

Engraved chart, on two sheets, joined, lighthouses and beacons picked out in yellow and red, chartseller’s stamp centre-left, backed on blue paper, some staining.

THE CELEBES SEA

East India Archipelago (Eastern Passages to China and Japan) Chart No.4.

Author
IMRAY, James F[rederick]

Publication date
1892. Corrected to 1894.

Publisher
James Imray & Son, 89 and 89a Minories,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Engraved chart, on two sheets, joined, lighthouses and beacons picked out in yellow and red, chartseller’s stamp centre-left, backed on blue paper, some staining.

Dimensions
1270 by 1040mm. (50 by 41 inches).

Notes
Detailed chart of the Sea of Celebes, published by the leading chart seller of his day James Imray.

The chart centres on the Celebes Sea, bordered by Borneo to the west, Sulawesi to the south, and

Mindanao (the Philippines) to the north. and from north to south from the Red Sea to Kerguelen Island. The chart marks soundings, hazards of the sea, and the position of lighthouses (highlighted in red and yellow), with principal ports and rivers marked. Below the title is an inset chart of the Kudat harbour, together with an explanation, the letters P.D. on the chart signifying ‘position doubtful’ and ‘?’ ‘uncertain and doubtful’. Imray has also added a plea: “The publisher’s respectfully request communications that may tend to the improvement of this or any other of their works”. This together with blue stamp showing that the chart had been updated to 1894, was a somewhat forlorn attempt to keep up with and compete, with the more accurate Admiralty charts, which by the late nineteenth century had begun to take more and more of Imray’s business.

James Imray (1803-1870), worked originally in the stationery and account book publishing business. In 1836, Imray joined with the chartmaker Michael Blachford. The partnership flourished and soon began to compete with the larger firm of Norie and Wilson. In 1846 Imray bought out Blachford. By the time of James’s death in 1870 the business had become the leading commercial chart publisher of its day. The business was carried on by his eldest son, James Frederick Imray (1829–1891). James Frederick had become a partner in the book and instrument sides of the business, in 1854, and the firm had changed its name to James Imray & Son. The 1870s would represent the high-water mark of the firm, with no less than three locations associated with the company: charts were produced at 89 Minories; 102 Minories was a saleroom for charts and books, and the nautical academy; and 1 Postern Row was a shop selling instruments. Alas James Frederick’s tenure led to the firm’s gradual decline, who lacked both the business acumen and the chart making knowledge of his father, with few new charts being commissioned. James Frederick also faced stiff competition from the Admiralty, whose charts, though more expensive, and less popular with merchant vessels, where being vigorously promoted by the Board of Trade as more accurate and reliable. Upon his death, in 1891, the business (his children being underage) was run by two employees, Alfred Imray (James’s cousin), and Henry Jenkins, until the brothers James Cutbill and Herbert Parbury came of age. However, with trading conditions increasingly tricky it was no surprise that when, in 1899, the firm of Norie and Wilson approached the two young men with the proposal for amalgamation that they readily accepted.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £1000

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