

The Opening of New London Bridge

David Cox

Sold



REF: 1635

Height: 21.9 cm (8.6")

Width: 36.5 cm (14.4")

Description

David Cox (1783-1859)

The Opening of New London Bridge 1831

Watercolour and pencil on two sheets of joined paper
21.9 by 36.5 cm., 8 3/4 by 14 1/2 in.

Provenance:

Greenwood Collection;

Christie's 3rd November 1895, lot 73

In 1799, a competition was held to design a bridge to replace the old London Bridge which was over 600 years old. The completion was won by John Rennie (1761-1821) who planned a bridge of five stone arches. Work began after Rennie's death in 1824 under the supervision of his son, with the bridge being sited 100 feet upstream of the old bridge which was knocked down after the new bridge opened.

Rennie's bridge was 928 feet long and 49 feet wide. The present watercolour shows the official opening by King William IV and Queen Adelaide on 1st August 1831. The Times described the ceremony as 'the most splendid spectacle that has been witnessed on the Thames for many years'. This view is taken from the south bank of the Thames, looking towards north towards the tower of the Monument and the church of St. Magnus. The royal standard can be seen flying from the huge pavilion erected at the north end of the bridge where a banquet was held. The royal party had embarked at Somerset House and processed to the bridge between a line of boats and barges. The King disembarked at 4pm and walked up red-carpeted stairs to the pavilion.

An oil of the subject of Clarkson Stanfield taken from the same viewpoint is in the Royal collection and a finished watercolour by Cox is the Yale Center for British Art. The Yale view omits the flags on the bridge so was probably drawn on the previous day.