



## ***Trapped*: Cinematic Novel Fictionalizes John Franklin's Ill-Fated 1845 Northwest Passage Expedition**

*Dr John Roobol's 'Trapped' fuses fact and fiction, in a unique expedition diary format, to tell the harrowing story of John Franklin's 1845 attempt to navigate the Northwest Passage, which ended in 129 perished brave souls. The lives of these heroes and the expedition they so courageously accepted, against the odds, is now celebrated amid a modern resurgence of interest, after the trip's two lost vessels were discovered by Parks Canada.*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**United Kingdom** – John Franklin and his 120+ sailors set off in 1845 to navigate the untouched waters of the Northwest Passage; an expedition that had become the pride of the Royal Navy and would send its best men to achieve hero status.

The crew did become heroes, but for their sacrifice instead of success – which saw the loss of 129 men and two ships.

It's a story that Dr John Roobol has spent thousands of hours investigating, particularly in light of the 2016 discoveries of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. Along with a non-fiction book that reconstructs the story, 'Franklin's Fate', Roobol is also delighted to announce 'Trapped' – a novel that takes readers inside the voyage in all of fiction's glory to resolve the 170 year old mystery.

Synopsis:

This is a fictional account of the lost 1845 Royal Navy Expedition led by Sir John Franklin in search of a North-West Passage. Both ships and all 129 picked men vanished. The wrecks of the ships were finally discovered by a consortium led by Parks Canada in 2014 and 2016. The story is based on a reconstruction of the events of the expedition ('Franklin's Fate') published simultaneously with 'Trapped'.

The story is told in the form of an expedition diary. It begins with the expedition in winter quarters on Beechey Island under the command of Sir John Franklin. Their first year had been a great success and they had explored Wellington Channel and sailed around Cornwallis Island. In the second year the expedition sails south between Prince of Wales and Somerset islands to arrive at the northern point of King William Island. They first explore the open water to the east but find the water too shallow for the heavily laden ships. The officers are divided on the next move but aboard the flagship Erebus, Sir John enthusiastically supported by his second in command Commander Fitzjames take the initiative and order both ships into the ice stream to the west of the island.

In the third year a sledge party of two officers and six men complete the mapping of a North-West Passage along the east side of the island. On their return to the ships they find expedition leader Sir John has died. Polar veteran Captain Crozier takes command. All hope for an early release from the ice and a return home for Christmas 1847. But there is no summer in 1847 and the ships remain trapped. Ice movements throw H.M.S. Terror onto her port side. There is fear that Erebus might suffer the same fate. So a base camp is constructed on the nearby shore. The expedition has been supplied for only three years, so preparations to abandon the ships in early 1848 are made.

Winter 1847-48 with both crews crowded aboard Erebus becomes hell with twenty deaths. In the Arctic night, the dead are placed in bunks aboard Terror. The tinned food is condemned and the crews put on short rations.

1848, the fourth year is a disaster. The 105 survivors retreat south hauling four boats and sledges with camping equipment. But the men are weak and continuous snowstorms slow them in their unsuitable naval uniforms and leather boots and shoes. Only Captain Crozier and two boats reach Terror Bay where the summer hunting is reported as good. The other two boats are halted in Erebus Bay by Commander Fitzjames. About a half of the men are too weak to continue or to return. The Captains meet and decided to return to Erebus. The sick and weak are left in three camps together with men to hunt for them. About a half of the men get back to Erebus. Surprisingly she is released in the summer thaw. The mixed crew of survivors work her ninety miles south to Imnguyaaluk Island, one of the Royal Society Islands off the west cape of King William Island. Her arrival is too late to save the men left in the three camps who have died there.

There the ship remains for two years and joint summer and winter hunts are carried out by the crew and the Inuit. A boat is sent north back along the route followed to seek help. In the fifth year Captain Crozier dies and Commander Fitzjames takes command. Shortly afterwards in summer 1850 most of the remaining crew set out on a second retreat. Only around thirteen men remain aboard Erebus with Commander Fitzjames in command. They have a camp on Imnguyaaluk Island and cook seal there using blubber. The men wear blackened soot and oil impregnated clothing as most of the spare clothing was left ashore before the 1848 retreat.

In summer 1850 Erebus is released and sailed another sixty miles to the south and into the known summer open water passage along the north coast of the American continent. Captain Fitzjames hopes to sail her along this passage to the west to emerge in Bering Strait. But he dies. His small crew place his body in the great cabin. Most of them leave by boat to attempt the open water passage to the Mackenzie River. Only four men who are the best hunters and the ship's dog Neptune (now trained to sniff out seals in the winter ice) remain. They wait for two years but no help arrives.

*So in 1850 they set out on their own escape attempt via the Melville peninsula. Only two reach their destination. By 1852 after seven years in the ice the two men settle down with the Inuit and have families. In 1868 American newspaper publisher and explorer Charles Francis Hall follows them onto Melville Peninsula looking for survivors. But the last two men avoid him as they now have Inuit families and have become Inuit.*

“If we want people to learn more about the story, we need to reach out to them in an accessible way, and there’s no better way than fiction,” explains the author, a retired Geologist. “I’ve released this novel in unison with ‘Franklin’s Fate’, which has a much more factual focus, and hope to capitalize on the renewed interest the voyages have garnered since the vessels have been found.”

Continuing, “The book calls on many of the testimonies, documents and facts used for my other book, so is about as realistic as we can get at this point in time. Readers can stand in Franklin’s shoes and those of his men, as they feel their plight, struggle alongside them and see what happens when the pride of a Navy comes up against an insurmountable threat.”

‘Trapped’, from The Conrad Press, is due for release on June 1st, 2019.

#### **About the Author:**

Dr M. John Roobol is a retired geologist who spent his life working in remote and exotic places away from civilisation. His Ph.D. was in Iceland, followed by expeditions to the Antarctic and the Andes mountains of South America. He worked four years in the Caribbean and developed a lifelong interest in the Caribbean volcanoes. He spent two years on two sailing geological expeditions one from Canada to the Caribbean and the other from New Zealand around the Pacific to Australia. He has worked for 30 years in Saudi Arabia, and still returns as a consultant. Much of his Arabian work was by helicopter over the vast then-pristine desert of the Arabian Peninsula. One of his interests is human behaviour outside the confines of civilisation, as observed on his expeditions to various places. He has a biochemist wife, four children and five grandchildren. He spends the year between England, Wales, Saudi Arabia and Australia.

He became interested in the lost Franklin expedition when in 1963, a fellow undergraduate at Imperial College, London gave him a copy of McClintock’s book ‘The Voyage of the Fox’. This described a successful search for remains of the lost Franklin 1845 Arctic expedition seeking a North-West Passage. However the book raised more questions than it answered. How did two specially strengthened ships and 129 picked officers and men all succumb despite a vast search organised by the Admiralty as well as private expeditions for the missing expedition? The author made a study of the lost expedition as his first retirement task. The work took seven years and has resulted in two books to be published simultaneously by The Conrad Press of Canterbury.

‘Franklin’s Fate’ is the larger book and is a complete review of everything known about the lost expedition. It relies heavily on Inuit testimony and was written for the arm-chair detective. The evidence is presented in steps each leading to the goal of a reconstructed history of what happened to the ships and men. The second book ‘Trapped’ is shorter and is a fictional account of the expedition based on the reconstruction. In it, it is possible to fill in chapters for which there is no evidence nor Inuit testimony. The author suggests reading ‘Franklin’s Fate’ first and ‘Trapped’ second.