

# Hordern House

---

## VANCOUVER

**GILLRAY, James** The Caneing in Conduit Street. Dedicated to the Flag Officers of the British Navy. *London, Hannah Humphrey, 1 October 1796*

Etching with original handcolouring, 250 x 345 mm.; in fine condition, mounted.

Rare satirical cartoon by James Gillray (1756-1815), ridiculing the explorer George Vancouver, who had served on Cook's second and third voyages, for his harsh treatment of the crew, specifically Lord Camelford, during the surveying voyage of the *Discovery*.

During a short but adventurous life, Thomas Pitt, second Baron Camelford (1775-1804), ran away from school at the age of fourteen to enter the Royal Navy. He joined the *Guardian*, the store-ship for the colony at New South Wales, which was soon wrecked off the Cape of Good Hope. In 1791 Pitt joined the crew of the *Discovery*, under Vancouver, and continued with her for three years sailing to Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii, en route to undertake an intensive hydrographic survey of the Northwest Coast of America.

Conditions aboard the *Discovery* were unhappy. Throughout the voyage Vancouver's health deteriorated and he suffered frightening mood swings, probably caused by his having contracted Graves' disease or myxoedema, debilitating afflictions of the thyroid. His crew was terrorised by his unpredictable bouts of rage, and the brutal punishments he meted out, which ran at ten times the average rate for the navy.

The culmination of Camelford's punishments came when he was flogged for sleeping on watch, discharged to the shore at Hawaii and left to find his own way home to England. Determined to avenge this dishonour, he issued a challenge to Vancouver, who attempted to have someone duel Camelford on his behalf. An outraged Camelford took matters into his own hands when he chanced upon Vancouver in the street and attempted to cane him, but was prevented from doing so by bystanders.

News of the affair, greatly helped by this caricature, left the ailing Vancouver a laughing stock, despite it being widely held that his assailant was deranged. Gillray added further salt to Vancouver's wounds by depicting him wearing the feather cloak given by the Hawaiian King Kamehameha I as a gift for George III. The legend on the inside of the cloak notes that he "forgot" to deliver it to the king. It was not actually presented to the king until 1797. Vancouver was subject to numerous charges that he profited from the voyage, and the Black Otter skins hanging in the shop window to the right of the image may well refer to attempts to capitalise on discoveries made on the Northwest Coast.

This is a fine, fresh example of this very rare etching.  
BM, 8823; Wright and Evans, 154.

\$A18750

Click [here](#) to see an image of this item.

This item is listed on [Bibliopoly](#) by [Hordern House](#); click [here](#) for further details.