

The *Fox* Expedition in Search of Franklin: A Documentary Trail

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ABSTRACT. A portfolio of contemporary documents relating to the *Fox* expedition in search of Sir John Franklin has recently been found. It contained 14 personal letters written to Captain F.L. M'Clintock by Lady Jane Franklin and her niece, Sophia Cracroft; newspaper clippings of long letters from explorer John Rae and Allen Young, third officer on the *Fox*; and a drawing. With one exception, these documents are being introduced to scholars for the first time. Newly discovered is Lady Jane Franklin's offer of command of the *Fox* to Captain F.L. M'Clintock. The documents, now in the author's possession, affirm Lady Franklin's thoroughgoing nature and tenacity in seeking to uncover information on her lost husband and his crew. Some other themes are the trust (well placed, as it turned out) that she accorded Captain M'Clintock and the distinct favour or disfavour with which she viewed various other Arctic personalities of the era. These themes have been commented upon in the past, but are confirmed by the documents. This article summarizes the content of the documents, places them in historical context, and quotes the two most significant letters in their entirety.

Key words: Lady Jane Franklin, Captain M'Clintock, *Fox* expedition, recently discovered documents

RÉSUMÉ. On vient de découvrir un dossier de documents contemporains ayant trait à l'expédition *Fox* qui fut lancée à la recherche de sir John Franklin. Il contient 14 lettres personnelles adressées au capitaine F. L. M'Clintock par lady Jane Franklin et sa nièce, Sophia Cracroft; des coupures de journaux contenant de longues lettres écrites par l'explorateur John Rae et par Allen Young, troisième officier à bord du *Fox*; et un dessin. À une exception près, c'est la première fois que ces documents font l'objet d'une étude de la part de spécialistes. Un élément inédit est l'offre de commandement du *Fox* faite par lady Jane Franklin au capitaine F. L. M'Clintock. Les documents, qui sont maintenant entre les mains de l'auteur, affirment le caractère énergique et la ténacité de lady Franklin à vouloir découvrir ce qu'il était advenu de son mari et de l'équipage disparus. D'autres thèmes qui ressortent sont la confiance (bien placée, comme le confirmeront les événements) qu'elle accorda au capitaine M'Clintock et sa façon très nette de considérer d'un bon ou d'un mauvais œil les divers personnages de l'époque ayant affaire avec l'Arctique. Ces thèmes, qui ont déjà fait l'objet de commentaires dans le passé, sont confirmés par les documents. L'article résume le contenu de ces derniers, les replace dans un contexte historique et cite les deux lettres les plus importantes dans leur intégralité.

Mots clés: lady Jane Franklin, capitaine M'Clintock, expédition *Fox*, documents récemment découverts

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FRANKLIN SAILS

When Sir John Franklin's ships left England on 19 May 1845 to sail the Northwest Passage, the British public anticipated success. Franklin's two vessels, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, were of stout oak reinforced with cast-iron supports and inch-thick iron sheathing on their bows. Each had a steam engine for use in navigating narrow leads through the ice. Many of the 134 officers and men on board were veterans of both Arctic and Antarctic discovery voyages. The Admiralty had done its utmost to supply the expedition with everything from a novel lower-deck heating system to three years' provisions. After more than two centuries of attempts, British men and technology would now assuredly conquer the stubborn Passage.

Both ships were known as "bombs," meaning that mortars could be fired from their strengthened decks. Indeed, the *Terror* was present at the historic shelling of Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbour during the War of 1812, an

attack that inspired Francis Scott Key to compose the American national anthem (Cookman, 2000). Both the *Erebus* and the *Terror* had already experienced polar conditions, having just returned from a heavy buffeting on James Clark Ross's 1839–43 voyage to the Antarctic.

On the six-week voyage to the Danish whaling station at Disko Bay on the west coast of Greenland, Franklin regaled the officers on board the *Erebus* with tales of his three previous northern expeditions. His second in command, Commander James Fitzjames, expressed his hope in a letter sent from Disko Bay to relatives in England that the expedition would not sail through to the Bering Strait that year, as he wanted to pass at least one winter in the Arctic (Coningham, ca. 1852). But, as the world came to know, it was not to be. After confidently entering Lancaster Sound, the eastern gateway to the Northwest Passage, both ships and crews disappeared. Back home, early optimism gave way to increasing consternation within the British government and in the entire nation. In fact, loss of its entire

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complement ranks this voyage as one of the most disastrous expeditions ever undertaken.

FIRST CLUES TO THE LOST EXPEDITION

Over the next decade, both British and American governments dispatched an astonishing 20 search expeditions that did much to open up the Arctic in terms of geography, ethnography, and other scientific disciplines. Additionally, Sir John's wife, Lady Jane Franklin, financed three more, obsessively pursuing the goal of finding her husband and his missing men, or at least honouring their memories. Government searching was commonly carried out through large-scale, seagoing assaults on one end of the Passage or the other. They were expensive, dangerous, and—excepting the discovery of Franklin's 1845–46 winter quarters on Beechey Island—devoid of search results.

However, by 1856 two expeditions sponsored by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had yielded tantalizing clues. John Rae, operating with far smaller parties than the Admiralty, traveled from Churchill on a surveying trip to the northwest corner of Hudson Bay in 1853–54. He led only 12 men in two small boats. After sledging overland, Rae penetrated to within 100 miles of the Franklin expedition disaster site (Richards, 1985; McGoogan, 2001). At this point, he traded with local Inuit for officers' silver plate, the treasured medal making Franklin a Knight Commander of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order, and other relics. In 1855, HBC Chief Factor James Anderson and Chief Trader James Stewart approached from the south, via the estuary of the Great Fish River [now the Back River], in two birchbark canoes. They also found Franklin expedition detritus, including government-marked rope and a piece of wood marked "Erebus" (Anderson, 1940–41; Barr, 1999). They might easily have located other remains, but lack of interpreters and leaky canoes in an area hardly abounding in repair bark combined to force an early retreat.

Yet questions persisted: where were the men, their records, and the ships?

LADY FRANKLIN REQUESTS ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SEARCH

Lady Franklin did not ponder long. In June 1856, she sent a memorial to the Admiralty appealing for a further search and, when there was no response, followed up on 2 December with a long letter to Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister. The letter was published (Franklin, 1857a) with a preface dated 28 January 1857, by which time Lady Franklin, together with her "amis de maison" among naval officers and scientists, was engineering a formal parliamentary inquiry. The short preface to this pamphlet hinted that more was coming when it stated that the document had been printed "in hopes of engaging a degree of sympathy in the subject of it, as may come in aid of favourable

disposition in Her Majesty's Government." Lady Franklin's diary (Franklin, 1857b) for February 1857 makes it clear that for most of that month, she was assiduously distributing the pamphlet to any party conceivably interested. The entry for 13 February 1857 indicates that 13 copies were signed by her friend Sir Roderick I. Murchison, President of the Royal Geographical Society, presumably for delivery to influential parties.

The parliamentary set piece played out on 24 February 1857 in the House of Commons, when the "favourable disposition" was requested in a motion introduced by Joseph Napier, a respected Irish lawyer who later became Lord Chancellor of Ireland. He pressed "the urgent nature of the claim for a further and complete search" (Hansard, 1857:1276). In a possible tactical error, Napier stated that Lady Franklin was prepared to devote her own resources to another search if the government declined to do so and that a quantity of Arctic supplies, which might be useful to her, were "lying up as rubbish" with the Admiralty. Sir Charles Wood, First Lord of the Admiralty, responded, as some in Lady Franklin's camp might have feared, to the effect that previous government-funded searching expeditions had caused risk to all participants, not to mention substantial expense, and that since the crews of both ships had undoubtedly perished by this time, another effort could not be encouraged.

Six MPs then spoke in support of Napier's motion, among them Richard Monckton Milnes, a recipient of one of the pamphlets signed by Murchison. Little remembered today, Milnes was one of the foremost public figures of the era. He held office in both houses of Parliament and was a prominent literary patron and writer, as well as an avid collector of both books and manuscripts. Milnes' speech in the Commons that day was both eloquent and accurate:

I do not think the country would accept as final the decision of the First Lord of the Admiralty. A great problem in geographical science has been solved by the Arctic expeditions; and, with the exception of the deplorable loss of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, those expeditions had been attended with a smaller sacrifice of life than often occurred on other stations where our ships were doomed to inglorious inactivity.... The interest felt by the country in this matter was a growing one; and, if the present Government abandoned it, it would force itself upon the attention of their successors. Lady Franklin was a woman not easily to be baffled in such a cause. She had set her heart and her fortune on what she deemed a great duty, and one way or another she would accomplish it. The public would rally around her, and an expedition would be fitted out.... If a further search were not made, the Government and the people of this country would fail in their duty. (Hansard, 1857:1286–1287)

In spite of a clear sentiment among the MPs for a renewed search, Napier saw that the Admiralty was adamant and withdrew his motion.

A respected contemporary source, John Brown, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, made this statement:

Mr. Napier (MP for Dublin) called the attention of the House of Commons “to the communications with Her Majesty’s Government respecting the Franklin Expedition, and the urgent motive of the claim for a further and complete search.” The honourable gentleman made a *powerful appeal in favour of a final expedition* in which he was supported by Capt. Scobell, Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Milnes...In looking carefully over the speeches made on this occasion, we think the arguments *raised against the proposition are not at all equal in force to the powerful reasons urged in its favour.* (Brown, 1858:439; italics are Brown’s)

LADY FRANKLIN’S LETTER TO
R. MONCKTON MILNES

Ever diligent in her acknowledgement of support, Lady Franklin sent a letter of thanks to Milnes the next day (Franklin, 1857c). She used black-bordered stationery, clearly accepting the status of a widow and agreeing with Sir Charles Wood’s argument about there being no likely survivors. Despite this display of bereavement, Lady Franklin was not above wearing pink and green if it might advance her cause (Berton, 1988:264).

In all manuscript documents transcribed, the writer’s contractions, punctuation, spelling, underlining, and even grammatical errors have been retained to give as much of the documents’ original flavour as possible. Square brackets with clarifying comments have been inserted in certain places. Lady Franklin wrote:

60. Pall Mall
Febry. 25, 1857

Dear Mr. Milnes

I trust you will allow me to offer you my grateful acknowledgments for the able support you have given to Mr. Napier’s motion. Not one of the many friends I have seen today but has assured me (tho’ the assurance was not necessary) that yours was the most effective speech in aid of his representations.

I am sure you do not require to be told that I shall not shrink from the alternative now forced upon me of completing the search by my own resources, but I have suggested to Mr. Napier whether it might not be urged still upon the Government that they have adopted unprecedented responsibility in announcing their adverse decision without having previously summoned to their aid a committee of experienced Arctic officers best fitted to advise on the subject. Such a council has always hitherto preceded every decision that has been made. If this be denied, it might still be pressed upon them that the

aid they have encouraged me to expect should be freely granted. It was “pecuniary” assistance that Lord Stanley of Alderley spoke of to Lord Wrottesley, but this I do not require, since if I can get the loan of one of the Arctic ships now lying in ordinary & fit for no other purpose, her fittings completed in the dockyard, & some of the stores put on board which are now lying waste, my resources will be relieved as much as by money. Some concession is due me I think in consideration of that cruel suspense in which I have been kept ever since the return of the last Gt Fish river expedition [Anderson and Stewart’s] extending for a period which has made me lose three consecutive seasons, while still in doubt as to what answer I should get to my repeated applications & to the memorial of my friends. This state of suspense, ending now in fatal certainty after preliminary circumstances which a few days ago seemed to promise quite a different result, has seriously affected my interests in many ways.

I was extremely pleased to see your mention of the “Resolute”, & am sorry that Mr. Napier did not make use of a document I sent him which has not any where met the notice it deserves. I mean the Resolution of Congress when it voted the money for the purchase & equipment of that ship. The “Resolution” expressly stated that the object of this noble gift was, not the exhibition of national goodwill, but simply of sympathy with the cause to which the ship had been devoted.

I am glad to have the opportunity of telling you that Capt Hartstene of the Resolute has placed his services in the most spontaneous & unconditional manner entirely at my disposal for the command of a private expedition in the event of my being driven to this painful alternative & in case of his not interfering with any English officers. I shall accept his generous offer only in case Sir Charles Wood refuses to fulfill his own written pledge (communicated to me last year by order of Prince Albert) that willing permission should be given to any naval officer volunteering for my private expedition.

I do not know whether I may ask of you to communicate with Mr. Napier upon the possibility of any further movement in the House. I am afraid of appearing to expect too much & would rather assure you how much I appreciate what has been already been done for me.

Yours very truly
Jane Franklin

This letter has been briefly noted in the literature (Savours, 1999:282), but here it is quoted in its entirety for the first time since it marks Lady Franklin’s commitment to another private expedition. Prior to 24 February 1857, Lady Franklin had hoped and inveigled for an Admiralty-sponsored search (Berton, 1988:311–314), but after that date it was clear she must be the guiding force. Indeed, this exceptional Victorian lady picked up the gauntlet with alacrity by stating to Milnes, “I am sure you do not have to be told that I shall not shrink from the alternative now

forced upon me....” I would argue that this sentence launched the next and most successful Franklin searching expedition—that of the yacht *Fox*. Although Lady Franklin was preparing to support her fourth search, I cannot detect any sign of weariness. To the contrary: judging by her enthusiasm, it might have been the first.

Monckton Milnes married into the Crewe family of London, and this letter was included in the sale of their library to Maggs Brothers, the London book and manuscript dealer, in the early 1950s. I acquired it from Maggs in 1997. Mr. John Maggs wrote to me about this time gap, saying: “We really did hold masses of that library over in the garage where I could pick through it when I had the time and inclination.” Transcription of this and all other documents has been accomplished by Ms. Hinda Rose of Maggs.

Lady Franklin’s reference to Captain Henry Hartstene (U.S. Navy, but temporarily commanding HMS *Resolute*) recalls the saga of that ship. One of five vessels in Sir Edward Belcher’s Arctic Squadron, which conducted an elaborate Franklin search, the *Resolute* was abandoned in 1854. After discovery by an American whaler the next year about 1000 miles east of Belcher’s search site, the *Resolute* was sailed to the United States, carefully refitted, and returned to Her Majesty’s government in December 1856 (M’Dougall, 1857; Great Britain, 1858). Captain Hartstene, the Arctic veteran who sailed her to London, was one of the many naval officers who offered their services to command another searching expedition outfitted by Lady Franklin.

The ship spurned by Belcher is with us today. When the *Resolute* was broken up in 1878, Queen Victoria presented a desk made from the ship’s oak timbers to the United States government. Placed for a short time in the White House library by President Hayes, the desk was resurrected from an obscure government warehouse in 1961 by Jacqueline Kennedy for her husband’s use. It has served as the desk of every U.S. president since that time (Monkman, 2000:262).

LADY FRANKLIN SELECTS CAPTAIN M’CLINTOCK

Sir Charles Wood did not put the government’s negative position in writing until 7 April 1857. However, as Arctic expeditions typically departed from England in the April–June period, Lady Franklin knew she had to move quickly, or the 1857 navigating season would be lost. Funds had to be raised to complement her personal resources; a ship had to be obtained, and a captain selected. With assistance from a number of prominent individuals, among them Murchison, solicitations were set in motion. Casting about for a suitable privately owned ship, Lady Franklin concluded that the best available was the 185-ton steam yacht *Fox*, which she purchased for £2000. It had nothing of the strength of the *Erebus* and *Terror* and was about half their size, but it would have to do.

A number of American and English naval officers stepped forward to offer their services to command her

expedition, including Captain Hartstene, but of all the candidates (such as Richard Collinson; Elisha Kent Kane, prior to his death in February 1857; and Sherard Osborn), one stood out. Captain Francis Leopold M’Clintock of the Royal Navy (Fig. 1) had what Lady Franklin required. If this search was to be sea-based, it was apparent that no ship was simply going to sail into the remote and ice-clogged region where Rae, Anderson, and Stewart had found their few relics. A wooden ship could press on just so far, then sledging expeditions would have to be sent out to do the final search work. M’Clintock, a taciturn Irishman of 38, was one of the Navy’s best sledge travelers. During Franklin search expeditions in 1848–49 and 1850–51, he had logged sledge trips of 500 and 770 miles, the latter being a record for the time (Belcher, 1855; Markham, 1909:64,130). And not a man had been lost. While competent ship captains abounded, the additional need for sledge experience narrowed the list to M’Clintock. As early as 1854, Lady Franklin had asked his advice on what form the next (and, she hoped, the final) expedition should take and indicated a desire he should lead it (Woodward, 1951:295). The relationship developed into a lifelong friendship.

Again, Lady Franklin did not dither. After some preliminary discussion, she sent Captain M’Clintock a long letter dated 17 April 1857, offering him command of the expedition (Franklin, 1857d). This significant document is presented here for the first time:

60. Pall Mall
Ap. 17/57

My dear Captn M’Clintock

Nothing can be more satisfactory than yr account of the Fox & Estimates & I think I wd chance close with the Trustees for the purchase, could I dare to conclude that you are willing to take her yourself by the E. route since you pronounce that route to be still practicable, provided preparations be instantly begun. I am sure you will perceive that my decision necessarily depends on you. I knew, when I made you the offer [presumably oral since this is the written offer] of the command of the Expdn, the ownership of the vessel & the disposal of my funds, that this is a tribute to your qualifications & a proof of my unlimited confidence rather than a proposal that can altogether meet your wishes & requirements.

It is not for your own sake, but for that of the great object we have both at heart that you wd wish for better means & official authority. I should be sincerely sorry you shd go if I did not feel sure that you wd do good service in clearing up the mystery in whole or in part, or in shewing that there are indubitable means of doing so with increased means, or in shewing that there are no probable human means of learning any thing further & I should be sorry you shd go if such a measure of success as even this last, were not in your eyes as it will be in mine & in other peoples’, highly honorable to you, such indeed as will



FIG. 1. Captain M'Clintock with some of the Franklin expedition relics (Cheyney, 1860).

entitle you to every feeling & every demonstration of gratitude.

If you accept my proposal, I shall consult you as to placing funds for the expdn in the hands of Trustees so that no uncertainty of life, or other casualty shall affect your security. As to the Trustees I shd wish you to have the nomination of one of them, or that both, or all, shd have your entire approval, at present I can see no objection to your being one yourself. It appears to me that by this means alone can you feel perfectly independent, and all I shall stipulate for myself is, that in resigning my funds, I do not by that step preclude myself from the right of expressing to you my own wishes as to the course the expedition should take & to which I know you will give a due & no more than a due influence. I need hardly undertake further explanation here, indeed I believe you already know all I could say upon it.

Your ship will be yr own, to abandon her if you please, or find it desirable, or to bring her home for perhaps another glorious destiny. As soon as she is bought & the lawyers deed made out, she will be no longer mine & I know you will do with her exactly what you think best for the good of the cause & the welfare of the Expedn.

I am not in despair abt the Resolute [not given to her by the Admiralty]. Our last letters from the Grinnells show that some representation is coming from New York & these paragraphs & letters in the Times (who sent you the telegraphic notice?) will work their way. If we could, or

better still if the Govt. could take upon themselves to send Resolute as Depot & store ship, so that you could be absolutely independent in your own little Fox, this I think wd be best of all, for you know my anxiety that you shd if practicable get down Peel Channel (not Sound) & then on to Westward. My anxiety abt Point Warren is none diminished by reading Dr Armstrong's book [Armstrong, 1857]—he speaks very plainly [about the initial hostility of Alaskan natives near Point Warren].

I have let Sir Rod. know that it was my intention to place my Expdn in your hands if you wd do me the favor to accept it & he earnestly replied that in such a step I had his most cordial approval as President of the Geogl Socy as well as in his private capacity. Genl Sabine zealously shares this view. Indeed he went so far as to say that except for the national character, he could not even wish for any Govt. aid. It wd be so much more honourable to all parties concerned, to be without it. We shall get some nevertheless & I for one shall not quarrel with it, even though the "glory"! Gen Sabine dwelt upon be thereby diminished.

Sir Roderick intends announcing the Exp next Monday at the Geogl. I wish he could attach your name to it, but perhaps you would think this too premature. Sir Rod. intends to couple the announcement of the Expedn with an invitation to the members to make a public subsn. which he will head with a donation of L 100. He will be followed by Mr. Tuke, MP for Bath L 50. This morning too I learn that the Fairholme family are going to send L 150 so that already there is a certain contribution of L 425—besides others which are promised.

As respects the instant closing with the Trustees for the Fox, I must beg you to consider the note I directed to you at Edinb containing the commn from Mr Tidd Pratt. I am sure you lose no time in letting me know how you understand it, & what shd be done in consequence, but in case of your having missed that note I may as well say that Mr Tidd Pratt called on me (not having previously answered my note) to advise me to wait for the auction on 5 of May, upon if she does not sell for 2000, he will have her up to London & sell her for whatever she will fetch, which he gave me to understand would almost certainly be less. He said he would not take less than 2000 at the auction, nor by private contract, since Mr Hall had estimated her at that sum. Being an executor joined with others, he sd he could not act otherwise. Do you think that notwithstanding I might make him an offer. And now in great haste & utterly ashamed of my scrawl, I must close.

I am glad you are coming so soon, the sooner the better.

Ever most truly yours
Jane Franklin

There it was—carte blanche for Captain M'Clintock: command of the ship, funds at his disposal to meet expenses, and a statement of Lady Franklin's "unlimited confidence" in his qualifications. Although Lady Franklin offered M'Clintock ownership of the *Fox*, he did not

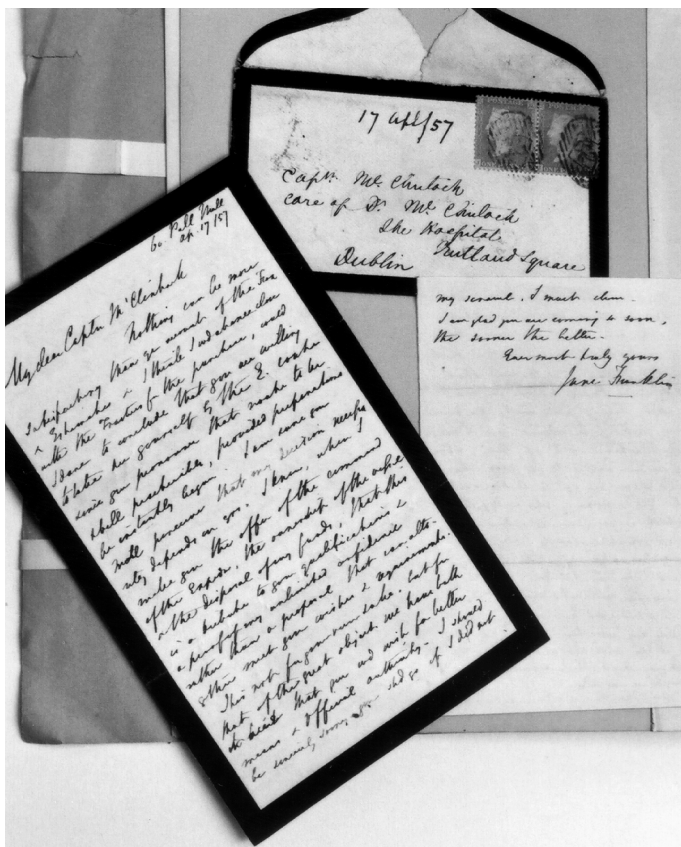


FIG. 2. A portion of Lady Franklin's letter of 17 April 1857, giving Captain M'Clintock command of the *Fox*, and related envelope (Franklin and Cracroft, 1857–1871).

accept. Researchers can draw some solace from the penultimate sentence, which indicates that Lady Franklin was at least aware of her challenging handwriting! This letter had an interesting history (Fig. 2). The envelope, postmarked AP 18 1857 and docketed by M'Clintock "Offer of command of Lady F's Expn.," survives. This document formed the foundation of a collection of letters, apparently assembled by M'Clintock, in what might be termed the "M'Clintock Portfolio" (Franklin and Cracroft, 1857–1871). M'Clintock referred to this letter at the outset of his hugely popular book on the expedition: "On the 18th April, 1857, Lady Franklin did me the honour to offer me the command of the proposed expedition – it was of course most cheerfully accepted" (M'Clintock, 1859:4).

THE "M'CLINTOCK PORTFOLIO"

Captain M'Clintock preserved many of the letters he received from Lady Jane Franklin and Sophia Cracroft in a heavy brown paper portfolio 10.3 inches high and 9.0 inches wide (Fig. 3). It was titled in a later hand, "Letters between Lady Jane Franklin and Admiral Sir Leo M'Clintock relating to the search for Sir J. Franklin on yacht *Fox* 1857." The letters, often with the envelope, were carefully mounted on 12 gilt-edged leaves. There are

14 letters, seven sent to him prior to departure of the *Fox* and another seven dated 1860–71, the latter date being four years before Lady Franklin's death (Table 1).

Also present are newspaper clippings of two long letters: one from Arctic explorer John Rae, published by *The Daily Telegraph* on 4 October 1880, and another from Allen Young, third officer on the *Fox*, published by *The Times* on 8 October 1880. Both letters relate to Franklin artifacts recovered by Lieutenant Schwatzka of the United States Army in 1879.

The portfolio also contains a rubbing and drawing of the famous bow piece of one of *Erebus*' boats that was discovered by M'Clintock (M'Clintock, 1859), then relocated by Schwatzka. The drawing is in M'Clintock's hand and presumably was made after Schwatzka sent the artifact to England in 1881 (Gilder, 1881).

After M'Clintock's death in 1907, the fate of the portfolio was unknown until early 1998. At that time, painters were preparing a wall in an upper office of Maggs Bros. When a bookcase was moved to the centre of the room, this packet came into view from behind it, and ultimately to my Arctic-Canada book and manuscript collection.

OTHER LETTERS IN THE M'CLINTOCK PORTFOLIO

Within a week, Lady Franklin closed the *Fox* (Fig. 4) purchase, and M'Clintock was given leave by the Admiralty, as informally sanctioned by Prince Albert, to take command. One might have assumed that, having granted her Captain broad authority and the means to carry it out, Lady Franklin would step back to let him outfit the *Fox*; however, it is well known that this was not her way. In the month of June alone, she and her devoted niece, Sophia Cracroft, sent six letters to M'Clintock, which are present in the M'Clintock Portfolio. Miss Cracroft's position as Lady Franklin's alter ego is apparent, as they never contradict one another, and frequently both write portions of the same letter. In a later letter, Miss Cracroft even reminds M'Clintock that "we are two persons & not one" (Franklin and Cracroft, 1857–1871: letter dated 1 May 1871).

Some interesting topics emerge from the pre-expedition letters. Primary among them was the preparation for presenting Captain M'Clintock to the Queen in a ceremony known as a *levée* (Owen, 1978:377–378). This took place on 18 June 1857, the introduction being made by Lord Wrottesley, President of the Royal Society. The ceremony gave the upcoming voyage a distinct Royal imprimatur.

A few applicants for berths in the *Fox* were rejected out of hand. Miss Cracroft wrote to M'Clintock on 9 June 1857: "My Aunt has an offer to go as Surgeon or anything from Dr. Hayes late of Kane's Expdn. A man who cd desert his chief is not fit to go again." Although terminally ill, Kane visited Lady Franklin in London late in 1856, when an incident involving Hayes was probably discussed. It occurred when Hayes, the ship's doctor, turned out to be the only officer prepared to lead eight crewmen electing to abandon the

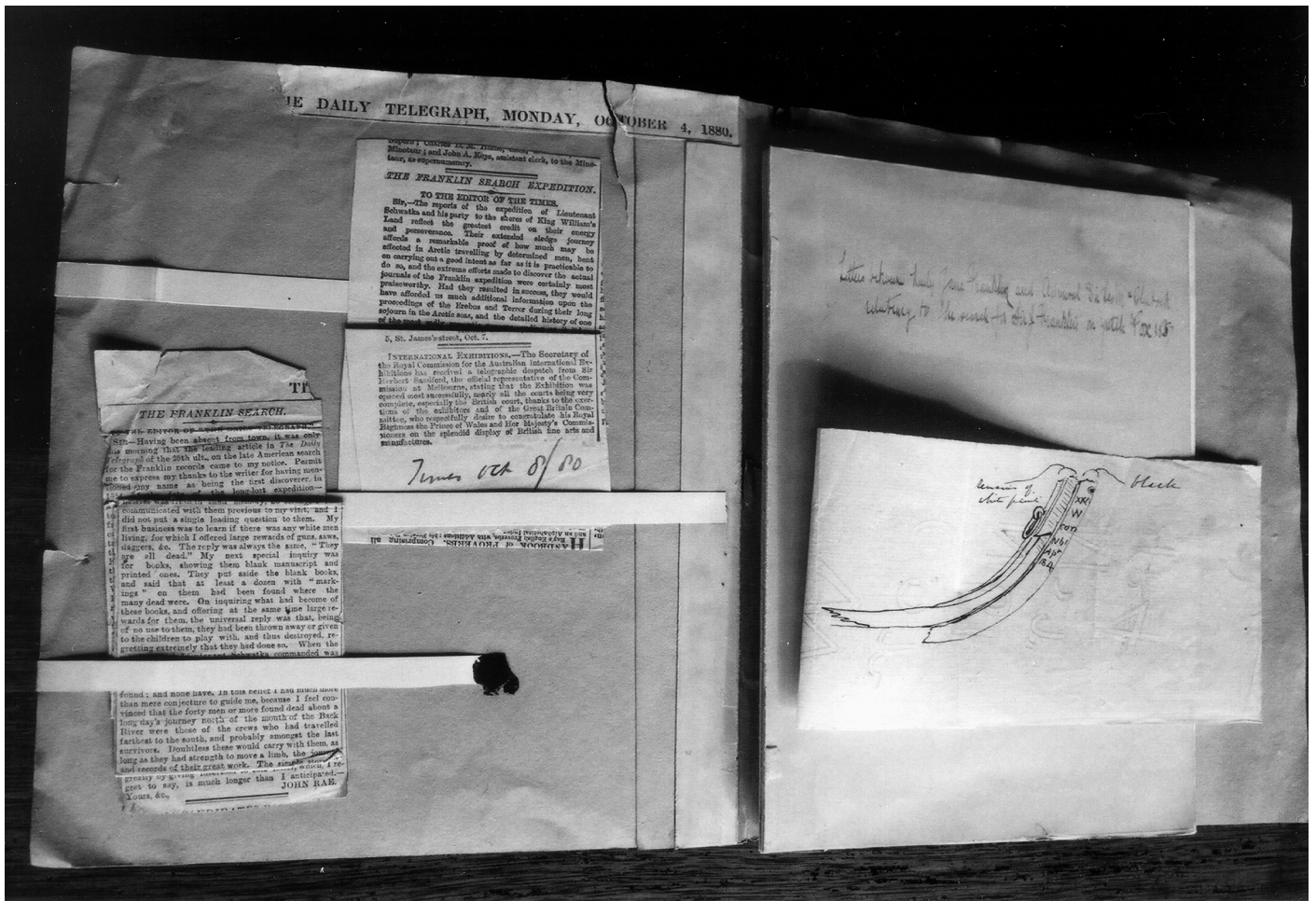


FIG. 3. The M'Clintock Portfolio.

ice-bound *Advance* in August 1854 in an unsuccessful attempt to seek assistance on the west coast of Greenland (Elder, 1858; Villarejo, 1965). There is uncertainty whether the group departing on this purported relief expedition left with Kane's blessing. In any event, the so-called "withdrawal party" was unsuccessful and ultimately returned to the *Advance* that December. It came close enough to a desertion that one cannot fault Miss Cracroft's characterization.

Other applicants found favour. Miss Cracroft, in her letter of 15 June 1857, states: "My aunt is anxious that Capt. May should do so [accompany her and Lady Franklin on the 20 June steamer to Aberdeen for the send-off]—in order to sketch the *Fox*. What a very nice person he is." Captain May was an accomplished artist who produced one of the three contemporary colour-plate books on the Franklin searches (May, 1855).

An interesting personal comment closed Lady Franklin's letter of 8 June 1857: "You have let Osborn's sister & the fairer ? Mrs. Crosse slip through your fingers. With this valuable hint I stop short for the present." Although Lady Franklin was looking out for the romantic interests of this most eligible bachelor, it is unlikely that M'Clintock had time to consort with many women at this point. In fact, he did not marry until 13 years later.



FIG. 4. The *Fox* docked in London after her return (Cheyne, 1860).

TABLE 1. Letters contained in the “M’Clintock Portfolio.”

Date of Letter	Signer(s)	Summary of Contents
17 April 1957	Jane Franklin	Offer of command of <i>Fox</i> expedition. Quoted above.
Undated end of letter	Sophia Cracroft	Preparations for the levée of 18 June 1857.
8 June and 9 June 1857	Sophia Cracroft and Jane Franklin	Request to attend Lord Mayor’s dinner on 16 June. More on the levée. Interest in having the <i>Fox</i> painted by an artist.
9 June 1857	Sophia Cracroft	Unsuccessful search for a metallic boat. Offer from Dr. Hayes to join expedition.
10 June 1857	Jane Franklin and Sophia Cracroft	Powder and an organ sent to the <i>Fox</i> . John Barrow sent “the monster blue book for you” (most likely Great Britain, 1855, which runs to 958 pages).
Undated, but June 1857	Jane Franklin	M’Clintock’s regrets on not being able to attend the Lord Mayor’s dinner are acknowledged. Statement that he must come for the levée.
15 June 1857	Sophia Cracroft and Jane Franklin	Iron boat cannot be obtained in time. Instruments sent by the Royal Society to be forwarded. Lunch is offered after the levée. Plum puddings on order.
9 January 1860	Jane Franklin	Offer of Captain Richards to mount a search expedition for the <i>Fox</i> is appreciated.
12 December 1860	Jane Franklin	Gratitude for M’Clintock’s accepting command of the expedition.
4 June 1868	Jane Franklin	Congratulations on a promotion. Social news.
1 September 1868	Sophia Cracroft and Jane Franklin	A seaman on Collinson’s <i>Enterprise</i> has asked for a promotion and is referred back to Collinson. A crewman, George Carey, of the <i>Fox</i> has died, and a payment to his widow is approved.
25 May 1869	Jane Franklin	Social news.
11 February 1871	Sophia Cracroft	Concern that John Rae’s bad feeling toward her aunt continues.
1 May 1871	Sophia Cracroft	More on John Rae. Her aunt’s health is poor.

As departure neared, letters of 10 and 15 June 1857 recounted a last-minute scramble to get supplies delivered—everything from light boats to scientific instruments to plum puddings.

Lady Franklin’s letter of 9 January 1860, written in the glow of M’Clintock’s triumphant return, points to political aspirations: “We must look out for a vacant Irish borough for you.” Nonetheless, M’Clintock chose a life-long naval career.

The long-running animosity between Lady Franklin and explorer John Rae is also represented in the correspondence. It stemmed from Rae’s assertion in the press, on his return from the Arctic in 1854, that the last survivors of the Franklin expedition had resorted to cannibalism (Delgado, 1999; Cookman, 2000). Though modern medical evidence supports Rae’s view, this possibility was abhorrent to Victorian society, and Lady Franklin took it as a slanderous affront to her late husband. A letter from Miss Cracroft to M’Clintock dated 11 February 1871 refers to Rae’s “roguery and malice,” noting that “You have been aware of Rae’s bad feeling for many years past and of his having poisoned poor old Arrowsmith’s [the renowned map maker] mind against us... Arrowsmith’s scowl is enough to terrify any peaceably disposed person, & assures a darker appearance toward us I think, every time we go to the Geographical!” Although M’Clintock’s expedition found numerous skeletal remains, there is no hint of cannibalism in his book. Whether this was the result of an overly brief field examination or of disinclination to raise a sensitive subject is not known.

The primary themes presented in these documents—Lady Franklin’s complete trust in Captain M’Clintock, her involvement in details of outfitting the *Fox*, and her views of certain Arctic personages of the era—are confirmed by the works listed as references. Consequently, these new documents tend to support, rather than revise, prior scholarship on these points. The remaining letters in the Portfolio

not commented on above deal with social matters and personal travel unrelated to Arctic history. Other manuscript documents related to the *Fox* expedition may be found at the Scott Polar Research Institute, the National Maritime Museum, and the British Library.

THE *FOX* SAILS—AND SUCCEEDS

The *Fox* intended to sail from Aberdeen on 30 June 1857 but was delayed. That day, after a final lunch on board, Lady Franklin and her party disembarked to three cheers from the crew. The harbour pilot then took temporary command and proceeded to run the ship aground on a bar, from which she was not extricated until the following day (M’Clintock, 1859). One suspects Lady Franklin was watching from shore. This incident would have been no small omen if she was the superstitious sort. Regrettably, there is no entry in Lady Franklin’s diary from this period, nor any other record that has come to light.

Then the waiting began, with months stretching into years. When the little *Fox* finally docked at London on 23 September 1859, it was immediately apparent that M’Clintock had solved much of the Franklin puzzle. Three sledging trips from the *Fox* in the spring of 1859 had discovered a plethora of relics and the only surviving document that told of Franklin’s death on 11 June 1847. M’Clintock was also able to piece together that harrowing tale of decline and disaster as the crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror* vainly sought to break out of their besetment (M’Clintock, 1859). The grim news was hardly unexpected in England, but at least it was news.

A shower of publicity ensued as M’Clintock and his officers were feted, promoted, and favourably reviewed by innumerable publications. Lady Franklin gave her Captain an elegant silver model of the *Fox*. A fair conclusion might be that all prior Franklin search expeditions were preamble,

while those after the *Fox* were merely working over old ground. M'Clintock's discovery of human remains and all manner of artifacts, including the only written record, made much of the expedition's fate evident to all. For the rest of his long life, M'Clintock's naval career was assured. On nearing mandatory retirement in 1884, he was awarded the rank of Admiral when one of the three permitted by the Royal Navy stepped aside, in recognition of M'Clintock's accomplishments, to make way for him (Markham, 1909). Of all his accolades, however, the most enduring is a plain marble tablet inside Westminster Abbey, under the memorial to Franklin. It reads:

Here Also Is Commemorated
Admiral Sir Leopold M'Clintock,
1818–1907,
Discoverer Of The Fate Of Franklin In 1859.

Lady Franklin and Captain M'Clintock had selected a small but sturdy vessel. The *Fox* went on to support a trans-Atlantic cable survey in 1860, then did service in the Danish trade with Greenland between 1864 and 1905. In 1912, she was grounded in Qeqertarsuaq Harbour on the west coast of Greenland, where remnants of her metal engine were still visible in 1994 (Erskine, 1997).

POSTSCRIPT BY SIR RODERICK MURCHISON

Some months after the *Fox* sailed, Lady Franklin's firm ally, Sir Roderick Murchison, was preparing his Anniversary Address for the 1857 Journal of the Royal Geographical Society. In the galley proof, found among the papers of Monckton Milnes, his conclusion originally read, "I only regret that their noble feats [those of earlier Franklin searchers] should not, for the honour of the nation, have been terminated by one final exhaustive public effort." With what might be seen as astute prescience, Murchison deleted the word "final" by hand, thereby explicitly encouraging further searches until the expedition's fate was determined (Murchison, 1857).

It was an accurate long-term assessment. Even to this day, the resting places of the *Erebus* and *Terror* are unknown, despite repeated investigation in likely locations. Magnetic anomalies in the seabed, created by the ship's iron components, should act as massive beacons, but the problem has proven difficult to solve. The Franklin mystery lives on.

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