

SUPPLEMENTARY
MATERIAL TO ACCOMPANY
*A LETTER FROM
THE ANTARCTIC*

COMPILED BY

Robert B. Stephenson

JAFFREY: THE EREBUS & TERROR PRESS

2020

CONTENTS

- Entry on J. E. Davis from John Stewart's *Antarctica An Encyclopedia*, 2011.
- First page of Ann Savours' TWO UNPUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF THE BRITISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION, 1839-48. [Page 587, *The Polar Record*, Volume 10, Number 69, September 1961.]
- Entry for *A Letter from the Antarctic* from Michael H. Rosove's *Antarctica, 1772-1922 Freestanding Publications through 1999*.
- Some paintings by J. E. Davis:
 - Cape Lockyer, discovered by H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, January 7th 1843.
 - H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, January 20th, 1842, in Latitude 66°.37' South, Longitude 159°.48' West.
 - H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* in the Ross Sea.
 - Mount Sabine in Latitude 71°.50' South and Longitude 169°.00' East - West 40 miles —Discovered by H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* Jany 11th 1841.
 - Mount Sabine in Latitude 71° 50' South and Longitude 169° 0' East - West 40 miles - Discovered by H.M Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* January 11th 1841.
 - A celebration (?New Years day) on the ice, illustrating the crew members (mostly dresses in blue) dancing and playing music, parading and eating at tables cut from the ice, beneath signs ("Pilgrims of the Ocean" and "Erebus and Terror"), the Royal Standard and others flags, an ice sculpture in the foreground, one of the ships in the background.
 - 'Coulman Island' showing *Erebus* and *Terror*.
- Illustrations by J. E. Davis in *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions, during the years 1839-43*.

DAVIS, JOHN EDWARD. b. Aug. 9, 1815, in Alverstoke, Hants, son of Henry Davis and his wife Emily Dobbins. He entered the RN on July 5, 1828 as a 2nd class volunteer, on board the *Pearl*, stationed off the coast of Ireland. From June 1831 to May 1837 he served in South America, as master's assistant on the *Samarang* and the *Blonde*. While on the latter, in 1835, he became 2nd master and was loaned to the *Beagle* for that ship's first South American survey. After some months on the *Comus*, he was 2nd master, cartographer, surveyor and draftman [sic; the word used then for a government employed artist] on the *Terror*, during Ross Antarctic Expedition 1839-43, and became a good friend of Joseph Dalton Hooker. On his return from the expedition he was promoted to master in Oct. 1843, and appointed assistant surveyor on the west coast of Ireland. In 1844, at Alverstoke, he married Mary and they lived in Greenwich. From 1853 he was engaged in surveying the south coast of England and the Orkneys. In 1860 he went on a deep-sea sounding expedition off the Irish coast, and in 1862 became naval assistant to the Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty, where he developed deep sea thermometers that formed the basis of those used later on the *Challenger* expedition. He also invented an improved astronomical sextant, and new techniques for deep-sea sounding. In June 1863 he was promoted to staff commander, and in 1870 to staff captain, when he was retired from the Navy List. He retired from the Hydrographic Office on Jan. 1, 1877, and died of a heart attack on Jan. 30, that year, at his home, Douglas House, in Greenwich.

Stewart, John. *Antarctica An Encyclopedia*, 2011.

TWO UNPUBLISHED
ACCOUNTS OF THE BRITISH
ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION,
1839-48

[MS. received 9 February 1960.]

[The British Antarctic Expedition, 1839-43, consisted of two Naval vessels, H.M.S. *Erebus* and *Terror*, with Sir James Clark Ross as leader and Captain P. R. M. Crozier as second-in-command. The objects of the expedition were mainly concerned with terrestrial magnetism, a subject of particular interest to Ross who had discovered the North Magnetic Pole in 1831. The expedition circumnavigated the Antarctic continent and made a number of important geographical discoveries. It twice penetrated the pack ice of the Ross Sea; it discovered, and roughly charted, 500 miles of new coastline in Victoria Land; it discovered Ross Island and the Ross Ice Front, also the James Ross Island group; it visited Prince Edward Islands, lies Crozet and lies Kerguelen; and it sighted Joinville Island and the Balleny Islands. Observations of terrestrial magnetism were made from stations, either permanent or temporary, set up during the voyage.

There are two main published accounts of the voyage, by Ross¹ and by Robert M'Cormick, surgeon aboard H.M.S. *Erebus*.² There are also two less-known narratives, both of which were extensively used by H. R. Mill in his *Siege of the South Pole*³ and which came to the Scott Polar Research Institute on his death. The first is a letter from J. E. Davis, second master of H.M.S. *Terror*, to his sister, later printed⁴ for private circulation. It describes the second expedition to the Ross Sea, which left New Zealand in November 1841.

In reproducing this account, the illustrations and a number of personal references and reflections have been omitted. The other, an unpublished manuscript, is by C. J. Sullivan, Irish blacksmith of H.M.S. *Erebus* and appears to have been written for a shipmate who joined the expedition towards its close; it covers the discovery of Victoria Land during the first voyage to the Ross Sea, in January 1841, as well as incidents during the second voyage to the Ross Sea. The whole of the prose section of this manuscript is reproduced below.

The two narratives, often describing the same events, form an interesting reflection of the talents and backgrounds of the two men. Davis was an educated man, able to express himself in clear, if somewhat verbose, prose, and, in addition, an artist and draughtsman of considerable merit. Sullivan possessed little knowledge of grammar or spelling but wrote with spirit, using a surprisingly wide vocabulary. Occasionally he felt himself confined by his inarticulate pen, and wishes he could draw or paint scenes he cannot trust himself to describe in words; he then turns to poetry and finds relief in a remarkable faculty for bad verse, humorous and solemn, but not meriting reproduction.

The illustrations are of watercolours by Davis himself, now in the Scott Polar Research Institute.⁶

References

¹ JAMES CLARK ROSS. *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions during the Years 1839-43*. London, 1847.

² ROBERT M'CORMICK. *Voyages of Discovery in the Arctic and Antarctic seas...* London, 1884.

³ H. R. MILL. *Siege of the South Pole*. London, 1905.

⁴ J. E. DAVIS. *A Letter from the South Pole*. Printed for private circulation, 1901. [Title is actually *A Letter from the Antarctic*.]

⁵ SPRI MS. 861/22.

⁶ SPRI 58/5/1-6.

Ann Savours]

[Page 587, *The Polar Record*, Volume 10, Number 69, September 1961.]

85. DAVIS, J. E. [JOHN EDWARD DAVIS]
(1815-77) *A Letter from the Antarctic.*

1st edition.

85.A1. London: William Clowes & Sons, 1901. Printed for Private Circulation. 21.4 cm. A2 on p. 3, A3 on p. 9, A4 on p. II, A5 on p. 17. pp. 38, I, (I); frontispiece ["Captain John Edward Davis, R.N."]. 4 sketches in text. — Denucé 2549 (erroneous attribution to Scott's 1901-4 expedition), AB-USN 23-53.12 (with the Denucé error), Spence 352, Conrad p. 59. *Very rare.*

a. Dark blue cloth, spine plain, front cover lettered in gilt with blind outer double rectangular border, rear board similarly blind stamped, all edges gilt, yellow endpapers. — Copies: BL (inscribed "Master Cox with compliments from the author's son Percy L H Davis 1902"), SPRI (inscribed "Hugh R. Mill Esq with compliments from the writer's son. Percy L. H. Davis. London 1902."), 7 (inscribed "To May Davis from her brother PLHD").

b. Blue paper wrappers, printed with title on front cover. — Copies: 50.

Davis was second master of the *Terror* during Ross's expedition of 1839-43 and prepared survey charts and fine artistic images of the voyage. He was cocky and popular among the junior officers. Davis did not care for Ross, criticized his treatment of Joseph Hooker and the botany of the voyage, and, upon Ross's marriage to Anne Coulman a month after the expedition's return, wrote to Hooker stating, "I do not wish him any harm but I hope the future Lady R may prove a Dragon."¹ (She was not.)

Many years after the expedition, Sir Clements Markham, who had known Davis for twenty years,

said of him, “Old Davis, if not above ‘the ordinary run’ was a good artist, a good writer, a good surveyor and a right good fellow.”² After the Ross expedition, Davis served on the voyage of the *Fox* to Iceland and Greenland. Late in life, he lectured often on polar exploration. In 1869, he addressed the Melbourne Geographical Society, attempting unsuccessfully to rekindle interest in further scientific exploration of Antarctica.³

Davis’s recollections of the collision of the ships and other events of the Ross expedition are dramatically profound among the few published. This account, in the form of a letter from Davis to his sister Emily (dated 11 April 1842, H.M.S. *Terror*, off Cape Horn), was published by Davis’s family privately, twenty-four years posthumously.

¹M. J. Ross, *Ross in the Antarctic* (Whitby, 1982), p. 212.

²*Ibid.*, p. 34.

³Baughman, *Before the Heroes Came* (Lincoln and London, 1994), p. 13.

Rosove, Michael H. *Antarctica, 1772-1922 Freestanding Publications through 1999* (Santa Monica: Adélie Books, 2001)



Cape Lockyer, discovered by H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, January 7th 1843 titled on the original detached label. Watercolour. 6-3/4 x 8-15/16 in. Christie's Exploration and Travel Sale, September 17, 1999. Lot 177.

Davis was Second Master on Commander Crozier's *Terror* and a number of his drawings (probably the first ever of the Antarctic continent) were used by Ross to illustrate his official account of the voyage published in two volumes in London in 1847.

James Clark Ross had reached the northern magnetic Pole in 1831 and was charged by the Government, following the recommendation of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Society, to lead an expedition to investigate terrestrial magnetism in the southern latitudes. The expedition was the first British exploration of the southern latitudes since Cook's skirting of the Antarctic circle in 1773-4 and the sealer Weddell's furthest south of 74°15'S in 1823. Bellinghousen had probably been the first to sight the Antarctic continent in January 1820 and Dumont D'Urville then discovered Adelie Land and Claire Coast. Their work towards the

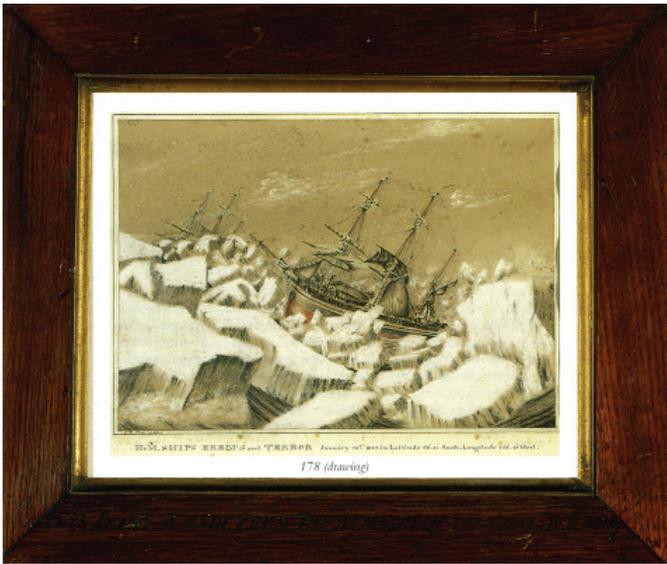
discovery of an Antarctic landmass was consolidated by James Clark Ross who penetrated the pack ice in January 1841 sailing into the clear water of the unknown Ross Sea and sighting snow-covered land on 11 January, thereby becoming the first to discover a sea route to the continent. McCormick on the *Erebus* saw and named an active volcano (Mt. Erebus) and Ross was the first to see and chart the South Polar Barrier which he named Victoria Barrier and which was later named the Ross Ice Barrier. He made two further navigations of the Ross Sea and Wedell Sea before returning to England in 1843.

‘Jan. 7. 1843 ... As we advanced to the southward, two high rugged bluff capes at a great distance appeared, bearing w.s.w. (true); the nearest of them I named, at the request of Captain Crozier, after his friend Captain Nicholas Lockyer, R.N.C.B. (Capt. Sir J.C. Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the southern and Antarctic Regions, during the years 1839-43*, London, 1847, II, p.346).

For Davis’s own account see his *A Letter from the Antarctic*, London, 1901 (illustrated with own sketches).

For further works by Davis on the voyage, see Christie’s, 10 April 1997, lot 95 and 17 September, 1998, lot 178.

Price realised £5,000.



H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, January 20th, 1842, in Latitude 66°.37' South, Longitude 159°.48' West. Black, white and red chalks on brown paper. 7-1/4 x 10-1/8 in. Price realised £12,000. Christie's Exploration and Travel Sale, September 27, 2006. Lot 155. This work previously sold at Christie's Exploration and Travel sale on 17 September 1998, Lot 178.

The present drawing by Davis records an incident on their second season in the Ross Sea, when a storm badly damaged both the Erebus and the Terror, the latter's rudder being broken to pieces by the ice and having to be replaced by the spare rudder: 'On the morning of the 20th it blew a heavy gale of wind; there we were in the midst of a very ice with a very heavy swell on. The ship at times striking it hard, it was very difficult to pass clear of the largest pieces which threatened at times to crush us... we were afraid for our bowsprit, it being so low, but we experienced a greater loss in our rudder which was broken and rendered useless at ten in the forenoon. A tongue of ice got under it and completely ground it round, splitting it all the way

up...? (Capt. J.E. Davis, R.N. *A Letter from the Antarctic*, London: 1901, pp.17-18, with a sketch after the present drawing illustrated p.20).

The *Erebus* and *Terror* weathered the storm and on 4 February the ships continued southwards.

In a frame inscribed 'THIS FRAME IS MADE FROM THE REMAINS OF THE RUDDER OF THE TERROR.'

An engraved version by T. Picken appears in Sir J.C. Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions, during the years 1839-43*, London, 1847, Volume I, facing p. 169.

Price realised: £11,500.



H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* in the Ross Sea.
Watercolour on paper. 7-1/8 x 11-3/8 in. Christie's
Exploration and Travel Sale, September 27, 2006.
Lot 154.

Price realised Did not sell.



Mount Sabine in Latitude $71^{\circ}.50'$ South and Longitude $169^{\circ}.00'$ East - West 40 miles — Discovered by H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* Janry 11th 1841. Signed 'I.E.Davis H.M.S. Terror.' (lower right), inscribed as titled on the mount and inscribed 'To Mrs Sabine with Captain Crozier's Compliments' on the reverse. Watercolour on paper. $7\text{-}1/8 \times 9\text{-}1/2$ in. Provenance: Mrs Sabine (Elizabeth Juliana Leeves 1807-1879). The Ross family and by descent to the present owner.

The mountain named for Sir Edward Sabine (1788-1883), army officer and physicist who sailed on Ross and Parry's Arctic voyages in 1818-21. 'Janry the 11th at two o'clock on Monday Morning, we discovered Victoria Land the Morning was beautiful and clear. at 7 o'clock in the afternoon we were under the Lee of the land sounded 250 fathoms of water—not a cloud to be seen in the firmament, but what lingered on the mountains—Large floating islands of ice in all directions. Hills vallies and Low Land all covered with snow. The snow topd. mountains Majestically Rising above the Clouds. The Pinguins Gamboling in the water the reflection of the Sun and the Brilliancy of the firmament

Made the Rare Sight an interesting View. That night we stood off from the land, we did not Loose sight of it for the Sun was high above the Horizon at midnight as it would be in England on christmas day. While we were in these distant Regions we had no night I mean dark.' (Cornelius Sullivan, blacksmith on *Erebus*, quoted in M.J.Ross, *Ross in the Antarctic*, Whitby, 1982, pp.84-5)

Price realised: £4,800. Christie's Exploration and Travel Sale, September 27, 2006. Lot 152.



Mount Sabine in Latitude $71^{\circ} 50'$ South and Longitude $169^{\circ} 0'$ East - West 40 miles - Discovered by H.M Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* January 11th 1841. Inscribed as titled and with inscription 'For Mrs Sabine with Captain Crozier's Compliments' on the reverse. Watercolour on paper. $7 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. Provenance: Mrs Sabine (Elizabeth Juliana Leeves (1807-1879)). The Ross family and thence by descent to the present owner.

Price realised: £4,800. Christie's Exploration and Travel Sale, September 27, 2006. Lot 153.



A celebration (?New Years day) on the ice, illustrating the crew members (mostly dresses in blue) dancing and playing music, parading and eating at tables cut from the ice, beneath signs (“Pilgrims of the Ocean” and “Erebus and Terror”), the Royal Standard and others flags, an ice sculpture in the foreground, one of the ships in the background. Watercolour, mounted, framed and glazed. Image 170 x 243mm. Signed on the image ‘J.E. Davis. 1842’.

John Edward Davis, as well as being the expedition artist, was second in command on *Terror*.

Provenance: Francis Crozier (1796-1848), commander of the *Terror* on the Ross Expedition, and by descent.

Price realised: £16,250 including the Buyer’s Premium. Bonhams. The Polar Sale: Scott & Amundsen Centenary, March 30, 2012. Lot 16.



‘Coulman Island’ showing *Erebus* and *Terror*. Watercolour. Image 220 x 290mm. Signed on the image ‘J.E. Davis, 1843’.

John Edward Davis (1815-1877) was the artist to John Clark Ross’s expedition providing the illustrations for *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions* (this to face p. 199 in vol. 1). On 17 January 1841 Coulman Island was named for the father of Ross’s fiancée, Thomas Coulman of Whitgift Hall, Goole. Earlier in the day Ross named the southern point, of what now proved to be an island, Cape Anne, for Anne Coulman whose birthday it was. The northern point was duly named Cape Wadworth as a compliment to Anne’s uncle, John Coulman of Wadworth Hall, Doncaster.

Price realised: Did not sell. Bonhams. The Polar Sale: Scott & Amundsen Centenary, March 30, 2012. Lot 17.

Illustrations by J. E. Davis appearing in
*A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the
southern and Antarctic Regions,
during the years 1839-43.*
(London: John Murray, 1847)

VOLUME I

Mount Sabine and Possession Island Discovered
11 January 1841.
Opposite p. 183.



Coulman Island, Discovered, 17th January 1841.
Opposite p. 198.



Beaufort Island and Mount Erebus, Discovered
28th January 1841.

Opposite p. 216.



Part of the South Pole Barrier to 180 feet above
the sea level, 1000 feet thick and 450 miles in
length, February 2nd 1841, Latd 78.15.3.

Folding panorama. Following p. 232.



VOLUME II

The Collision to Windward of the Chain of Bergs.
13 March 1842.

Frontispiece. Opposite Title Page.



A Gale in the Face. 20th January, 1842.

Opposite p. 169.



The Erebus Passing Through the Chain of Bergs.
13th March 1842.
Opposite p. 220.



