

Records relating to the slave trade in the Liverpool Record Office

a guide to the microfilm edition

with an introduction by
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RECORDS RELATING TO THE SLAVE TRADE IN THE LIVERPOOL RECORD OFFICE

An Introduction to the Microfilm Edition

Liverpool's Rise as a Slaving Port

The documents reproduced in this publication relate to the triangular slave trade between Britain, Africa and the Americas during the eighteenth century, the period that saw Liverpool rise from being a small north-western port mainly handling cargoes and ships in the coasting, Irish and European trades to a large port with international trading connections. Liverpool's growth as a port and commercial centre was particularly associated with the slave trade. After Parliament ended the London-based Royal African Company's official monopoly in England in 1698, private merchants in London, Bristol and Liverpool entered the slave trade. During the 1720s Liverpool merchants increased their participation in this line of traffic. They advanced further in the 1730s. By the 1740s Liverpool overtook Bristol and London to become the leading British slave-trading port, whether measured by the number of ships dispatched to Africa or the number of slaves carried across the Atlantic Ocean. Liverpool's dominant position was maintained without any diminution until the British slave trade ended in 1807. Indeed, Liverpool increased its share of slaving voyages emanating from British ports over those next six decades. In the period 1741-50 Liverpool sent out 43 per cent of the ships engaged in the British slave trade. By 1801-7 Liverpool's share had increased to 79 per cent. Liverpool had invested more than £1 million in the slave trade by 1800. Throughout the entire period of the British slave trade, Liverpool's ships delivered over 1.1 million slaves to the New World.

Liverpool's commercial supremacy in the slave trade was based on the expansion of shipping and dock development on Merseyside in the eighteenth century, supported by considerable demographic and manufacturing growth. Locational advantages were also significant, for Liverpool had a unique combination of regional advantages, including access (until 1765) to smuggled merchandise on the Isle of Man, safe shipping routes around the north of Ireland in wartime, and (after 1750) an industrialising hinterland with plenty of textile production suitable for export cargoes to Africa and America. Liverpool also capitalised on the commercial acumen of its merchants, notably their success in forging effective commercial partnerships along the West African coast, especially in the Bight of Biafra, the epicentre of slave supplies to British vessels, and in coordinating payment mechanisms for slave sales with Caribbean agents and London sugar commission houses. Her merchants were also quicker than rivals at other ports to exploit new markets for slaves such as the Ceded Islands after 1763 – Grenada, Tobago, St. Vincent, Dominica – and Cuba, Demerara and Trinidad in the late eighteenth century.

The Liverpool Documents in Context

Original manuscripts relating to the conduct and organisation of the Liverpool slave trade are scattered throughout Britain, the Caribbean and the United States. The

National Archives, Kew, naturally includes much relevant information among government departments such as the Treasury, the Colonial Office, the Board of Trade, the Admiralty, the Exchequer and Chancery. Business records and shipping information on the Liverpool slave trade can be found in archives as far apart as Minneapolis and Glasgow. As might be expected, some of the most illuminating surviving material is deposited in Liverpool itself. The three main archives where such documents are found are the Merseyside Maritime Museum; the University of Liverpool Library; and the Liverpool Record Office, which is part of the Liverpool Central Library. This publication covers all of the relevant material now housed at the latter repository. Eleven different types of surviving material are included. They were generated by individual Liverpool merchants or merchant partnerships. The items include correspondence, accounts, invoices, sales records, ships' logbooks, sailing instructions to the master of a vessel, and contemporary statistics on the slave trade. Each group of items varies in format and range; but all provide essential information for students and researchers wishing to understand the organisation of the Liverpool slave trade.

Overview of the Individual Collections

The documents pertaining to David Tuohy are those of an Irishman who spent fourteen years in the African trade, including the captaincy of four slave voyages between 1765 and 1769 and part-ownership of ten Liverpool slave ships from 1772 to 1786. Tuohy married in Liverpool in 1768 and settled there in 1771. After his experience as a captain of slave vessels, he settled down as a merchant on Merseyside. In Gore's *Liverpool Directory* for 1781, he is described as a merchant resident at 48 Old Hall Street. His correspondence indicates that he divided his commercial affairs mainly between trade between Liverpool and Ireland, a trade in which he imported beef, butter and tallow, and exported salt, beer and cheese, and the slave trade. He participated in voyages where he could spread his investment among other partners, as in the voyage of the Brig *Nancy* in 1774 in which he held a one-sixth share (380 TUO/4/7). His ventures in the triangular slave trade involved sending ships to the Windward, Ivory and Gold coasts, the Bight of Benin, and especially Angola, and then selling the Africans at Jamaica, Barbados, St. Kitts, Antigua, Dominica and Grenada. Tuohy had few mercantile contacts on the North American continent apart from in Charleston, South Carolina. He probably died in the late 1780s or early 1790s; the last mention of him in these papers is a letter addressed to him dated September 1788 (380 TUO/6/4).

Among references to the slave trade in Tuohy's correspondence is a letter detailing the current difficulty of selling Africans in Barbados (380 TUO/1/18); another one that mentions competition with the French for slaves in Angola (380 TUO/2/1); and a further letter explaining the interruptions to the slave trade caused by the beginning of the American War of Independence (380 TUO/2/3). The most detailed material on the slave trade in the Tuohy Papers is found in the ships' papers (380 TUO/4/1-13). These usually include an invoice of merchandise shipped to Africa, a list of seamen on board individual ships, the owners' instructions to the captain, and disbursements on the ship's cargo and outfit. The letters of instruction comment on the quality, distribution and price of slaves to be purchased for particular cargoes of European goods; the mercantile and island contacts in the Caribbean for the sale of Africans; the clothing, treatment and provisions required for slaves during the Middle Passage; the factors' commissions on slave sales; the division of shares among the vessels' owners; terms for payment on

slave sales; the seasonal transaction cycles of voyages; and the wages and fees to be paid to the doctor, captain and crew on slaving voyages. Most of the typewritten transcripts (380 TUO/5/1-44) are of letters found elsewhere in this collection, but four transcripts (380 TUO/6/1-4) are items where the original is no longer extant.

The Case and Southworth records (380 MD 33-36) cover the years from 1754 to 1767. They are the surviving commercial manuscripts of a Liverpool merchant firm with a branch house in Kingston, Jamaica. Thomas Case was listed in the Liverpool trade directory for 1766 as a merchant in Water Street. He owned a number of ships, became a member of the African Company of Liverpool, and held shares in eighteen slaving vessels. Two of these ships, the *Fortune* and the *Bee*, were vessels where he was the sole owner; the others were co-owned with his brother Clayton and other Liverpool merchants such as William Boats and William Davenport. Thomas Case entered into an insurance brokerage business with William Gregson in 1774. This was dissolved in 1778, however, when bankruptcy proceedings were issued against Case after he fell into financial difficulties. Nicholas Southworth, who managed the Kingston end of the Case & Southworth partnership, had captained three slaving vessels from Liverpool to Africa and the Caribbean in 1746, 1748 and 1752. Southworth was the part owner of several slave vessels in the 1750s and 1760s but he never co-owned vessels with Case. The partnership of Case & Southworth appears to have flourished until the records end in 1767.

The records of Case & Southworth are bound volumes with detailed information on the import of hardware, textiles and provisions from British and Irish merchants via Liverpool to Kingston; the sale of lots of slaves in Kingston; and imports of sugar, rum, pimento and wood at Liverpool. Both ends of the business, at Liverpool and Kingston, acted on commission, but sales were much more valuable at the Jamaican end (largely owing to the slave sales) than on Merseyside. The Liverpool house under Case sold on behalf of far fewer people than the Kingston branch under Southworth. This resulted from the much larger population of the Lancashire port and its hinterland compared with the much smaller white population in Jamaica. The Account Book (380 MD 33) and the Journal (380 MD 34) include a mass of daily transactions. At first sight these list a bewildering array of sales but they can be collated and analysed to indicate some interesting patterns in consumer behaviour. Some of the detailed accounts of slave sales, giving the purchasers, date of purchase, size of lot sold and prices gained, are duplicated in the two Sales account books (380 MD 35-36) but some are not. The Case and Southworth account books are some of the most detailed sales' records of Africans in the British slave trade available in any British archive.

Thomas Leyland (c.1752-1827) was a merchant, banker, millionaire and three times Mayor of Liverpool. In 1766 he won a lottery prize of £20,000, which he used to build up his business affairs. He was involved in various trading partnerships. He built up much of his mercantile fortune from participation in the slave trade, and was particularly active in that traffic as well in various other trades in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. Leyland had an interest in sixty-nine slaving voyages from Liverpool. The ships in which he was concerned delivered an estimated 22,365 Africans to the Americas. He was associated with some other important Liverpool merchants but he also linked up with smaller fry. Thus, for example, he was part owner with David Tuohy in the slave ship *Kitty* in 1789. In 1802 Leyland entered into a banking partnership with Clarke and Roscoe, a firm of Liverpool bankers. After this was dissolved in 1806, he set up his own bank in Liverpool with his nephew Richard Bullin

in 1807. Through amalgamations, his banking business later became part of the Midland (now HSBC) Bank. Thomas Leyland left a fortune of £600,000 in 1827, making him one of the wealthiest decedents in Britain at the time. In addition to the records made available here, further documents relating to Leyland's slave trading and banking career survive in the HSBC archives and among the Dumbell Papers at Liverpool University Library. A good many of Leyland's ships' books relating to the slave trade were unfortunately destroyed by bomb damage during the Second World War.

Thomas Leyland's letterbook, 1786-88, (387 MD 59) is a large bound tome comprising 2,262 business letters in a legible hand on 780 numbered pages. Material on Leyland's involvement in the Liverpool slave trade can be found among the letters. There are also many examples of dealings in commodities with far-flung business connections in England, Ireland, Scotland France, Spain, Holland, Portugal and the United States. Leyland dealt in various commodities, including wine, salt, barley, tallow, earthenware, cotton, sugar, oranges, bark, coal and rice. More detailed information on Leyland's involvement in the slave trade is found in the five ships' account books, covering the period 1793-1811 (387 MD 40-44). These volumes follow a set format. They include a letter of instruction to the ship captain; invoices of merchandise shipped; a list of the crew; tradesmen's notes and disbursements for the cargo and for the outfit; accounts of slave sales and charges on sales; and disbursements made at the point of sale, presented as debit and credit accounts.

John Newton is the best-known captain in the history of the British slave trade. He was the captain of three slaving voyages between 1748 and 1754, and sailed on a further voyage as a mate. He documented his experiences on these voyages in detailed logs. Later in life he became an evangelical minister in the Church of England, renounced his involvement in the slave business, and became a prominent abolitionist who testified against the slave trade before committees of the House of Commons in 1789 and 1790. Newton was a prolific writer on the slave trade and on spiritual matters, and was also the author of the hymn 'Amazing Grace.' His copy letters reproduced in this publication (920 MD 409) were written to the Anglican clergyman David Jennings. The letters cover the 1750s, when Newton was still active in the slave trade. They include details on his experiences on board Africa-bound vessels that can be fruitfully dovetailed with his diaries, logs and other writings from the period. The letters to Jennings are particularly interesting in tracing Newton's growing spiritual awareness as his voyages in the slave trade progressed. They provide a broader view of the implications of involvement in slave trading than one gathers from the purely business orientation of many other sources reproduced here.

The Robert Bostock letterbooks, covering the period 1779-92, include much business correspondence on the slave trade (387 MD 54-55). Bostock was both a ship captain and a merchant. He was captain and first owner on three Liverpool slaving voyages, in 1769, 1770 and 1786. He was the first owner of fourteen other Liverpool slaving voyages between 1787 and 1793, and took shares in twelve other slaving voyages from the Mersey. In Africa Bostock traded with the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast and the Bight of Biafra. He delivered slaves to Antigua, St. Kitts, Barbados, Grenada and Jamaica. His letters include instructions to ship captains about the conduct and destinations of their African voyages; advice on the purchase of slaves and commodities in Africa; requests to London merchant houses for financial guarantees for payment of slave sales; the average prices for which captains should sell slaves in different Caribbean islands; and communications with factors and agents about

economic conditions in the Caribbean. Bostock's letterbooks are especially useful for their abundant evidence of contemporary prices paid for slaves in the West Indies. One detailed sales' list of slaves at Antigua for September 1784 is included in his first letterbook (387 MD 54, fols. 16-18).

Several smaller items among these microfilms include interesting additional details on the Liverpool slave trade. The sailing instructions of 16 October 1700 for the captain and supercargo (i.e. travelling agent) of the ship *Blessing* is the first business letter that survives on Liverpool's transatlantic slaving (920 NOR2/179). Deposited in the Norris Papers, it offers advice on the loading of provisions at Kinsale, Ireland, and the purchase of slaves on either the Gold Coast or at Whydah, in the Bight of Benin. The slaves were to be sold in the West Indies. The instructions state the preferred options of the ships' owners about which Caribbean island market would produce the best sales. John Tomlinson's Account Current with John Knight (380 MD 127) covers shares in slave vessels between 1757 and 1777. Tomlinson was the first owner of thirty Liverpool slaving voyages that disembarked some 5,900 slaves to markets in North America and the Caribbean. Though little contemporary material has survived about Knight, he was a major Liverpool slave trader with an interest in 111 voyages over thirty years (1744-74) that delivered over 26,000 Africans to America. All save one of Tomlinson's slave trading voyages were made in partnership with Knight.

The logs kept on board *H.M.S. Agamemnon*, the *Count du Nord* and the *Madampookata*, with related papers (387 MD 62/1) include daily entries about the progress of these slaving vessels. These records were apparently kept by Thomas Dixon, and are all in one volume. The descriptive entries are particularly interesting when the ships were based on the West African coast. Details of the course of the ships, their latitude and longitude, and remarks on provisioning, stores, watering, painting and cleaning are also provided. The log of *H.M.S. Agamemnon* covers the period 1 October 1782-10 June 1783. The remarks for the *Count du Nord* extend from 29 September 1783 to 10 June 1784. The descriptions on board the *Madampookata* cover the period 29 March 1785 to 22 January 1786. The log of the brig *Ranger* concerns a slave voyage from Liverpool to Lisbon, Anamaboe and Jamaica in 1789-90 (387 MD 56). The account of the sale of slaves from the brig *Mars* deals with a slave auction at Savannah, Georgia in January and February 1804 on behalf of the Liverpool merchants McIver, McVicar and McCorquodale (MD 97).

The pages filmed from volume 10 of the Holt & Gregson Papers (942 HOL 10) comprise important contemporary statistics on the Liverpool slave trade and material relating to the abolitionist movement. For the most part, these are separately compiled contemporary documents that were gathered together in this volume. The most significant documents on the Liverpool slave trade found here are: an account of the ships, cargoes and capital employed in the African slave trade from Liverpool on 3 March 1790 (fols. 367-9, 445); a calculation of the loss that might be sustained by and at Liverpool should an abolition take place (fols. 371-3, 443); the number of men who have been discharged by the different masters and tradesmen of Liverpool previously employed in the African slave trade and now out of work (fols. 375-7, 447); Mr. Tarleton's calculation of the trade of Liverpool to Africa and the West Indies and of the ships employed therein, 1787 (fol. 419); letters relating to abolitionism (fols. 429-431, 433, 437-9); a list of the vessels which sailed from Liverpool to Africa in the period January 1786-January 1787 (fol. 473, 477); and a list of the vessels sailing from Liverpool for Africa from 1 January 1787 (fol. 481).

Significance for Research

These various records on the Liverpool slave trade can be used in numerous ways. They are obviously vital for the study of individual Liverpool slaving merchants. They provide important contemporary material on trade practices on the West African coast, the conduct of slave sales, trends in prices for sales of slaves, details on the networks of credit and trust with agents and factors in the Caribbean, the difficulties encountered by shipping engaged in the 'triangular trade,' the motives and commercial outlook of captains and merchants in the slave trade, the types of goods needed for cargoes sent to Africa to barter for slaves, and the accounts that were drawn up for slaving voyages. The ships' logbooks at the Liverpool Record Office are complemented by similar sources, sometimes for the same ships, held at the University of Liverpool Library. Altogether, the sources filmed here are essential source items for the investigation of one of the most notorious trades with which Liverpool was associated.

Bibliographical Note

Information about the growth of the eighteenth-century shipping, trade and port of Liverpool is available in C. Northcote Parkinson, *The rise of the port of Liverpool* (1952) and F.E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: an economic history of a port, 1700-1970* (1971). A pioneering modern collection of essays on the Liverpool slave trade is Roger Anstey and P.E.H. Hair, eds., *Liverpool, the African slave trade, and abolition* (1976; enlarged edn., 1989). A recent successor is David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz, and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and transatlantic slavery* (2007). The original sources available on the Liverpool slave trade are outlined in F.E. Sanderson, 'Liverpool and the slave trade: a guide to sources,' *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 124 (1973). The most comprehensive statistics on the Liverpool slave trade are in David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, *The Trans-Atlantic slave trade: a database on CD-ROM* (1999). The manuscripts of the Liverpool slave merchant William Davenport held at Keele University Library have already been published in the same BRRAM series as the present collection, as have the American materials from both the above-mentioned Tarleton papers and the Holt-Gregson papers. The eighteenth-century Liverpool trading community is described in Sheryllynne Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic trading community 1760-1810: men, women, and the distribution of goods* (2006).

Several individual merchants and voyages represented in this publication have received attention from historians. Notes on Thomas Leyland's career and extracts from some of his manuscripts are available in Gomer Williams, *History of the Liverpool privateers and letters of marque with an account of the Liverpool slave trade* (1897). Material on his life is also included in John Hughes, *Liverpool banks and bankers* (1906) and W.F. Crick and J.E. Wadsworth, *A hundred years of joint stock banking*, 4th edn. (1964). For the Bostock letterbook, see J.H. Hodson, 'The Letter book of Robert Bostock, a merchant in the Liverpool slave trade, 1789-1792,' *The Liverpool bulletin*, 3 (1953). See also Vera M. Johnson, 'Sidelights on the Liverpool slave trade,' *The Mariner's Mirror*, 38 (1952). John Newton's period as a slave ship captain is detailed in Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell, eds., *Journal of a slave trader, 1750-1754* (1962). Newton's relationship to transatlantic slaving has also been the focus of two recent studies:

Marcus Rediker, *The slave ship: a human history* (2007) and James Walvin, *The trader, the owner, the slave* (2007). Comments on the log of the brig *Ranger* are found in Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, *The last years of the English slave trade, 1750-1807* (1941).

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Kenneth Morgan

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Reel contents

- Reel 1 Tuohy Papers
- Letters to David Tuohy [380 TUO/1]
 - Draft letters from David Tuohy [380 TUO/2]
 - Accounts [380 TUO/3]
 - Papers from the *Snow Betty* and *Peggy* [380 TUO/4/1]
 - Papers from the Ship *Ranger* [380 TUO/4/2]
 - Papers from the Ship *Sally* [380 TUO/4/3]
 - Papers from the Ships *Corsican Hero* and *Tom* [380 TUO/4/4]
 - Papers from the Brig *Nelly* [380 TUO/4/6]
 - Papers from the Brig *Nancy* [380 TUO/4/7]
 - Papers from the Vessel *The Hope* [380 TUO/4/8]
 - Papers from the Ship *Blayds* [380 TUO/4/9]
 - Papers from the Ship *Ingram* [380 TUO/4/10]
 - Sailing orders for the Captain of the Brig *Minerva* [380/TUO/4/11]
 - An Inventory of the Ship *Ranger* [380 TUO/4/12]
 - Sailing directions [380 TUO/4/13]
 - Transcripts of letters [380 TUO/5]
 - Transcripts of letters no longer extant [380 TUO/6]
- Reel 2 Case & Southworth Records
- Account Book [380 MD 33]
 - Journal [380 MD 34]
 - Sales Account Book [380 MD 35]
 - Sales Account Book [380 MD 36]
- Reel 3 Thomas Leyland Records
- Account Book of the Ship *La Convention* [387 MD 40]
 - Account Book of the Ship *Lottery* [387 MD 41]
 - Account Book of the Ship *Lottery* [387 MD 42]
 - Account Book of the Ship *Enterprise* [387 MD 43]
 - Account Book of the Ship *Fortune* [387 MD 44]
 - Letter Book of Thomas Leyland [387 MD 59]
- Reel 4 Copy letters from John Newton to Rev. Dr. Jennings [920 MD 409]
- Letter Book, etc. of Robert Bostock, v. 1 [387 MD 54]
 - Letter Book, etc. of Robert Bostock, v. 2 [387 MD 55]
 - Norris Papers: Instructions for the Captain of the Ship *The Blessing* [920 NOR2/179]
 - John Tomlinson's Account Current with John Knight [380 MD 127]
 - Ships' logs of *H.M.S. Agamemnon*, etc. [387 MD 62/1]
 - Log of the Brig *Ranger* [387 MD 56]
 - Account of the sale of slaves from the Brig *Mars* [MD 97]
 - Holt & Gregson Papers, v. 10 f.357-377, 419, 429 & 433-481 [942 HOL 10]

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