



Jack Crawford 1775 -1831

Born on 22nd March 1775 at Pottery Bank, which was then known as Thornhill's Bank. Jack was a trained Keelman. His job was to ferry coal from the staithes on the river out to the coal ships on the River Wear. He had a very important job and The Royal Navy would use them as reserves but only in times of national emergency. Jack was a keelman until 1786, when at the age of 11 -12 years old he joined the crew of the "Peggy" as an apprentice. In 1796 he was press ganged and joined into The Royal Navy and served on the HMS Venerable under Admiral Duncan.

The Battle of Camperdown 1797

The HMS Venerable, under the command of Admiral Duncan, was ordered to Holland in October 1797 to stop the Dutch joining forces with the French. A fierce battle started between the British and Dutch fleets, known as the Battle of Camperdown, many were killed. As this battle thundered on, Admiral Duncan's colours were shot down from the ship's mast making it appear as if the English had surrendered. Jack braved the smoke and bullets to scale the rigging and nail the flag back on with a marlin spike. The British were victorious, and when news reached home of what Jack had done, the sailor was hailed as a national hero! Unfortunately Jack died in poverty in 1831 after he became the second victim of the cholera outbreak.