

# The Arctic Medal 1818-55 to Members of the Antarctic Expedition of 1839-43

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In September 1843, Captain James Clark Ross returned home with HMS *Erebus* and *Terror*, having made three seasonal journeys to Antarctica since 1839; they were some of the most successful polar voyages in history. However, in spite of attaining the highest southern latitude up until that time, astounding geographical discoveries like the Ross Sea, Ross Ice Shelf, Mount Erebus and Mount Terror, sighting extensive sections of coastline, and gathering a wealth of scientific data and natural history specimens, the expedition did not capture the public's imagination as did earlier Arctic adventures.

From Britain's perspective in the mid-nineteenth century, with her empire expanding, Antarctica did not offer prospects for colonisation or trade at a time when there were many profitable areas Britons had their eyes on for development. Nevertheless, Ross's expedition did point the way for exploration of the frozen continent's interior some 50 years later – the beginning of what has come to be called the 'Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration'.

The return of the Antarctic expedition immediately ignited notions for a new venture from the seasoned explorer Captain Frederick Beechey, and the overwhelming opinion voiced by British explorers was that a North-West Passage should take priority over a North Pole attempt. In December 1844, an ageing Sir John Barrow presented Lord Haddington, First Lord of the Admiralty, with a convincing document: "Proposal for an attempt to complete the discovery of a North-West Passage". By the following spring Sir John Franklin departed in command of HMSs *Erebus* and *Terror* and disappeared into the Arctic mist.

Arctic Medals to a members of Ross's Antarctic expedition are extremely rare. Only 28 Antarctic voyagers under Ross, as listed below, were entitled to the Arctic Medal for other voyages. Of this number, 12 were lost on the Franklin expedition, and several of these medals went unclaimed.

James Clark Ross wrote to the Admiralty on 17 March 1856, asking that his Antarctic officers and men receive the Arctic Medal, but a few days later was coldly turned down:

I am commanded to acquaint you that my Lords do not consider this Service comprised within those for which Her Majesty has signified Her Gracious Intention of conferring a Medal.

However, an Arctic Medal is known to one member of the 1839-43 expedition who does not appear to have served on any other expedition, that to Second Master Henry B. Yule of HMS *Erebus*, being engraved H.B. YULE, EREBUS (Glendining's, 27 & 28 January 1910, lot 230). If

Yule's grumblings about promotions to Dr Hooker after the expedition returned are any indication, one can imagine him acquiring a medal and having it named up: 'I know, as do you, that justice and the Naval service never were friends'<sup>1</sup>



*Erebus and Terror in a gale in the pack, 20 January 1842 (lithograph after J.E. Davis)*

## Officers and warrant officers

### (1) **ABERNETHY, Thomas**

Able Seaman	<i>Hecla</i> 1824-25
Ice Master	<i>Hecla</i> 1827
Second Mate	<i>Victory</i> 1829-33
Gunner	<i>Erebus</i> 1839-43
Ice Master	<i>Enterprise</i> 1848-49
Master	<i>Felix</i> 1850-51
Ice Master	<i>Isabel</i> 1852

Medal sent 16 June 1857. Surname appears as Abernathy and Abernelty in some sources, and as "Ebernethy" in the *Hecla*'s muster for 1824-25.

**(2) BIRD, Edward Joseph**

Midshipman      *Hecla* 1821-23  
Midshipman      *Fury* 1824-25  
Mate              *Hecla* 1827  
First Lieutenant   *Erebus* 1839-43  
Captain            *Investigator* 1848-49

Medal signed for by G.W. Skyring for navy agents I.G. & T. Stilwell on 6 May 1857. Also entitled to the NGS/Algiers (Midshipman/*Albion*), which was accompanied by an unnamed Arctic Medal when sold at Dix Noonan Webb on 12 April 2008. Bird served in the boat expedition towards the North Pole in 1827.

**(3) BROMLEY, John**

Carpenter's Mate   *Hecla* 1827  
Carpenter            *Erebus* 1839-43

Medal signed for by "J Bromly" on 8 May 1857. Bromley served in the boat expedition towards the North Pole in 1827.

**(4) CROZIER, Francis Rawdon Moira**

Midshipman            *Fury* 1821-23  
Midshipman            *Hecla* 1824-25  
Lieutenant            *Hecla* 1827  
Commander/Captain   *Terror* 1839-43  
Captain                *Terror* 1845-48

Medal not contemporarily issued, but presented to Crozier's great-great-nephew, Mr Rawdon Crozier on 5 August 1988. In 1836 Crozier also served as the 1st lieutenant in HMS *Cove* during her search for 11 whalers and upwards to 600 men reported beset in ice in the Davis Strait.

**(5) HONEY, Thomas**

Carpenter 3rd Class   *Terror* 1839-43  
Carpenter 2nd Class   *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued. Honey began the 1845 expedition as a carpenter 3rd class, but the medal roll shows him as a 2nd class, so he was evidently promoted in absentia. He may

have been related to Samuel Honey, who was the blacksmith in *Terror* during the Franklin expedition. Samuel's medal was also not issued.

**(6) LUMSDEN, John**

Able Seaman *Hecla* 1827  
Acting Gunner *Terror* 1839-43

Medal was delivered to Lumsden's widow, Mary Penelope Lumsden, on June 9 1857. Lumsden served in the boat expedition towards the North Pole in 1827. He was invalided from the *Terror* at Hobart, Van Diemen's Land, on 3 July 1841.

**(7) LYALL, David**

Assistant Surgeon *Terror* 1839-43  
Surgeon *Assistance* 1852-54

Medal sent 11 May 1857. Lyall's Baltic Medal (Surgeon/*Pembroke*) and Arctic Medal are both contemporarily engraved, and held in a private collection in the USA. Lyall was a botanical collector in the *Terror*, senior medical officer of Captain Sir Edward Belcher's 1852-54 expedition, and made important contributions to botany through the exploration of New Zealand, North America and the polar regions.

**(8) McMURDO, Archibald**

3rd Lieutenant *Terror* 1836  
1st Lieutenant *Terror* 1839-43

Medal sent 23 May 1857 and, according to Poulsom and Myres, his medal is known to exist. McMurdo was invalided from the *Terror* at the Falkland Islands on 27 August 1842.



Surgeon David Lyall's Arctic and Baltic Medals (Glenn M. Stein, FRGS, FRCGS)



Edge namings of Lyall's Arctic Medal (top) and Baltic Medal (bottom) (Glenn M. Stein, FRGS, FRCGS)



David Lyall, by Maull & Polyblank, 1862 (courtesy of the Linnean Society)

**(9) MOORE, Thomas Edward Laws**

Mate            *Terror* 1839-43  
Commander   *Plover* 1848-52

Medal signed for by G.W. Skyring for navy agents I.G. & T. Stilwell on 5 May 1857. Moore commanded HMS *Pagoda* during an Antarctic expedition in 1845 to complete magnetic observations for the area missed by Ross, and also look for the elusive Bouvet Island.

**(10) PHILLIPS, Charles Gerrans**

2nd lieutenant    *Terror* 1839-43  
2nd-in-command   *Felix* 1850-51

Medal signed for by 'C. Gerrans Phillips' on 20 August 1860.

**(11) ROBERTSON, John**

Surgeon        *Terror* 1839-43  
Surgeon        *Enterprise* 1848-49

Medal signed for by a 'Vans C. Clarke Surg<sup>n</sup> R.N', but without a date.

**(12) WOODWARD, James**

Capt. Forecastle/Boats. Mate    *Erebus* 1839-43  
Boatswain 3rd Cl.                *Enterprise* 1850-55

Medal sent 27 May 1857. The roll shows Woodward as a 3rd class boatswain, but his contemporarily engraved medal features the first class rank, which most likely shows Woodward's status in 1857. The medal is held in a private collection in the UK. After 25 August 1840 he was a boatswain's mate, and the change was undoubtedly related to the death the *Erebus*'s boatswain Roberts, who fell overboard from aloft and was drowned on July 30. Woodward must have been above average in intelligence, as the *Enterprise*'s Captain Richard Collinson wrote in his journal regarding navigating the Bering Sea: 'Mr. Woodward was also good enough to undertake the translation of [Baltic German navigator, geographer, and Arctic explorer] Admiral Lütke's sailing directions for these seas, which we found of great utility.'

## Petty officers and seamen

### **(13) BUSBRIDGE, Joseph**

Cook/AB *Terror* 1839-43

Ship's Cook *Plover* 1848-52

Medal sent 12 June 1857; it is contemporarily engraved and in the collection of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Canada. Busbridge served as a cook in the *Terror* until Feb. 27, 1841, when he was rated an able seaman. There was a John Henry Busbridge who also served as an able seaman and then quartermaster onboard the *Plover*, and by age, it's possible this was Joseph's son. The former signed for his Arctic Medal on 13 May 1857.

### **(14) DIGGLE, John**

AB/QM *Erebus* 1839-43

Ship's Cook *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued. Diggle served as an able seaman until 14 July 1839, when he was rated a quartermaster.

### **(15) FARR, Thomas Richard**

Capt. Maintop *Terror* 1839-43

AB/Capt. Maintop *Terror* 1845-48

On the medal roll as 'Tarr'; no medal recorded as being issued. Farr served as an able seaman until 6 May 1845, before being promoted to captain of the maintop.

### **(16) FAWCETT, Edward Henry**

AB/Capt. Maintop *Terror* 1839-43

Boatswain's Mate *Investigator* 1848-49

Boatswain's Mate *Investigator* 1850-54

Medal sent 15 May 1857. Fawcett served as an able seaman until 1 October 1840, before being promoted to captain of the maintop.

**(17) HARDY, William (alias BROWN, Samuel)**

Boatswain's Mate *Erebus* 1839-43 (as William Hardy)

Boatswain's Mate *Erebus* 1845-48 (as Samuel Brown, alias William Hardy)

Medal signed for by 'Mary Frances Brown', along with a notation on 20 May 1857 that she was his legal representative, and 'Certificate returned' 25 May 1857.

**(18) JERRY, William**

AB *Terror* 1839-43

AB *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued.

**(19) JOHNSON, Thomas**

Quartermaster *Terror* 1839-43

Boatswain's Mate *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued.

**(20) JOPSON, Thomas**

Captain's Steward *Terror* 1839-43

Captain's Steward *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued.

**(21) MARSHALL, Thomas**

AB *Erebus* 1839-43

AB *Resolute* 1850-51

Cox. of the Launch *Assistance* 1852-54

Medal sent to the Excellent, 19 May 1857.

**(22) RIGDEN, James**

AB/Capt. Cox./Capt. Maintop/QM *Erebus* 1839-43  
Carpenter's Crew *Erebus* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued.

**(23) RIGGS, William**

Armourer *Terror* 1839-43  
Blacksmith *Plover* 1848-50  
Blacksmith *Herald* 1850-51  
[Blacksmith (Pensioner) *North Star* 1852-54?]

On the medal roll as 'Rigg'; medal sent 15 July 1857. Riggs joined the *Herald* from *Plover* at Port Clarence on 14 September 1850 for passage home. The *Herald* probably remained in Arctic waters for only a few more days. According to Poulson & Myres, Riggs was in *North Star* 1852-54, but a thorough review of that ship's muster did not uncover his name.

**(24) SIMMONDS, William**

AB *Erebus* 1839-43  
Musician/Ship's Cook *Assistance* 1850-51

Medal sent 25 May 1857. Also shown on the roll as a musician in *Resolute* 1850-51, but he joined the *Assistance* from *Resolute* on 16 March 1850, before the latter sailed. Simmonds was rated musician until 28 April 1850, then ship's cook.

**(25) SIMS, David H.**

AB *Terror* 1839-43  
AB *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued.

**(26) SMITH, Luke**

AB *Terror* 1839-43

AB *Terror* 1845-48

No medal recorded as being issued.

**(27) STEBBING, Richard William**

Armourer *Erebus* 1839-43

Master at Arms *Herald* 1848-54

Medal sent to the *Brunswick*, 8 June 1857.

**(28) WALL, Richard**

Cook *Erebus* 1839-43

Ship's Cook *Erebus* 1845-48

Medal roll states 'Hannah Wall her X Mark' on 22 June 1857, plus the notation 'W.6991'. This relates to ADM 44, Series EC, which are claims of executors and next of kin for back pay of ratings who died in service 1800-60. According to McCormick, Wall had been Ross's cook and afterwards evidently a manservant in his house, and then rejoined *Erebus* as Franklin's cook (undoubtedly with Ross's recommendation).

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**Note**

<sup>1</sup> *Ross in the Antarctic* (1982), M.J. Ross, p 214

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