

CAPTAIN KIDD AND HIS ANGUILLA CONNECTION

By Nik Douglas

One of the best known pirates of the 17th Century was Captain Kidd, who it turns out, had visited Anguilla in his treasure ship, just before his arrest in New York. Since much of Kidd's treasure was never found, there is much speculation that he buried some of it in the West Indies, possibly even in Anguilla. The Connection between Kidd and Anguilla continued after Kidd's death by hanging in 1701. In 1706 a report to the Privy Council Committee for the Colonies accused Governor Leonard of Anguilla of knowingly dealing with Captain Kidd's goods and being indebted to Kidd's colleague, Captain Tempest Rogers. The report reads as follows:

"Capt. George Leonard, Governor of Anguilla, traded with Rogers (Capt. Tempest Rogers yt. Made yt. Grate voyage with Capt. Kidd, a trading yt. Kept him in bought to be some of Capt. Kidd's. Capt. Kidd's boat was ashore at Anguilla and Kidd lay at Anchor Thaire about fower houers. Leonard stands indebted to Rogers 300 pcs of eight."

Before any conclusions can be drawn about Capt. Kidd and his missing treasure, it will be helpful to take a look at the life-story of this infamous man.

William Kidd was born in Greenock, Scotland, in 1645. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he went to sea when was only 14, serving on a ship involved in the West Indies trade. In 1673 Kidd was forced to join the Navy and fought in the Dutch wars. By 1680 was able to buy his own ship, the Antique, using her to trade around the coast of New England.

In 1689 Kidd married Sarah Oore, a rich widow living in New York. He commanded a privateer in the West Indies that same

year and captured a French ship which was renamed the Blessed William. Kidd sold this prize ship to a Colonel Hewitson of New York, who promptly gave him the command of this vessel. Together with Hewitson, Kidd led a party of privateers to a battle with Six French Ships off Antigua. Two French ships were captured but Kidd's vessel was badly damaged. He only just managed to get the Blessed William to Antigua. While his ship was being repaired, Robert Culliford, the first mate, conspired with several of the crew to take over the Blessed William and turn to piracy. In June 1690, while Kidd was ashore, the deed was done, leaving Captain Kidd stranded in Antigua. Later, Robert Culliford became a much-wanted pirate, operating out of Madagascar.

Kidd was given command of another privateer and was able to capture a well-known French privateer. For this he received a special reward of £150, from the Governor of New York. Later Kidd was censured for requisitioning supplies from British ships and his appointment as a privateer was revoked.

In 1695 Kidd took cargo to London on his own sloop and while he was there he met an old friend from New York who introduced him to Lord Bellomont, who had been appointed Governor of New York and given the special job of seizing pirates. On 26 June 1695 Captain Kidd was commissioned as a privateer under the Great Seal of England. Kidd was referred to as "Our trusty and well beloved Captain William Kidd" and placed in command of the Adventure Galley, 260 tons, armed with 34 guns and with a crew of 150. However as the ship left the Thames Estuary, 80 of Kidd's best seamen were taken off by a press gang. Shorthanded, Kidd sailed again from Plymouth on 23 April 1696, arriving in New York on 4 July that year.

In New York Kidd increased his crew to 155 men. On 6 September 1696 he sailed for Madagascar. Near the Cape of Good Hope he encountered four British warships escorting some ships of the East India Company. Kidd hailed and boarded one of the warships and demanded some sails to replace ones damaged by storms. An argument ensued and Kidd left. Some days later, Kidd sailed to Johanna Island and quarrelled with the Captains of three East India Company ships. On 27 April 1697 Kidd announced he was leaving for St Mary's Island "to look for pirates", however instead he sailed to nearby Mohilla Island, where he careened his ship but lost 30 of his men from illness. Returning to Johanna Island, another 20 men died from a sudden Epidemic.

Kidd sailed to the Red Sea, to lie in wait for richly laden Indian ships returning from Jeddah. He attacked a convoy escorted by the East India Company's warship Septer, who returned the fire and caused him to flee. This was Kidd's first real act of piracy. Kidd sailed on to the Indian coast and captured the Mary, a small Indian ship, from which he seized some spies and a small amount of gold. Sometime later Kidd was chased by two Portuguese ships and 11 of his crew were wounded before he could escape. By this Kidd's crew were very impatiently for a major prize and there were constant threats of mutiny, on 30 October 1697 Kidd got into a row with a gunner called William Moore and struck him with a heavy bucket. Moore died the next day.

Late in November 1697 Kidd captured the Maiden, Indian owned but Captained by a Dutchman. He renamed this ship the November and together with the Adventure Galley he sailed to the Laccadive Islands. There he careened the Adventure Galley and engaged in looting and murder. Early in

January 1698 Kidd tried to take a Portuguese ship but was chased away by two large Dutch vessels. Finally, on 31 January 1698 Kidd encountered and attacked the Quedah Merchant, a richly laden 400 ton Indian vessel commanded by an Englishman. Kidd hoisted the French flag and by this trick was able to get close enough to board and take and a large quantity of silver, gold and jewels, worth about \$500,000.

Kidd arranged to sell much of the Quedah Merchant's cargo along the Indian coast and paid each of his men an initial prize of £200, keeping £8000 for himself. The Quedah Merchant was renamed Adventure Prize and together with the November and the Adventure Galley Kidd sailed to the pirate haven at St. Mary's Island, Madagascar, reaching there early in May 1698. Since the Adventure Galley was in poor condition, Kidd set fire to her. He sunk the November in the harbour and kept the main treasure of jewels, gold and coins on the Adventure Prize (formerly the Queen Merchant). At this his crew numbered 115.

On 7 May 1698 the pirate Robert Culliford sailed into St. Mary's as Captain of the Resolution, formerly the infamous Mocha, originally an Indian vessel. The last time Kidd had seen the Cornishman Culliford was in 1690 when, as his first mate, he had stolen his ship the Blessed William, marooning Kidd on Antigua. There are conflicting stories as to what happened when the two pirate Captains met. Evidently they patched up their differences. It is claimed that Kidd gave Culliford some guns and ammunition. A number of Kidd's men deserted to join Culliford and several of Culliford's men joined Kidd, including the well known pirate John Gilliam. Later, at his trial, Kidd claimed that he had given orders for his men to seize Culliford, but they would not obey him.

By this time Kidd's acts of piracy were significant enough to cause a circular letter dated November 23rd 1698, to be sent to the Governors of every colony, instructing them to seize Kid and his ship.

In April 1699 Captain William Kidd made his first landfall since being declared a pirate. He landed on Anguilla and took on water and stores. The official account of his landing reads as follows:

"In the beginning of April 1699 he arrived at Anguilla and sent his boat ashore where his men heard the news that he and his people were proclaimed pirates, which put them in such consternation that they sought all opportunities to run the ship upon some reef or shoal fearing Kidd should carry them into some English port."

A number of Kidd's crew deserted while the Adventure Prize was moored off Anguilla. We may never know whether they brought any treasure with them.

Kidd sailed the Adventure Prize to St. Thomas but left in a hurry when he was refused provisions. He encountered the sloop Antonio off Puerto Rico, captained by an acquaintance from Antigua, Boulton. The two ships sailed to Mona Island, between Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo and there Boulton supplied Kidd with whatever provisions he had and returned to Antigua to get more. On Boulton's return to Mona Island, Kidd bought the Antonio from him and left him 22 of his men in charge of the Adventure Prize. Kidd sailed for New England in the Antonio, arriving in Delaware Bay early in June 1699. There he landed the pirate John Gilliam with a large treasure chest.

Kidd sailed on the Block Island and transferred several treasure chests into three sloops, Mrs Kidd joined Captain Kidd with their several children. Then Kidd sailed to Gardener's Island, where he landed several treasure chests before sailing to Boston, reaching there on 2 July 1699. He sent messages to Lord Bellomont, together with several expensive presents. However while Kidd was away the politics had changed and he was now a much wanted pirate and his noble friends did not want to be associated with him in any way. On 6 July 1699 Kidd was seized and put in chains.

By the Kidd had given his version of his adventures and revealed the location of his treasure ship Adventure Prize off Mona Island, his ally Boulton had transferred all the remaining treasure to a sloop and sailed away. The Adventure Prize was burnt at its mooring.

Captain Kidd was shipped to England for trial. He appeared at the Old Bailey on 8 May 1701 and was soon found guilty of the murder of William Moore and on several counts of piracy. His defence had on French passes seized from the Maiden and the Quedah Merchant, which he claimed justified his taking of these vessels. However the passes, which he claimed to have turned over to Bellomont in New York, could not be found. Lord Bellomont died before Kidd came to trial and for many years the French passes were believed not to exist. Some 200 years later the passes were found in the Public Record Office in London. On the charge of murder, Kidd claimed he had acted in self defence.

Kidd was sentenced to death but he believed he could bargain with the promise of treasure in the West Indies. He wrote the following letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons:

"In my proceedings in the Indies, I have lodged goods and Treasure to the Value of one hundred thousand pounds, which I desire the Government may have the benefit of, in order thereto I shall desire no manner of liberty but to be kept prisoner on board such Shipp as may be appointed for that purpose and only give the necessary directions and in case I faile therein I desire no favour but to be forthwith Executed according to my Sentence."

Kidd's plea was refused and he was hanged at Wapping on 23 May 1701. On the first attempt the rope broke, before he lost consciousness. A new noose was found and Kidd went through the procedure over again. He was declared dead and his body exhibited in chains and tar, as a warning to those tempted to become pirates. The £6, 473 found on Kidd was used to fund the Greenwich hospital.