



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about SAILORS OF THE HUNDRED PARISHES

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the British Royal Navy was the largest in the world, employing a vast number of men, so it is not entirely surprising that some of them came from the Hundred Parishes. Although far from the sea, there are memorials to sailors in a number of parishes.

There are at least three local memorials to men who served with Captain James Cook (1728 – 1779) on his three great voyages of discovery between 1768 and 1779.

Wethersfield Church has a memorial to Captain Charles Clerke who circumnavigated the globe three times and was second-in-command to James Cooke on one voyage. Captain Clerke is little known today, although a fitting tribute exists in the form of a book, *In the Wake of Captain Cook: the life and times of Captain Charles Clerke, RN, 1741-1779*.

Little Hadham churchyard is the final resting place of Captain William Harvey, one of only seven men who accompanied Cook on each of his three voyages. His gravestone stands just outside the church porch; Hundred Parishes walk number 115 passes his former home.

There is a memorial in Clavering Church to the widow of William Wales, an eminent astronomer who accompanied Captain Cook on his second voyage.

Let us take a closer look at the polymer £20 banknote that was first issued in 2020.



It features the British artist JMW Turner (1775 – 1851) and his painting, *The Fighting Temeraire*. The painting shows HMS Temeraire in 1838, being towed by a steam tug towards a scrapyard at Rotherhithe on the Thames. It was a sad ending for a ship that achieved considerable fame at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The Temeraire was immediately astern of Nelson's flagship, the Victory, and played a major part in the battle, her crew capturing two enemy ships while suffering heavy casualties.

The captain of the *Temeraire* at Trafalgar was Eliab Harvey (1758 to 1830). He was a pall-bearer at the funeral of Admiral Nelson who died in the battle.

Eliab Harvey was later knighted and promoted to the rank of admiral. His family home was Rolls Park at Chigwell in Essex. He shared his time between naval duties and being a Member of Parliament. Sir Eliab Harvey's final resting place is in the Hundred Parishes, in the Harvey family crypt beneath St Andrew's Church, Hempstead. He is one of around fifty members of the extended Harvey family who have each been committed to lead coffins, some of which are decorated with a three-dimensional likeness of the deceased's face. The crypt is usually sealed but there is a memorial plaque to Sir Eliab Harvey inside the church.

Earlier, we mentioned the memorial to Captain William Harvey outside Little Hadham church. As he is not in the Hempstead crypt, he may be from a different Harvey family.

A print of *The Fighting Temeraire* hangs in Saffron Walden in The Temeraire, a Wetherspoon pub whose walls are richly decorated with pictures and information about local history.

Just outside the porch of Wendens Ambo Church is the tomb of William Nicholson who died in 1886 in his 104th year, "a midshipman in Nelson's Vanguard". Nelson commanded HMS Vanguard at the Battle of the Nile in 1798.

Hunsdon's parish church is not usually open, but when inside it is difficult to avoid the dramatic memorial pictured below, with its clear naval connection. Whilst not very obvious from the inscriptions, it honours members of the Charrington family. The memorial is engraved with the initials and year of death of members of the Charrington family who lived next door to the church at Hunsdon House in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Grade I-listed house dates mostly from the 19th century and stands partly on foundations that once supported Henry VIII's Hunsdon Palace.



The patriarch of the Charrington family was Spencer Charrington, 1818 to 1904, who for many years served as Member of Parliament for Mile End. His place on the memorial is simply marked "SC 1904". Many of his children are similarly recorded with just their initials and year of death. The anchor itself has a full description, explaining that it was made from the timbers of HMS Caledonia, 1802 – 1907 and marks the last resting place of Rear Admiral R.A.J. Montgomerie who died in 1908.

A number of memorial plaques on Hunsdon's church walls help to piece together the story: Montgomerie was the son-in-law of Spencer Charrington, while HMS Caledonia was a training ship under Montgomerie's command. Further wall plaques honour two more of Spencer Charrington's sons, both of whom were officers in the Royal Navy: Captain Eric Charrington and Lieutenant Harold Charrington. The latter was killed by Bedouin Arabs in the desert of Mount Sinai, Arabia in 1882 while on "an important and confidential mission connected with the war in Egypt". His memorial plaque was erected by his admiral.

The churchyard at High Cross in the parish of Thundridge is the last resting place for two brothers who served their country with distinction: Lt-Col Arthur Martin Leake, a double VC, and his older brother Francis Martin-Leake. Francis served in the Royal Navy, captaining cruisers in WWI. Soon after the start of the war, he survived the sinking of his vessel HMS Pathfinder by a German submarine torpedo. Later in the war, he captained HMS Achilles. After the war he was promoted to Vice-Admiral.

Another naval connection can be found in the parish of Ugley, where Orford House stands beside the B1383. This was built by Admiral Edward Russell, a distinguished 17th-century naval commander and First Lord of the Admiralty who was later created Earl of Orford.

It is thought that he never lived here, using the house as a stopover en route between London and his main home in Cambridgeshire.



Most of the seafarers mentioned in this article reached a senior rank. There were probably more local men who went to sea but whose service is not so visibly recorded. The Society would like to learn of any others. Please let us know if you know of any more local sailors – please use the Feedback form on the website.

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