

Captain John Smith, 29.07.1824 – 21.10.1874



The *Lahloo*

John Smith was the second son of Captain John Smith, skipper of the Leith whaler *Baffin*, and his wife Ann Young. His birthplace in East Green is now a B&B named *Lahloo*. The house on Pittenweem Road, West Anstruther, briefly occupied by Captain Smith and his family in 1874, is also a B&B named *The Spindrift*.

After five years of schooling in Anstruther, John Smith joined his father at the whaling. By the age of ten, his formal education was over and he had begun a full time career at sea. A few years later, when the number of Scottish boats involved in the whaling industry declined, John Smith senior gave up whaling and purchased the *Jessie* which traded up and down the east side of the British coast. He was accompanied onboard by his son John who served as cook on the schooner from the age of fourteen.

John Smith senior bought shares in other ships and John junior served as a seaman on several of those vessels. In 1848, he was appointed first mate of the barque *Achilles* of Kirkcaldy. In 1851, he became first mate of the *Duke of Wellington* of Glasgow which traded between the UK, Australia and the East Indies. He obtained his Masters Certificate in 1853 and was appointed Master of the *Duke of Wellington*. On 27th March 1856, John Smith married his first cousin Annie Kellock of Riccarton, Ayrshire. The couple had three surviving daughters.

In 1860, fellow townsman Captain Alexander Rodger offered Smith the command of his third tea clipper the *Min* on the strength of his successful record with the *Duke of Wellington*. This decision was to cause a rift between Rodger and another captain born in Anstruther, John Keay, who had commanded Rodger's second ship the *Ellen Rodger* up until this point. Keay subsequently left Rodger's employment.

John Smith was given command of Rodger's fifth clipper ship *Lahloo*, launched in 1867 and winner of the 1870 Tea Race. One of the new ships of the 1870 season was *Cutty Sark* captained by another Fifer, George Moodie of Wemyss. By that year, steamers which could use the Suez Canal were starting to take over as carriers of the early season's teas and were giving hints that the days of the tea clipper were drawing to a close.

While Captain Smith was below decks, *Lahloo* was wrecked in 1872 in the East Indies; fortunately no lives were lost. However, this was the third ship Captain Rodger had lost so, broken hearted, he gave up the shipping business and retired. John Smith went to work for Killick Martin & Co. of London and returned to live in Anstruther in a villa which was in the process of being built. In 1874, he took command of the new three-masted iron sailing ship *Maju* which was contracted to carry coal to Rangoon. *Maju* was lost on with all hands on her maiden voyage, on October 21st, 1874, on the Atlantic side of the Isle of Lewis.

Captain John Smith, aged 51, was buried at Riccarton, Ayrshire where he had lived for most of his married life. Smith's steward, John Watterston of Anstruther, was one of the victims. Eleven members of the crew are buried at Barvas, Lewis.