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## Franklin, John

Rear-Admiral **Sir John Franklin** KCH FRGS RN (16 April 1786 – 11 June 1847) was a British Royal Navy officer and Arctic explorer who mapped almost two thirds of the northern coastline of North America. Franklin also served as governor of Tasmania for several years. In his last expedition, he disappeared while attempting to chart and navigate a section of the Northwest Passage in the Canadian Arctic. The entire crew perished from starvation, hypothermia, tuberculosis, lead poisoning, scurvy and exposure before and after Franklin died and the expedition's icebound ships were abandoned in desperation.

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### Early life

Franklin was born in Spilsby, Lincolnshire, in 1786 and educated at King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth.

John Franklin was the ninth of twelve children. One of his sisters was the mother of Emily Tennyson. Franklin's father initially opposed his son's interest in a career at sea. However, Franklin was determined and his father reluctantly allowed him to go on a trial voyage with a merchant ship. This hardened young Franklin's resolve, so at the age of 14 his father secured him a Royal Navy appointment on HMS *Polyphemus*. Franklin was later present at a number of historic voyages and naval battles. These included the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, an expedition to explore the coast of Australia on HMS *Investigator* with his uncle, Captain Matthew Flinders, a return to the Napoleonic Wars, serving aboard HMS *Bellerophon* at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and he was at the Battle of New Orleans.

He accompanied Captain Dance on The East India Company's ship the *Earl Camden*, frightening off Admiral Linois at the Battle of Pulo Aura in the mouth of the straits of Malacca 14 February 1804.

### **1819: Franklin's First expedition**

Main article: Coppermine Expedition of 1819â “1822

Franklin was chosen to lead an expedition overland from Hudson Bay to chart the north coast of Canada eastward to the Mackenzie River.<sup>[1]</sup> Between 1819 and 1822 he lost 11 of the 20 men in his party. Most died of starvation, but there was also cannibalism. The survivors were forced to eat lichen and even attempted to eat their own leather boots. This gain was not enough to "eat his boots".<sup>[2]</sup>

### **1823: Marriage and second Arctic expedition**

In 1823, after returning to England, Franklin married the poet Eleanor Anne Porden. Their daughter, Eleanor Isabella (senior) died of tuberculosis in 1825, shortly after persuading her husband not to let her ill-health prevent him from returning to the Arctic. This expedition, a trip down the Mackenzie River to explore the shores of the Beaufort Sea, was better supported than the first.

On 29 April 1829 he was knighted by George IV. On 5 November 1828 he married Jane Griffin, a friend of his first wife's. They were indomitable in the course of their life together. On 25 January 1836 he was made Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. He also made a Knight of the Greek Order of the Redeemer as well.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **1836: Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania)**

Franklin was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land in 1836, but was removed from office in 1841. He was unpopular with the civil servants, who particularly disliked his humane ideals and his attempts to reform the Tasmanian penal colony. A woman of her day, known for "roughing it" to the extent that an expedition had to be mounted after she and Franklin were further distanced the couple from "proper" society, and may have contributed to Franklin's recall. Nevertheless, Franklin is remembered in Tasmania. He is remembered by a significant landmark in the centre of Hobartâ “ a statue of him dominates the site of the original Government House. On the plinth below the statue appears Tennyson's epitaph:

*Not here! The white north hath thy bones and thou  
Heroic sailor soul  
Art passing on thine happier voyage now  
Toward no earthly pole*

His wife worked to set up a university, a museum and botanical gardens. The village of Franklin, on the Huon River on the West Coast of Tasmania, one of the better known Tasmanian rivers due to the Franklin Dam controversy.

### **1843 Visit to Victoria**

In April, 1802, Captain Matthew Flinders, after charting the southern coastline of Australia in the HMS *Investigator*, discovered the rocky opening of what was later named Port Phillip Bay. Once inside the entrance he ascended a bluff later known as Arthur's Seat which Murray had named Arthur's Seat. He was accompanied by Midshipman John Franklin, who then climbed the bluff leaving his post as Governor of Tasmania. Franklin revisited the cairn that had been set up at the lookout point by

## 1845 Northwest Passage expedition

Main article: Franklin's lost expedition



Map of the probable routes taken by *Erebus* and *Terror* during Franklin's lost expedition.

- Disko Bay (5) to Beechey Island, in 1845.
- Around Cornwallis Island (1), in 1845.
- Beechey Island down Peel Sound between Prince of Wales Island (2) and Somerset Island (3) and the Boothia Peninsula (4) to near King William Island in 1846.

Disko Bay (5) is about 3,200 kilometres (2,000 mi) from the mouth of the Mackenzie River (6).

Exploration of the Arctic coastal mainland after Franklin's second Arctic expedition had left less than 500 kilometres. The British decided to send a well-equipped Arctic expedition to complete the charting of the Northwest Passage. In command of the expedition, an invitation was extended to Franklin, who accepted despite his age, 59. A younger man in command of HMS *Erebus* and Franklin was named the expedition commander. Captain Francis Rawdon Moira Crozier, who had commanded the Ross 1841–42 Antarctic expedition, was appointed executive officer and commander of HMS *Terror*. In 1845, and received official instructions on 5 May 1845.<sup>[7]</sup>

HMS *Erebus* at 370 long tons (380 t) and HMS *Terror* at 340 long tons (350 t) were sturdily built and were outfitted with steam engines from the London and Greenwich Railway that enabled the ships to make 4 knots (7.4 km/h) on the open sea. The ships had a based heating and distillation system for the comfort of the crew and to provide large quantities of fresh water for drinking. The ships enabled the iron rudder and propeller to be drawn into iron wells to protect them from damage, ships' libraries contained a large amount of worth of conventionally preserved or tinned preserved food supplies. Unfortunately, the latter was supplied from a contractor who had contracted only a few months before the ships were to sail. Though his "patent process" was sound, the haste with which the food was prepared led to sloppily-applied beads of solder on the cans' interior edges and allowed lead to leach into the food. The crews were Englishmen, many from the North of England with a small number of Irishmen and Scotsmen.

The Franklin Expedition set sail from Greenhithe, England, on the morning of 19 May 1845, with a crew of 24 officers and crew members. From Aberdeen for supplies. From Scotland, the ships sailed to Greenland with HMS *Rattler* and a transport ship, *Barretto Junior*. In Whitefish Bay, Disko Island, Greenland, the expedition backtracked and finally harboured in that far north outpost. Five crew members were discharged and sent home on the *Rattler* and *Barretto Junior*, reducing the ships' final crew to 19. The expedition was discovered by Europeans on 26 July 1845, when Captain Dannett of the whaler *Prince of Wales* encountered *Terror* and *Erebus*.

It is now believed that the expedition wintered in 1845â “46 on Beechey Island. *Terror* and *Erebus* became trapped in 1846 and never sailed again. According to a note later found on that island, Franklin died there on 11 June 1847. The cause of death is unknown.

After two years and no word from the expedition, Franklin's wife urged the Admiralty to send a search party. By the third year, the Admiralty waited another year before launching a search and offering a £20,000 reward for finding the expedition. Franklin's fame led to many searches. At one point, ten British and two American ships, USS *Advance* and USS *Rescue*, headed to the Arctic. More men were lost looking for Franklin than in the expedition itself. Ballads such as "Lady Franklin's Lament", commemorating his wife's search for her husband, became popular.<sup>[8]</sup> In the summer of 1850, expeditions including three from England as well as one from the United States converged off the east coast of Beechey Island, where the first relics of the Franklin expedition were found, including the remains of expedition crewmen.



Statue of John Franklin in his home town of Spilsby

In 1854, the Scottish explorer Dr. John Rae, while surveying the Boothia Peninsula for the Hudson's Bay Company, learned from a party from talking to Inuit hunters. He was told both ships had become icebound, the men had tried to reach safety, and some had resorted to cannibalism.<sup>[9]</sup> Rae's report to the Admiralty was leaked to the press, which led to widespread criticism of Franklin's widow and condemned Rae to ignominy. Lady Franklin's efforts to eulogise her husband, with support from the Admiralty, led to further 25 searches over the next four decades, none of which would add any further information of note.<sup>[9]</sup>

In the mid-1980s, Owen Beattie, a University of Alberta professor of anthropology, began a 10-year series of scientific studies titled "The Franklin Expedition Forensic Anthropology Project", showing that the Beechey Island crew had most likely died of tuberculosis.<sup>[11]</sup> Toxicological reports indicated that lead poisoning was also a possible factor.<sup>[12][13]</sup> In 1997, more evidence was uncovered; an account was finally vindicated; blade cut marks on the bones of some of the crew found on King William Island supported the theory that the crew had become so dire that some crew members resorted to cannibalism.<sup>[14]</sup> It appeared from these studies that a combination of diseases including scurvy, poisoned food, botulism and starvation had killed everyone in the Franklin party.

In October 2009 Robert Grenier (a Senior Marine Archaeologist at Parks Canada) outlined recent discoveries of metal fragments recovered from 19th century Inuit hunting sites. Grenier firmly believes these pieces of metal once belonged to the remains of the ship's hull.

A quote from the British newspaper *The Guardian* states the following:

"After studying 19th-century Inuit oral testimony â “ which included eyewitness descriptions of starving, exhausted, and  
condescending to ask local people how they survived in such a wilderness â “ he believes the 19th-century official  
members abandoned their ice-locked ships are wrong. He believes both ships drifted southwards, with at least two  
of their vessels. One broke up, but Inuit hunters arriving at their summer hunting grounds reported discovering a

"They're not very strong on location or date," Grenier said. "They have all the space and time in the world, but w

The ship, probably the *Terror*, was very neat and orderly, but the Inuit descended into the darkness of the hull wit  
tall dead man in an inner cabin. Grenier believes it was there they recovered the copper, which was more valuabl  
shears from the ship's workshop with which to work it. Hauntingly, they also reported that one of the masts was c  
was the funnel from the galley still smoking from a meal cooked that morning, before the last of Franklin's men d

## Historical legacy



Statue of John Franklin in London

For years after the loss of the Franklin party, the Victorian era media portrayed Franklin as a hero who led his me  
statue of Franklin in his home town bears the somewhat false inscription stating "Sir John Franklin â ” Discoverer  
Franklin outside the Athenaeum in London and in Tasmania bear similar inscriptions. Although the expedition's f  
was widely reported and debated, Franklin's standing with the public was not diminished. The mystery surroundi  
of a 2006 episode of the *Nova* television series *Arctic Passage* and a 2006 documentary "Franklin's Lost Expedition  
has inspired many artistic works including a famous ballad, *Lady Franklin's Lament*, a verse play by Canadian poe  
short story and essays by Canadian author Margaret Atwood, and several novels, and is referenced in Canadian n  
*Passage*. There is also a direct reference to John Franklin's ill-fated expedition in the Irish-American group Nightr  
in a track titled "The Erebus and the Terror". Additionally in 2007, a fictional account of the expedition was autho  
978-0-316-01744-2).

He is the namesake for the R/V *Franklin*, a research vessel built in Queensland. She currently flies the Swedish fla

The Franklin rose, developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, was named in his honour.<sup>[15]</sup>

The explorer was also remembered when one of Canada's Northwest Territories subdivisions was named the District of Franklin, this jurisdiction was abolished when the Territories were divided in 1999. On 29 October 2009 a special service was held at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, to accompany the rededication of the national monument to Sir John Franklin. The service was a solemn re-internment of the remains of Lieutenant Henry Thomas Dundas Le Vesconte, the only remains ever re-interred in the monument in 1873.<sup>[16]</sup> The event brought together members of the international polar community and invited geographers, photographers and authors and many descendants of Sir John Franklin and his men and the families of those who were on the expedition. Sir Francis Leopold McClintock, Rear Admiral Sir John Ross and Vice Admiral Sir Robert McClure among many others were present. Jeremy Frost and polar historian Dr Huw Lewis-Jones, celebrated the contributions made by the United Kingdom and the Arctic region in the pursuit of geographical discovery. The Navy was represented by Admiral Nick Willmott and among the readings were eloquent tributes from Duncan Wilson, chief executive of the Greenwich Maritime Museum and Canadian High Commissioner.<sup>[17][18]</sup> At a private drinks reception in the Painted Hall which followed this Arctic event, Parks Canada Robert Grenier spoke of his ongoing search for the missing expedition ships.

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Franklin rose

Article by Dr Huw Lewis-Jones

Online review of recent Service of Thanksgiving

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## Music

"Lady Franklin's Lament", Traditional Ballad

## External links

Franklin and the North-West Passage Original reports from The Times

NOVA's companion website for Arctic Passage

Biography at the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*

The Fate of Franklin (Russell Potter)

The Life and Times of Sir John Franklin

List of artifacts recovered from the Franklin Expedition

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Works by John Franklin at Project Gutenberg

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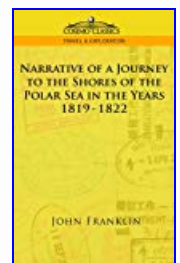
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### Royal Navy Arctic Exploration

Expeditions

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