

JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

The Barque "Dumfrieshire" off Great Orme's Head, North Wales
JOSEPH HEARD

Sold



Description

JOSEPH HEARD 1799-1859 English School The Barque "Dumfriesshire" off Great Orme's Head, North Wales Oil on canvas, signed, inscribed and indistinctly dated 185* 66 x 91.4 cms 26 x 36 inches Overall framed size 78.7 x 105 cms 31 x 41 3/8 ins

The former Curator of Oil Paintings at the National Maritime Museum, E H H Archibald, says of Joseph Heard in his Dictionary of Sea Painters in Europe and America that "...with Samuel Walters he must stand as the top-ranking Liverpool ship portraitist of the 19th century." He would have known the artist's work well as the National Maritime Museum has eleven paintings by Heard in its collection.

Joseph Heard was born on 7th March 1799 in Egremont near Whitehaven in Cumberland. His father, also Joseph, was a saddler and it is believed that the aspirant painter received some artistic training from John Clementson who was a local portrait painter. Joseph had a brother Isaac who painted portraits. It is possible that Joseph came across the work of H Collins who was a ship portraitist from the area as well as the important marine painter Robert Salmon who was from Whitehaven also.

However, little is known of his background apart from that he went to London in the mid 1820s but his stay was brief for he exhibited a portrait in a Whitehaven in 1826 and then at the Carlisle Academy in 1827. His professional career started in Whitehaven until he moved to Liverpool in 1834 together with his brother and they shared a studio, Joseph working on marines and Isaac on human portraits. It was there that he established himself as an eminent portrayer of the ships that plied their trade through Britain's second most important Empire port. There were many wealthy ship owners and captains eager to have their prized vessels portrayed on canvas and not necessarily off the coast of Liverpool.

He was a fine exponent of this genre of painting, with well observed and beautifully painted waves which are bright and lively. His knowledge of the ships depicted is plain to see and they are nearly always off a headland, lighthouse or port. He would have known well the coasts around Liverpool and its environs but the more distant and foreign topography would, as was common with marine painters at that time, probably have been based on prints or other paintings.

Heard's work has sometimes been confused with that of his fellow Liverpool marine artists, D MacFarlane and Samuel Walters but, as Archibald points out, "...he usually has a couple of idiosyncracies: a little curved bow wave, and a steamer usually somewhere appearing in the background of his paintings".

He remained in Liverpool for the rest of his life, and died in Upper Pitt Street on 17th November, 1859 at the age of 60. The Merseyside Maritime Museum, with nine examples, holds the largest collection of Heard's paintings apart from the National Maritime Museum. Other collections where his work can be seen include: Beacon Museum, Whitehaven; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; University of Liverpool; National Museum of Ireland...