



# James Fitzjames: The Mystery Man of the Franklin Expedition

*William Battersby*

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James Fitzjames was a hero of the early nineteenth-century Royal Navy. A charismatic man with a wicked sense of humour, he pursued his naval career with wily determination. When he joined the Franklin Expedition at the age of 32 he thought he would make his name. But instead the expedition completely disappeared and he never returned. Its fate is one of history's last great unsolved mysteries, as were the origins and background of James Fitzjames – until now.

Fitzjames packed a great deal into his thirty-two years. He had sailed an iron paddle steamer down the River Euphrates and fought with spectacular bravery in wars in Syria and China. But Fitzjames was not what he seemed. He concealed several secrets, including the scandal of his birth, the source of his influence and his plans for after the Franklin Expedition.

In this first complete biography of the captain of the HMS *Erebus*, William Battersby draws extensively on Fitzjames' personal letters and journals – most never published before – as well as official naval records, to strip away 200 years of misinformation and half-truths and enables us to understand for the first time this intriguing man and his significance for the Franklin Expedition.

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