



James Cook and his wife Grace lived in a cottage in the village of Marton in Cleveland, where he worked as a farm labourer. It was here on 27th October 1728, their second son, James Cook was born, destined to cross the oceans of the World and venture further as any man might. As a small boy, the family moved to Aireyholme Farm, three miles from Great Ayton.

Thomas Skottowe, the Lord of the Manor of Ayton, who owned the lands on which the Cook family farmed, was a benevolent and kindly master caring for his tenants. He had noticed that the second son of the Cook family, was a bright boy called James and arranged for him to attend the local village school.

It was in Staithes that James first learnt the art of quietly bringing a small boat and navigating a passage to the shore in the dark. This was a necessity for the coastal smugglers of the day. James Cook's experience amongst the folk of Staithes fishing community was to be a vital and direct influence in shaping his career. He soon found that a shop-keeper's boy was not the life for him and expressed his feelings to William Sanderson, having the desire to go to sea.

William Sanderson took James to the port of Whitby, where he introduced him to his friend, John Walker, who was a trader, with ships at sea. When James Cook came to take up a post in Whitby, he arrived to a very busy seaport, where ships were being built, sail making, rope and cordage skills prevailed in their manufacture, together with all the allied trades that went with these. The ancient town and seaport of "Whitby", with its monastic and maritime associations, stretching back to the earliest times, was the very port exactly fitted to capture the imagination and foster the ambitions of such a man as James Cook.

The "Freelove" on which Captain Cook served his first voyage to sea, was about 450 tons in weight. James soon made his mark and came under the approving eye of his masters. James helped in the rigging of a new ship being built by the Walker family of Whitby. She was larger than the Freelove, being about 600 tons and was named "The Three Brothers" During the winter months, when the weather was too severe and the sea too heavy to sail in, the ships underwent the re-rigging, cleaning of the ship's bottom and general overhaul. James learnt all these skills and they would hold him in good stead on his voyages around the world. At these times of winter, James Cook and other prentice lads staying at the masters house, worked the days on the ships and spent long evenings reading the skills required to be masters of their own ships.



William Scoresby (senior), was born on 3rd May 1760, in the village of Cropton, twenty miles south west of Whitby, on a small farming estate called Nutholm. His attendance at school was very spasmodic, due partly to the distance from his home plus the adverse weather conditions encountered. At the age of nine his father removed him from school to work the farm. At one stage he went to work for some neighbouring farmers, living with them and receiving such unpleasant treatment, he resolved not to work in the profession his father wished him to pursue.

He came to Whitby in the winter of 1779 and secured a three year apprenticeship on the ship called "Jane", owned by Mr Chapman, a Quaker. As the ship was laid off for the winter period, he returned to his father's farm and studied all he could for his new profession, being particularly interested in navigation. On his return he married Mary Smith, the daughter of a yeoman farmer. They had three children, Mary, Sarah and William (junior). In the Spring of 1785, he returned to the sea on the Greenland whaler "Henrietta", under Captain Crispin Bean and by his sixth voyage had risen to second officer, the "Specksioneer". This title is of Dutch origin and applied to the officer in charge of all the fishing apparatus and the principal harpooner. In 1790, Captain Bean informed the ship's owners that he would shortly be retiring and suggested that Scoresby (senior) be his replacement and was appointed the new Captain over the protests from the crew. On the next voyage Scoresby (senior) experience many mutinous events. The next voyage Scoresby (senior) engaged himself upon, he insisted he would pick his crew. His careful choices paid dividends, returning to port having caught eighteen whales, the far by biggest catch seen in Whitby.

In 1802, Scoresby (senior) was invited to join a partnership of eight people, to build a new Greenland whaler in the town of Whitby. Each share cost £ 1000, two shares being owned by the builders, Fishburn and Broderick. Scoresby (senior) took up one share and was paid wages, on a par with those he had been earning on the Dundee. The ship was launched on 21st February 1803 and was named the "Resolution". (not to be confused with the Captain Cook's Resolution). She sailed on 21st March and on the 18th April she caught her first whale. It was on this voyage William Scoresby (junior) then aged 14 years of age was apprenticed. He graduated to mate at the age of 17 and at the age of 21 years, the earliest one could take command of a ship, took over the Resolution. William Scoresby (senior) in the year 1870, invented what we call today "the crows nest".



Frank Sutcliffe born at Headingley, Leeds in 1853, set up his own professional photographic studio in a dis-used jet workshop along Waterloo Yard, Whitby in 1875 and eventually established himself in more suitable premises in Skinner Street, Whitby .Frank Meadow Sutcliffe is probably Whitby's most famous artist. He became a pioneer in his chosen art form - photography. Sutcliffe's equipment was unwieldy and cumbersome. His full plate cameras were constructed from brass and mahogany, complete with hand bellows. Sutcliffe worked in Whitby from the beginning of his career in 1875, using a technique that employed wet collodian, but he soon had to move with the times, turning to the use of dry plates.

Despite his awkward equipment, Sutcliffe was able to create images of unsurpassed elegance and sensitivity. His photographs, almost all of Whitby and its environs, captured a truth not available to those working with brushes or pencils. ore than any other artist of his time Sutcliffe was able to illustrate real life. Unlike a modern photographer who can snap off rolls of film and choose the best image, each of Sutcliffe's shots had to be carefully composed. His obvious love of Whitby, Staithes and other nearby villages shines through.

Sutcliffe retired from photography in 1922 and became curator of the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society, a position he held until his death in 1941. The fact that the local clergy of Whitby 'excommunicated' Sutcliffe for showing this print to the corruption of the other 'sex' has at times tended to eclipse the sheer artistic and technical brilliance of this photography.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century the manufacture of jewellery from locally mined jet was one of Whitby's main industries. Situated in Haggerstgate and owned by William Wright, this was the only jet workshop equipped with gas-engine powered lathes. Today you can still see jet being made in the Jet museum on upper church street near the Duke of York pub inside ls all the old tools they used to use.

A Whitby 'cat' aground near Belle Island in the upper harbour. A 'cat' was a boat with a flat keel designed for loading and unloading cargo, very often coal, from the beach. The 'Endeavour', the first ship used by Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery, was also a Whitby built 'cat'. Captain James Cook chose this kind of vessel because it had a flat bottomed keel and was large enough to hold all the stores for a very long voyage.