

A Hull Whaler off a headland
JOHN ASKEW

Sold



REF: 334639

Height: 65.8 cm (25.9")

Width: 97 cm (38.2")

Framed Height: 71.5 cm (28.1")

Framed Width: 101.5 cm (40")

Description

There is little known about the life of John Askew or his artistic training and in this he is like his contemporary Robert Willoughby, 1768-1843, the pioneer of the Hull school of ship painting and portraiture who started earning a living as a house painter but turned to easel painting later. It is assumed that Askew was from the North-East of England and he plied his trade as a ship portraitist, depicting the vessel for the owner or the captain. These ship portraits differ from marine paintings in that the vessel is the prime object in the painting with other craft and the landscape often subordinate to it. Often in the 18th and early 19th centuries, the ship would be shown in three positions with the focal point of the painting displaying the broadside and the other two showing the stern and the bow. The correct details of the ship were of paramount importance as the commissioner knew his ship very well so the artist had to be not only technically able but know how a ship sat in the water and how the wind filled the sails and for all this, the financial remuneration was fairly modest.

John Askew's work is not common but it would seem that he was influenced stylistically by Robert Dodd 1748-1815 and indeed, the former is known to have produced occasional copies of Dodd's work. There is a naval engagement depicting Warren's action on 23rd April 1794 near the Channel Islands, which Askew signed and dated 1805, which was taken from the original painting or else from the engraving and he was probably commissioned to produce this by some other naval office involved in the action.

The National Maritime Museum has "A whaler and other vessels in a light breeze" in its collection and the Quadrant in North Tyneside has "The Lifeboat Northumberland." A few other examples have appeared: "The brig Ceres in three positions off the entrance to Whitehaven", "HM frigate Arethusa inflicting the final blows on the French frigate Pomone off the Channel Islands " and "British ships off the coast."

Bibliography:

Dictionary of Sea Painters - E H H Archibald

Dictionary of British Marine Painters - Arnold Wilson

British 19th Century Marine Painting - Denys Brook-Hart

HULL WHALING SHIPS

Hull had a tradition of sea faring and marine-based commerce since the Middle Ages and this had concentrated mainly on the ports bordering the Baltic Sea and the Scandinavian Peninsula. Whaling had been part of this since the late 16th century but suffered a setback as a consequence of the upheaval of the Civil War, the expansion of Dutch activity in the hunting and the political manoeuvring of the London-based Muscovy Company which wanted a monopoly.

However in 1732 the government yielded to lobbying from the South Sea Company and agreed to subsidise the whaling industry so that even a failed trip would receive some recompense towards the costs incurred. At the same time restrictive trade tariffs were placed on foreign imported whale products. In 1754 an expedition to the Arctic financed by James Hamilton, set out from Hull and from then the trade grew,

particularly when the waters around Greenland became a significant source of whales. In 1766 Samuel Stand...