

CAPTAIN JAMES ROBERT MOSSE 1745-1801



Monument to Captain James Robert Mosse and Captain Edward Riou in St Paul's Cathedral

James Robert Mosse was born in 1745 and died in 1801. He was a military hero who was killed at the Battle of Copenhagen during the Napoleonic Wars and is remembered on a memorial stone in St Nicholas Churchyard, Wickham. He came from a long line of naval officers.

He was baptised at Little Missenden in Buckinghamshire on 5 December 1745.

James joined the Royal Navy when 11 years 8 months old, on 6 August 1757, by the favour of the Captain of HMS *Burford*, and he

was rated Captain's Servant on 6th August 1757 and served until October 1758.

In November 1758 he joined HMS *Lizzard*, as a Master's Mate, until May 1763, serving in the Americas and West Indies. During this service, Mosse was captured by the Americans and held prisoner for a while.

From 1763 to 1771 he served in HM Ships *Hussar*, *Tweed*, *Yarmouth* and *Bellona*, working in the English Channel. In 1771 he was promoted to Midshipman while in HMS *Northumberland* in the East Indies. He was promoted to Lieutenant and in October 1771 he served in HM Ships *Swallow*, *Orford* and *Buckingham* until 1775. March 1776 saw him in North America, serving under Lord Howe, in HMS *Juno*, which ship was scuttled at Rhode Island in order to evade capture in 1778. His next posting was to HMS *Eagle*.

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James married Ann Grace Kinchin, daughter of the Reverend Stephen Kinchin, of Stoke Charity on 16 March 1780 at Deane, Hampshire. They lived in Wickham and had six children. In October the same year he was posted to HMS *Alfred* and then HMS *Vengeance* in the West Indies.

In April 1782 he became First Lieutenant to Lord Howe in HMS *Victory* and, in October of the same year, participated in the relief of Gibraltar in command of the fire ship HMS *Pluto* while holding the rank of Commander. His rank as Master and Commander was confirmed on 19th April 1783. Unfortunately for him, he was placed on half-pay to serve on impressment duty in Bristol. However, this odious duty did not last for long and he was soon appointed Captain of HMS *Wasp*, again serving in the English Channel, until 1790.

From 1790 to 1793 we have no record of his activities, but it was likely that he had no sea appointment and was placed on half pay ashore. No doubt he was relieved and

delighted on being appointed as Captain of the depot ship, HMS *Sandwich* in February 1793, patrolling the Thames sandbanks at the Nore.



Thus, in 1797, he became involved in the Nore Mutiny and participated in the subsequent prosecution and execution of Richard Parker, (the ring leader of the mutiny), which took place in his ship. His conduct of the prosecution was reported in *The Times* of 23-4 June 1797.

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Shortly after the Nore incident, he served in the North Sea for 18 months until April 1799, in command of HM Ships *Braakel* and *Veteran*.

On 1 May 1799 Mosse was appointed Captain of HMS *Monarch* under the overall command of Admiral Nelson and led the fleet through the Sound of Copenhagen towards the capital, under fire from Kronborg Castle.



On 2 April the Battle of Copenhagen began. Captain Mosse played a leading role in the battle, sailing from one end of the line to



the other, firing and receiving fire. During the battle, HMS *Monarch* was badly damaged and ran aground. However, *HMS Ganges* collided with her and pushed her off the mud, whereupon she came under renewed fire from the Danes.

Captain Mosse was killed soon after adopting his required position, his last orders being to “cut away the anchor”. Midshipman Millard, serving in HMS *Monarch*, recorded how he last saw his Captain: “on the poop; his card of instructions, (Nelson’s orders), in his left hand and his right was raised to his mouth
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with the speaking trumpet, through which he gave the word, "Cut away the anchor".....in a few minutes the Captain was brought aft perfectly dead."

In addition to Captain Mosse, 55 men of HMS *Monarch* were killed during the battle, and 164 seriously injured out of a compliment of about 400.

Captain Mosse was buried at sea, but the Government erected a joint monument in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral in London to Mosse and a another naval hero, Edward Riou, who also fell in the Battle of Copenhagen, A pension of £200 per annum was settled on his widow, and £25 per annum on each of his six children.

In St Nicholas Churchyard in Wickham, there can be found, with some difficulty it has to be said, a modest memorial stone to him that also marks the grave of his wife and children. The inscription reads



"In memory of James Robert Mosse, who was killed while commanding HMS Monarch at the Battle of Copenhagen April 1801 age 46. Anne Grace Mosse, relict of the above, who departed this life Jan 21 1843 age 30, also Margaret Mosse, daughter of the above, died 26 July 1866 age 77."

**Captain Mosse's last letter to his wife is both illuminating and touching.
To read a transcript of it, click [HERE](#).**

