

**Researched by A.C.F. David Esq**

**Captain James King, Royal Navy and St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock**

On the south wall of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock, there is a memorial tablet, see below for the inscription, to the Reverend James King, one time Dean of Raphoe in Ireland, and his wife Anne erected by their four surviving sons.

Also commemorated on this tablet is 'their beloved brother' Captain James King, Royal Navy, 'the friend and colleague of Captain James Cook in his last voyage round the world'.

Captain King was born in Clitheroe, Lancashire, the son of the Reverend James King, who was at that time curate of St Mary Magdalene, Clitheroe. According to the parish registers young James King was baptised on 13th July 1750, presumably shortly after his birth. At an early age King entered Clitheroe Grammar School, where he remained until he was 12 years old.

He then entered the navy on 19th November 1762 (not unusual in those days for someone so young) under the patronage of his kinsman William Norton, serving under him first in the *Assistance* as an able seaman, although in fact he was treated as a junior officer, and then as a midshipman in the *William and Mary*. After further service as an able seaman or midshipman in the *Gibraltar* and *Liverpool*, King joined the *Guernsey*, Captain James Chads, on 15th March 1768 as an able seaman for service on the Newfoundland station under Commodore Hugh Palliser, a friend and patron of Captain Cook.

Having passed for lieutenant on 7th March 1769, King was promoted to this rank on 10th January 1771, serving in several ships before being placed on half pay in May 1773. He was then granted leave to go abroad on his private affairs for one year, spending this time in Paris in scientific study. This was followed by a period with his brother Walter at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he made the acquaintance of the Reverend Thomas Hornsby, Savilian Professor of Astronomy, who recommended him for Cook's third voyage. On board the *Resolution* King shared the duties of astronomer with Cook, taking astronomical observations on board by sextant to establish the *Resolution's* position at sea and on shore by sextant or by astronomical quadrant to establish the geographical position of salient points during the course of Cook's surveys. Thus King's geographical positions were an important contribution to the accuracy of the various surveys carried out during the voyage.

Following the death of Cook, King remained in the *Resolution* but on the death of Charles Clerke, Cook's successor, King was appointed in command of the *Discovery*, the *Resolution's* consort, remaining in her for the rest of the voyage. After his return to England King was very much involved in the publication of the official account of Cook's third voyage, writing the third volume at Woodstock, near Oxford, where his brother Thomas was rector of St Mary Magdalene. But shortly

after his return King was promoted post captain and appointed in command of the *Crocodile* on Channel service.

Then towards the end of 1781 he was appointed in command of the *Resistance*, 40 guns, as escort for a large fleet of merchantmen to the West Indies, returning to England shortly afterwards with his health much impaired. He then returned to Woodstock to continue to work on Cook's third voyage. After the publication of the three-volume account of the voyage, advancing tuberculosis drove him to Nice, accompanied by his friends James Trevenen, who had served with him in the *Resolution and Discovery*, and Captain William Young, who had served with him in the *Guernsey*, where he died on 16th November 1784 at the age of 34, although the memorial tablet in Woodstock parish church states erroneously that he died in his 32nd year.

He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1782 in recognition of his astronomical observations during Cook's third voyage. He was also made an honorary L.L.D. Oxon.

Near this Place are interred the Remains of JAMES KING  
of SKELLANDS in the W. Riding of the Co<sup>y</sup> of YORK. D.D. and Dean of  
RAPHOE  
who died Ap<sup>l</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 1795; and of ANNE his Wife.  
Daughter, and Coheiress of JOHN WALKER Esq<sup>r</sup> of HUNGRIL, in the same  
Riding,  
who died Nov<sup>r</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> 1794: Both in the 81<sup>st</sup>Year of their Age.

Their four surviving Sons erected this MONUMENT  
in pious Remembrance of the best of Parents,  
and with grateful Acknowledgements to the Divine Providence  
for the invaluable Blessings of their EXAMPLE & INSTRUCTION:  
And also to the MEMORY of their beloved BROTHER  
JAMES KING Capt<sup>n</sup> in the Royal Navy L.L.D. & F.R.S.  
The Friend and Colleague of Capt<sup>n</sup> COOKE in his last Voyage round the WORLD  
The History of which, from the time of the Death  
of that celebrated NAVIGATOR, He wrote at WOODSTOCK,  
during the short Intervals of his Retirement from the Publick Services of his  
Country:  
in which, his laborious, & almost uninterrupted Exertions,  
brought on a premature, & deeply lamented Death.  
He died in the 32<sup>d</sup> Year of his Age, 1784  
At NICE, where He is interred.