



About the Exhibition

Death in the Ice – The Mystery of the Franklin Expedition explores the enduring mystery behind Sir John Franklin’s final tragic Expedition. Setting sail from Britain in 1845 to chart a Northwest Passage through the Arctic, the Expedition’s two ships and men never returned. Through historical artifacts and Inuit oral histories, this exhibition provides the most comprehensive account to date of Franklin’s final voyage.

Death in the Ice reveals what the search for the Northwest Passage meant to Britain, how the Franklin Expedition was prepared, what life was like on the ships, and what factors may have contributed to the loss of both ships and men. It also tells the story of the extensive search efforts that continue to this day, including the critical role played by Inuit in unravelling the mystery of the expedition’s disappearance.

This exhibition brings together more than 200 artifacts, many from the collections of the Canadian Museum of History and the National Maritime Museum in Britain. For the first time, these iconic objects — recovered in the decades following the Franklin Expedition — are displayed alongside new information and objects resulting from ongoing research by Parks Canada and the Government of Nunavut, including the discovery of the two expedition ships: HMS *Erebus* in 2014, and HMS *Terror* in 2016.

The exhibition is organized into eight zones, as described below.

Zone 1 The introduction tells the story of Sir John Franklin setting sail from Britain in 1845, in command of the Royal Navy’s most ambitious Northwest Passage expedition to date — never to return. This zone highlights the enduring mystery surrounding the Expedition and presents, for the first time, part of the ship’s wheel recovered from the wreck site of *HMS Erebus*. This zone also emphasizes the critical contributions made by Inuit traditional knowledge and oral histories towards a better understanding of what happened to the Franklin Expedition in the years after it entered the Northwest Passage.

Zone 2 uses Inuit and European maps and artifacts to explore more than 400 years of efforts to chart a Northwest Passage. This zone also reveals the lengthy preparations required for such a journey, including alterations to the Franklin Expedition vessels, which visitors can learn about through models, plans and sketches. Personal objects introduce visitors to the Expedition’s senior officers.

Zone 3 invites visitors to experience life on board HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* from what the men ate, to how order and discipline were maintained. Artifacts provide a window onto life on board a crowded, ice-bound vessel, revealing how the men likely kept occupied on a daily basis, including leisure activities and scientific pursuits. Using historical ship plans, visitors can experience the limited space available for the men and their provisions. In the sub-zone **Tununiq – The Back of Beyond**, Inuit oral history describes where the ships became icebound: a particularly desolate area that Inuit associated with unrelenting cold, poor hunting and starvation.

Zone 4 uses works of art and explorers' accounts to reveal how profoundly the Arctic had captured the British imagination, and how Lady Jane Franklin fanned that fascination to spark search efforts for her missing husband. The sub-zone **The Search for the Franklin Expedition** includes artifacts and information recovered during the many search efforts that took place between 1847 and 1880. This zone includes the Victory Point Note, the only firsthand account of the Expedition's tragic end. Inuit oral histories and artifacts highlight the critical role Inuit played in revealing much of the Franklin story.

Zone 5 explores theories about what led to the deaths of the Expedition's 129 men. Forensic studies support Inuit accounts of starvation and cannibalism. A craniofacial reconstruction, part of a study led by Government of Nunavut researchers, brings visitors face to face with two of the men from the ill-fated expedition.

Zone 6 tells the exciting story of the finding of HMS *Erebus* in 2014 and HMS *Terror* in 2016. Visitors will be able to see the davit pintle — part of a device used to lower boats from a ship — that became an important clue to the discovery of HMS *Erebus*, Franklin's flagship. Visitors can also see the sonar image of HMS *Erebus* as it appeared to underwater archaeologists on the day of its discovery, and take a virtual tour of the vessel, led by a Parks Canada underwater archaeologist. This zone also includes objects recovered from the ship. Of particular note is a bronze bell, the first artifact to be raised from the wreck of HMS *Erebus*.

Zone 7 commemorates the men of the Franklin Expedition. Personal items, including a medal awarded posthumously to a Franklin officer, and silverware bearing family crests and mottos, are combined with daguerreotype images and a full list of the names of the 129 men who sailed into the Northwest Passage onboard HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, never to return. This zone emphasizes the humanity of the officers and crew, who died far from home.

Zone 8 traces the impact the Expedition has had on the popular imagination, showing how — more than 170 years after HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* set sail — the mystery of Franklin's ill-fated 1845 Northwest Passage Expedition continues to fascinate us.