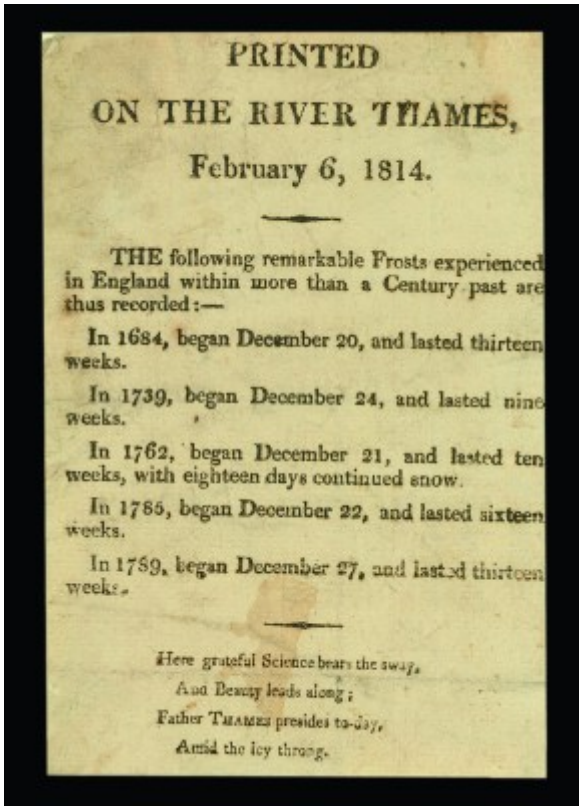


PRINTED

ON THE RIVER THAMES,

February 6, 1814.

THE following remarkable Frosts experienced in England within more than a Century past are thus recorded:—

In 1684, began December 20, and lasted thirteen weeks.

In 1739, began December 24, and lasted nine weeks.

In 1762, began December 21, and lasted ten weeks, with eighteen days continued snow.

In 1785, began December 22, and lasted sixteen weeks.

In 1789, began December 27, and lasted thirteen weeks.

Here grateful Science bears the sway,
And Beauty leads along;
Father THAMES presides to-day,
Amid the icy throng.

Woodcut handbill.

"FATHER THAMES PRESIDES TODAY..."

[Souvenir handbill from the Frost Fair of 1814].

Author
[ANONYMOUS]

Publication date
February 6, 1814.

Publisher

Publication place
River Thames,

Physical description
Woodcut handbill.

Dimensions
137 by 94mm (5.5 by 3.75 inches).

Notes
This handbill, printed on the frozen River Thames during the Frost Fair of 1814, records previous great frosts: 1684, which lasted thirteen weeks; 1739, which lasted nine weeks; 1762, which lasted "only" eighteen days; 1785, which lasted sixteen weeks; and the frost of 1789, which lasted thirteen weeks. Beneath this information a short verse pays hommage to the weather:

"Here grateful Science bears the sway,

And Beauty leads along;
Father Thames presides to-day,
Amid the icy throng".

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: 18217

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