



## Captain Cook's Monument

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Approximately eight miles west of where the 'History Tree' stood, at the National Park Moors Centre at Danby, is one of the most iconic landmarks in the North Yorkshire Moors. Erected in 1827, Captain Cook's Monument stands on Easby Moor at over a thousand feet above sea level and can be seen from many high points on the Moors and much of Teesside.

The monument was erected in memory of Captain James Cook (1728-1779), Fellow of the Royal Society, explorer, navigator, cartographer and captain in the Royal Navy. Cook was born and brought up in North Yorkshire. His birthplace of Marton is approximately six miles northwest of the monument, while his childhood home of Great Ayton can be seen about a mile to the northwest. Cook's formative years took him to the coast, first to Staithes as a grocer's apprentice, and then to Whitby as a Merchant Navy apprentice. The latter would eventually lead to a career with the Royal Navy, where Cook's worldwide explorations began and eventually brought about his demise at Kealakekua Bay in Hawaii.

Robert Campion, who funded the monument, was primarily a banker and also a sail-maker, with businesses in Whitby. He was also Lord of the Manor of Easby during the second quarter of the 19th century (although he became bankrupt in 1841). As explained in the Whitby

Panorama and Monthly Chronicle of 1827, appeals for subscriptions for a monument were made from 1811; however, none were forthcoming. Campion's virtue and benevolence is extolled in the article as it tells how he erected the monument through his own expenditure. At the time of the appeal, a monument was intended for Eston Nab or Roseberry Topping, but it was eventually built on Campion's own Easby estate due to its elevation and the views it commanded towards Cleveland, Durham and the coast.

Campion laid the foundation stone on his birthday, 12th July 1827, witnessed by several onlookers including his own family and Captain Cook's nephew, Mr Fleck, who followed family tradition and became a master-mariner. The event is described as a celebration, with music playing and wine and spirits shared with the onlookers and workmen, whilst a ship's flag was hoisted. It is said that commemorative documents were placed within the foundations, including a portrait of Captain Cook and a glass plate etched with details of the event.

The monument was to be an obelisk 12 feet square at its base and was intended to stand 40 feet high, but when it was completed later that year on Cook's birthday, 27th October, it reached 51 feet tall. A further ceremony took place with an address by Campion followed by his

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son, John, scaling the scaffolding and placing a top-stone on the construction. The completion of the monument was celebrated in a similar fashion to the laying of the foundation stone three months earlier, with the addition of cannon being fired at the top of nearby Borough Green Woods, which echoed around the Moor.

An inscription, written on three cast-iron plates and sited on the west side of the monument, commemorated Captain Cook as “among the most celebrated and most admired of the benefactors of the human race” with the monument erected “as a token of respect for and admiration of the character and labours of this truly great man”.

The original monument had a doorway and no railing. Unfortunately, it fell into disrepair towards the end of the 19th century. By 1894 an appeal was launched for its restoration and subscriptions were given, and by July 1895 the restoration had been completed. On 25th July the

North East Daily Gazette describes how the restoration had saved the monument from further dilapidation caused by two lightning strikes which ripped off the door - leaving open access for sheep - and obliterated the inscription on the cast-iron plaques. The restoration included fitting the monument with a lightning conductor, covering the doorway and engraving an inscription on a granite slab paraphrasing the original. The then Lord of the Manor of Easby, Mr John James Emerson, gave permission for the restoration, provided stone from his own quarries and paid for a palisade to surround the base of the monument.

During the 120 or so years since its restoration, the monument has suffered serious damage just once, from a lightning strike in 1960, which split it virtually from top to bottom due to corrosion of the lightning conductor. The monument was repaired relatively quickly and looks today much as it did in 1895.



### Find out more

Roseberry Topping and Captain Cook's Monument Walking Trail,  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/roseberry-topping/trails/roseberry-topping-and-captain-cooks-monument>

Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, Stewart Park, Marton-in-Cleveland, Middlesbrough TS7 8AT,  
<http://www.captcook-ne.co.uk/ccbm/>

Captain Cook Memorial Museum, Grape Lane, Whitby YO22 4BA, <http://www.cookmuseumwhitby.co.uk>

Captain Cook Schoolroom Museum, 101 High Street, Great Ayton, Middlesbrough TS9 6NB,  
<http://www.captaincookschoollroommuseum.co.uk>

Captain Cook & Staithes Heritage Centre, High Street, Staithes, Saltburn-by-the-Sea TS13 5BQ

Captain James Cook collection at the Whitby Museum, Pannett Park, Whitby YO21 3AG, <https://whitbymuseum.org.uk/>



*Cook Monument, Easby Moor*



*Captain James Cook in 1775*



*Cook Schoolroom Museum, Great Ayton*



*Replica of HM Barque 'Endeavour', Whitby*