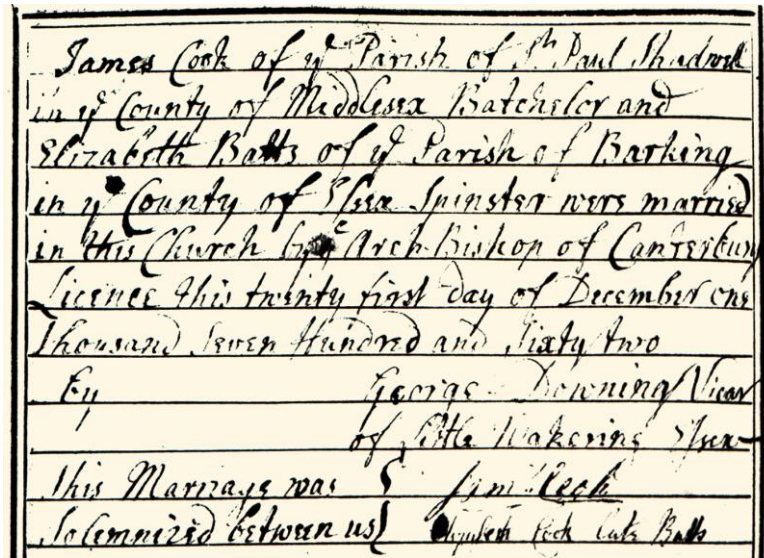


London Borough of Barking and Dagenham  
Local Studies Information Sheet No.22

**FAMOUS 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY PEOPLE IN BARKING &  
DAGENHAM: JAMES COOK AND DICK TURPIN**



Captain Cook's marriage entry in the register of St Margaret's Church, Barking

**CAPTAIN JAMES COOK: THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS EXPLORER**

James Cook was born on 27 October 1728 in Yorkshire. After serving an apprenticeship in the Merchant Navy and rising to command his own vessel, he volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1755. Whilst lodging at the Bell Inn at Execution Dock, Wapping, run by Samuel Batts, Cook met and fell in love with his landlord's daughter, Elizabeth Batts, who was 13 years his junior. They were married on 21 December 1762 at St Margaret's Church, Barking.

Elizabeth Batts has no known connections with Barking, so historians have long been puzzled as to why she and Cook married there. In 1994 Herbert Hope Lockwood, in an article "Captain Cook and a voyage of discovery around Ilford" in the Barking and District Historical Society magazine, described evidence suggesting that at the time of her marriage Elizabeth had been staying with family friends James and Ann Sheppard in their house at Croucher's Yard on Ilford High Road. Ilford was at that time within the parish of Barking. Supporting this theory is the fact that the officiating vicar at the marriage, George Downing, served as Chaplain to Ilford Hospital Chapel.

The newly-married couple first settled in Shadwell and then in 1765 moved to Assembly Row in Mile End Old Town. During their 17 years of marriage, however, which produced six children, they spent a comparatively short time together. Cook's voyages took him away for years at a time. In 1779 Cook was murdered by an Hawaiian tribe. His body was cut up and the flesh scraped from the bones, which were given to the tribal chiefs to wear before being returned to his ship for proper burial at sea. His widow Elizabeth lived for another 56 years, until the grand old age of 93. She outlived all of her children, two of whom were tragically lost at sea.

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## DICK TURPIN : KING OF HIGHWAYMEN

Dick Turpin was baptized in 1705 at Hempstead in Essex, where his father John was landlord of the Blue Bell Inn (later the Rose and Crown). Dick became a butcher and married Elizabeth (Betty) Millington. From about 1730 the couple lived at Buckhurst Hill and Turpin became

involved with a gang of deer-stealers led by a blacksmith named Samuel Gregory. The band turned to housebreaking, and terrorized isolated farms and houses on the outer fringes of London. On 19 December 1734 they turned their attention to Longbridge Farm. This was farmed by the Skinner family, and was situated where the Barking campus of the University of East London later stood.

Members of the family and their servants were tied up at gunpoint and held hostage while Turpin and his gang searched the house for valuables. They stole clothes, linen, silverware and forty-seven pounds. Within three and a half hours they had stolen over £300 pounds worth of items from the Skinner family. The gang are said to have tossed money to crowds of bystanders as they made their escape through Barking.

In 1737 Turpin escaped an ambush in which the rest of his gang were caught or killed. In May the same year he killed a man who tried to capture him, and a £200 reward was placed against his life. In 1738 he was finally arrested in York for a disturbance of the peace. On 7 April that year, after the authorities had realised that they had captured the notorious highwayman Dick Turpin, he was tried and executed for horse-stealing.

### Primary sources:

**No primary sources on either James Cook or Dick Turpin are held at Valence House.**

### Secondary sources at the LBBB Archives and Local Studies Centre:

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DAY, J.E: *Immortal Turpin: the authentic history of England's most notorious highwayman* (1948)

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RHODES, Linda & ABNETT, Kathryn: *Foul deeds and suspicious deaths in Barking, Dagenham & Chadwell Heath* (2007)

SHARPE, J: *Dick Turpin: the myth of the English Highwayman* (2004)

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