

BRITAIN AND HER EMPIRE 1500-1770

Hawaii

How did Captain James Cook die?



Captain James Cook and his crew exchange gifts.

In 1778, the English Captain Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands. He called them Sandwich Islands after his sponsor, the 4th Earl of Sandwich. The relationship between Cook's sailors and the natives was very friendly in the beginning. On 14 February 1779, some Hawaiians took one of Cook's small boats. He attempted to take hostage the King of Hawaii, Kalaniopuu. The Hawaiians prevented this, and Cook's men had to retreat to the beach. As Cook turned his back to help launch the boats, he was struck on the head by the villagers and then stabbed to death as he fell on his face in the surf. The Hawaiians dragged his body away. Four of the crew with Cook were also killed and two wounded in the confrontation.