act directs, by W. Heather, at the Navigation Warehouse, No. 157, Leadenhall Street,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Engraved chart hand-coloured in outline, extensive manuscript annotations, mounted on linen, edged in blue silk, ownership inscription to verso.

Dimensions

670 by 1220mm. (26.5 by 48 inches).

Notes

Rare chart published for use aboard East India Company ships, in order to mark a ships track. The present chart was owned by Captain William Majoribanks, who captained H.C.S. (Honourable Company's Ship) Thomas Coutts from 1817 to 1819.

The 'Thomas Coutts' was built by Frances Barnard, Son & Roberts, in the Blackwall yard for Stewart Marjoribanks, a merchant involved with the East India Company. She was launched on the 17th September 1817 under the name of 'Thomas Coutts'; with a tonnage of 1424 9/94, and dimensions of 138 by 43.4 by 17.1 feet. The East India Company chartered her on the 31st December 1817. Her first two voyages were under the command of Captain William Marjoribanks, who was relieved of command on the 31st December by Captain Alexander Chrystie. She made eight voyages between 1817 and 1833 under the auspices of the East India Company. Although no longer chartered by the Company after 1833, she continued to make regular runs to India and China up until 1845. In 1841 she was sold to famous ship-owner Joseph Soames, and in 1845 was broken up.

The chart marks the voyages of several East Indiamen: H.C.S. Thomas Coutts (1818-1819); H.C.S. Carn Brea Castle (1826) and two partial tracks of H.C.S. General Harris (1820-1821) H.C.S. Asia (1820-1821). The Carn Brea Castle's voyage is extensively recorded in two manuscript tables. The voyage of H.C.S. Kingston (1821) is also recorded in a table but its course is not plotted.

The East India Company operated under a variety of names from its founding in 1600 until it was dissolved in 1874. It was formed to maximise British trading opportunities in southeast Asia, particularly the Indian subcontinent, and eventually expanded to manage trade with China and the far east as well. Although nominally a body to regular and exploit trade, the East India Company became increasingly involved in politics over the course of the eighteenth century, and as a result was often faced with opposition. Nonetheless its powerful influence continued to be felt, and it held a monopoly over trade until well into the nineteenth century.

At the time the present chart was made, the East India Company was still at its height, with a private army around twice the size of the British military forces, and with extraordinary revenues of many millions of pounds. In fact, large swathes of India were effectively ruled by the Company through the use of its private army. With ships constantly sailing back and forth between Britain and Asia, it was essential to ensure smooth and efficient passages. To this end, blank charts were produced for the sailors of the East India Company, which they could use as a template to plot their tracks through the sea. The present example identifies ports and harbours at which the ships might wish to stop off, as well as various shoals and reefs that could prove to be dangerous obstacles for the unwary seaman.

It was published by John William Norie (1772 - 1843), a mathematician, hydrographer, chart maker and publisher of nautical books. His most famous work was the 'Epitome of Practical Navigation' (1805), which became the standard work on navigation and went through many editions. Norie began his career working with William Heather, who ran the Naval Academy and Naval Warehouse in Leadenhall Street from 1795, which sold navigational instruments, charts, and books on navigation. Norie took over the Naval Warehouse after Heather's retirement and founded the company J.W. Norie and Company in 1813. After Norie's death the company became Norie and Wilson, then in 1903 Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 24178

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