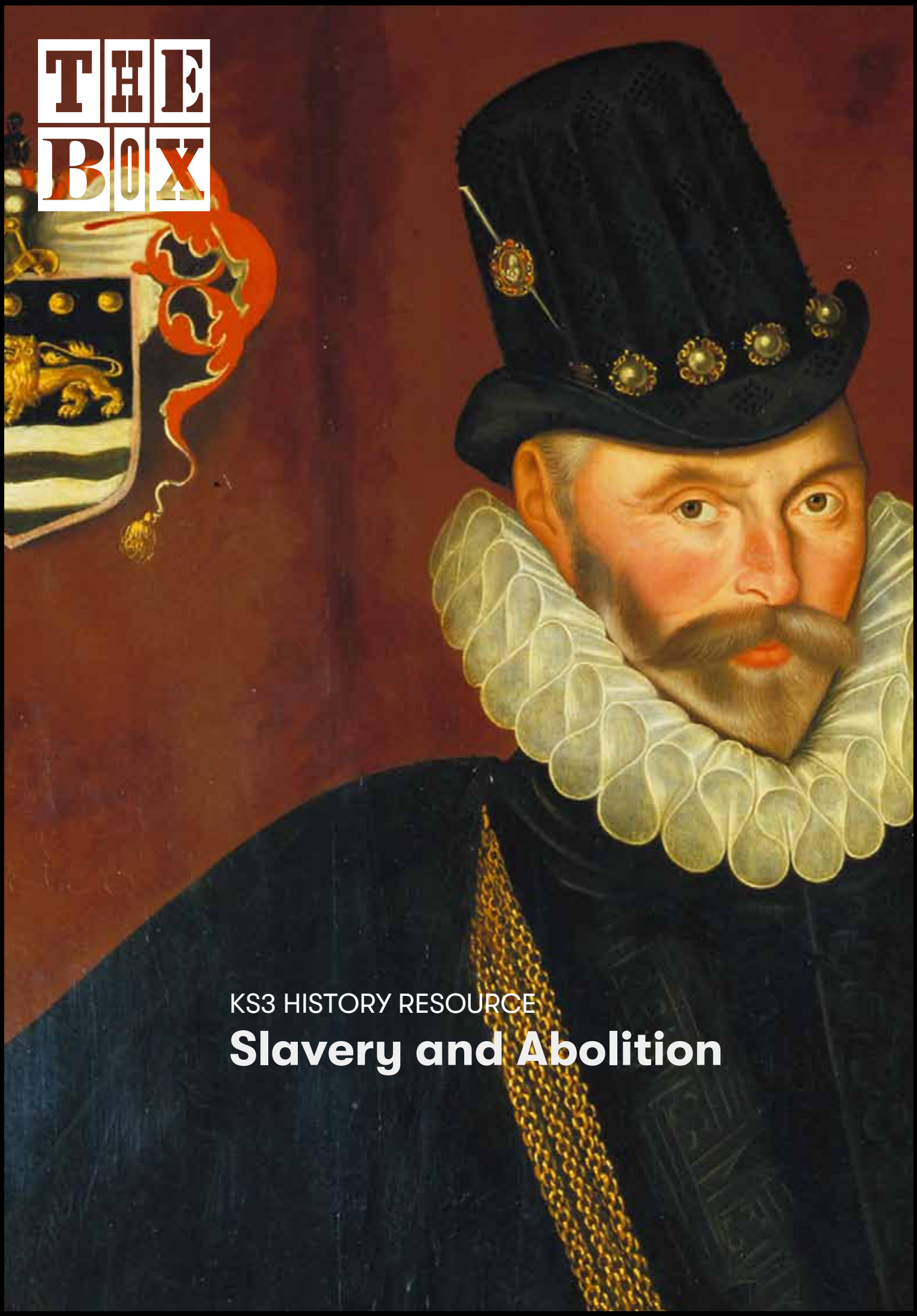
THE BOX



KS3 HISTORY RESOURCE

Slavery and Abolition

Contents

About this resource

This resource explores Plymouth's involvement with the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its eventual abolition through objects, documents and paintings from **The Box, Plymouth** and other regional and national collections.

It builds upon research carried out by independent curator Len Pole and our associated schools resource created for the 2007 exhibition 'Human Cargo' at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. This exhibition and its learning programme formed part of the nationwide Abolition 200 events, exhibitions and educational projects organised to mark the 200th anniversary of the passing of the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*.

The exhibition was developed in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

The 2007 projects also helped raise awareness of modern forms of social injustice, such as human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage and trade inequity. These remain globally and locally relevant today.

Further research into Plymouth's connections to the slave trade and abolition was completed by Shaun Standfield from Plymouth Library Services, which we printed to accompany the original schools resource developed in 2007. We are also indebted to Dr Susan Leedham for sharing her research into the Cottonian Collection and Dr Richard Huzzey of Durham University for sharing research into the Abolition movement in Plymouth. Dr Corrine Fowler of the University of Leicester also kindly read and commented on a draft version.

In October 2018, Plymouth City Council signed the Co-operative Party's Charter Against Modern Slavery, committing councils to proactively vet their own supply chain to ensure no instances of modern slavery are taking place.

The Box is a major redevelopment scheme and a symbol for the city's current regeneration and future. It will be a museum for the 21st century with extrordinary gallery displays, high profile artists and art exhibitions, as well as exciting events and performances that take visitors on a journey from pre-history to the present and beyond.

Entry into the Transatlantic Slave Trade

In 1562, Sir John Hawkins sailed from Plymouth to Guinea on the west coast of Africa and became the first British slave trader. He kidnapped 400 African men and women, loaded them onto his ships and sold them in Santo Domingo (in modern day Dominican Republic) in the Caribbean. He made a total of three slaving voyages between 1562 and 1567.

Hawkins' was the first Englishman to show how profitable such a trade could be. Queen Elizabeth I lent Hawkins her vessel, the 700 tonne *Jesus of Lubeck*, to continue this trade and provide her with a percentage of the profits.

Hawkins is believed to have enslaved up to 1,400 Africans, based on his ship's records. Many merchants and privateers (captain's authorised by the Queen to attack and plunder Spanish ships) began trading in enslaved people as they found they could make far more money than they could trading spices or other goods.

Sugar and tobacco were imported into Plymouth and wool and other manufactured goods were exported. The economy of the area began to align with this new transatlantic trade, mainly through this importation and exportation of goods and the victualling of ships bound for Africa or the Americas.

Hawkins' personal wealth grew so huge that Queen Elizabeth I granted him a coat of arms, appointed him Treasurer of the Royal Navy in 1577 and gave him a knighthood in 1588. His personal coat of arms bears the image of a bound African man.

South West merchants continued to exploit Africa for its precious metals and spices, with Exeter being given a Royal Charter in 1585. This placed tight controls on who could access the trade routes.

Sir John Hawkins

by Hieronymus Custodis
Oil on panel
1591

1928.7

Sir John Hawkins was the archetypal Elizabethan pirate. Hawkins was the son of William Hawkins, a mayor of Plymouth and one of the city's richest men. This painting depicts Hawkins in fine Elizabethan dress, displaying his status as a wealthy sailor and merchant. The gold chain around his neck and sword are obvious indicators of Hawkins status.

Hawkins was the first English merchant to sell enslaved people for profit. He made at least three voyages to Africa with the intention of acquiring enslaved people to trade across the Atlantic Ocean.

Sir Francis Drake is known to have sailed on at least one of those voyages. The voyages made by Hawkins were funded and supported by London merchants and by Queen Elizabeth I and brought wealth to the merchants, the Royal Family and the City of Plymouth.

His new-found wealth, Naval expertise, successful expeditions against the Spanish and his involvement in exposing conspirators in the plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I, helped him become an MP and later Treasurer of the Navy. Hawkins was one of the most high profile and important figures in Elizabethan society.

The coat of arms in the top left of the painting includes an image of a bound African man, and was granted to Hawkins by Queen Elizabeth I.

He was knighted by the Lord High Admiral, Lord Effingham (on behalf of the Queen) for his role as one of the three main commanders of the English fleet against the Armada.


ÆTATIS SVÆ LVIII
Anno Dñi 1591

Margaret Hawkins' bond

Parchment, 8 July 1598

277.18

In 1557 Hawkins married Katherine Gonson, the daughter of Benjamin Gonson, Treasurer of the Navy. Gonson resigned his position in 1577 and Hawkins was soon appointed as his replacement, holding the office for 22 years.

Hawkins made sweeping financial reforms to the Navy, upsetting many of his peers who had vested interests. This resulted in Hawkins being accused of fraud and investigated by William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, Francis Walsingham (Elizabeth's current and previous 'spymaster' generals) and his cousin Sir Francis Drake. No undue corruption was found.

Following the death of Katherine, Hawkins married Margaret Vaughan, a Lady of the Bedchamber for Elizabeth I. Soon after the marriage Hawkins had set sail for the Caribbean with Drake on a voyage seeking treasure. This voyage was to be their last - both probably contracting dysentry - and were buried at sea.

This document relates to the wills of both Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake, being a bond between Margaret and the executor of Drake's will, Thomas Drake. It agrees that they will both abide by the ruling of the four named arbitrators in any disputes that arise out of their mutual executorships. Margaret was left between £2000 and £10,000 in the will (according to different sources), between £500,000 to £2.4 million today.

The poor of Plymouth were left £50 or around £12,500 today.

Hawkyns de London vidua mia Uxore Johis Hawkyns mi
eosdem Johnis Hawkyns teneri et firmiter obligari ...
enti sibi ultima voluntatis ffrancisci Drake militis def...
Thome Drake aut successori attornat ... suis ... qua...
recipit et administr. meos ... presentibus sigillo meo signat ...
Anglie ffranc et Hibnie Regine fidei defensor ...

Margaret Hawkyns

Sigillat et delib. in presentia mei
Tho: Lucas ...
Ric. Osbaldeston ... London
Thomas myddelton
Edw: Ullmer

Sir Francis Drake

by Marcus Gheeraerts
Oil on canvas (detail)

1921.139

Drake was born in Tavistock around 1540. He was apprenticed at an early age to his relative, William Hawkins, from who he learned the fundamental skills of sailing, trade and exploration. While he was still a young man, Drake accompanied his cousin John Hawkins on slave trading voyages from Africa to the Caribbean and was involved in capturing between 1,200 and 1,400 enslaved people.

These voyages caused a great hostility between England and Spain, as the Spanish (alongside Portugal) claimed exclusive rights to trade with the Americas under the *1494 Treaty of Tordesillas*. During Hawkins and Drake's third slave trading expedition in 1567, their convoy was attacked by Spanish warships at San Juan de Ulua, Mexico. This encounter would escalate the conflict between Spain and England.

In 1572 Queen Elizabeth I enlisted Drake as one of her 'privateers', captain's authorised by the Queen to attack and plunder Spanish ships. On a voyage to Panama in 1572, Drake took aboard a skilled navigator and interpreter called Diego, a Cimarron (Africans who had escaped from their Spanish captors to settle their own villages). Diego accompanied Drake back to Plymouth along with around £20,000 in Spanish gold and silver (around £8 million today), landing in 1573.

No record of Diego's activities for the four years he stayed in Plymouth exist, though it is likely he lived with and worked for Drake and his then wife Mary Newman at their townhouse on Looe Street.

Diego was one of around 170 men who left Plymouth in 1577 on the voyage that would become the first circumnavigation of the globe by an Englishman. Diego would die on this journey, near the Maluku Islands in Indonesia.

Ptolemy’s Geographia or Atlas

Ptolemaeus auctus, restitutus, emaculatus. cum tabulis veteribus ac novis.
Strasbourg edition, 1520

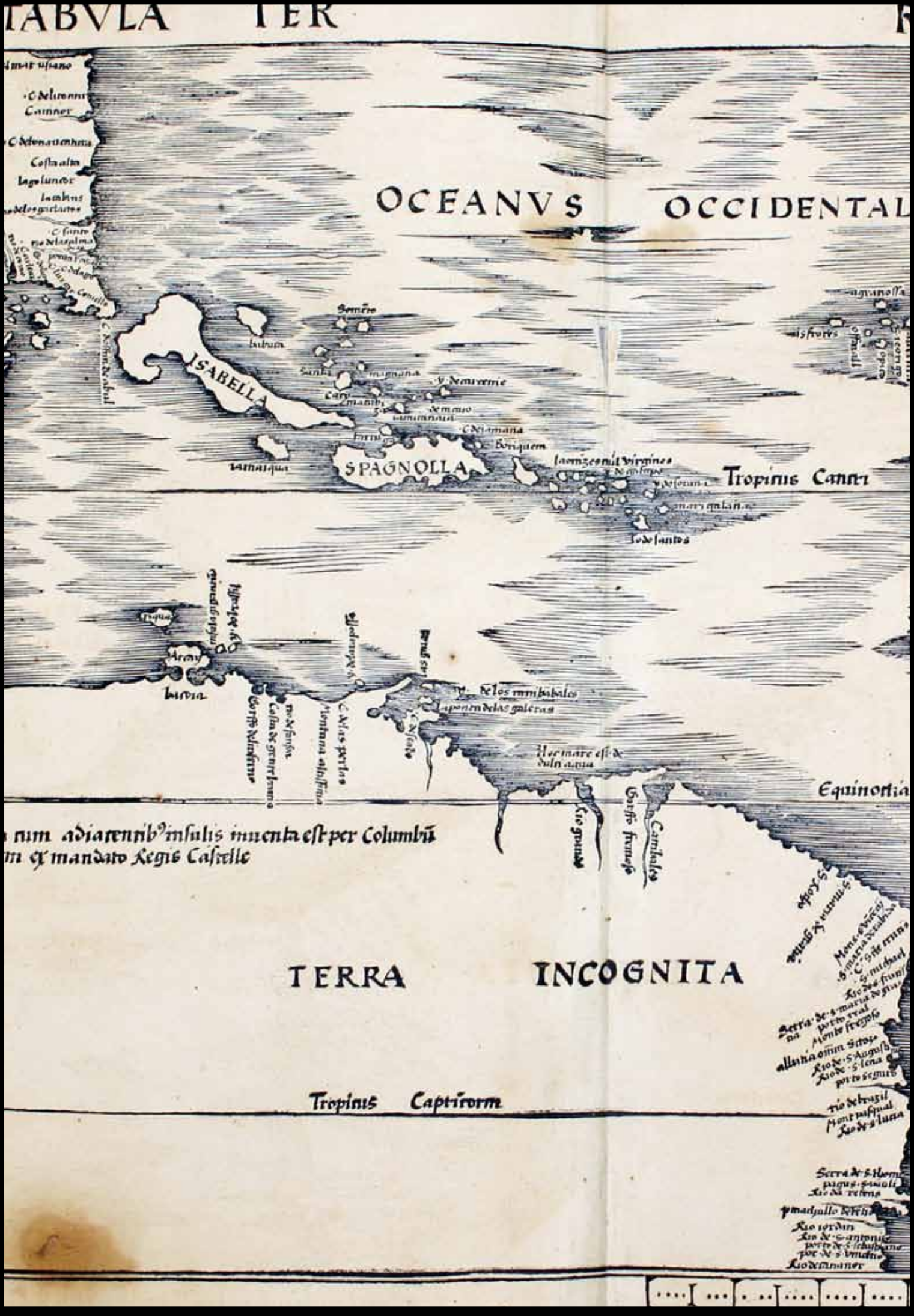
2310/1

Claudius Ptolemaeus was born c. AD 90 in Egypt and was known as a mathematician, geographer, astronomer and astrologer. He lived in Egypt under Roman rule, but few reliable details of his life are known. He died in Alexandria around AD 168.

Ptolemy wrote three texts which would become very important to later Islamic and European science. The first was astronomical - now known as the *Almagest*. The second was astrological - now known as the *Tetrabiblos*. The third is now commonly called the *Geographia*, which is a thorough discussion of the extent of geographic knowledge of the Greco-Roman world. It provided instructions on how to create maps based on projections of a spherical earth, using latitude and longitude coordinates.

The 1513 edition, printed in Strasbourg, contains the earliest printed map of the ‘New World’ with the Caribbean at its centre. This slighter later 1520 version is an updated edition including newly redrawn maps by German cartographers which included more detailed names of the Caribbean islands and coastal places names in North, Central and South America. The *Geographia* would continue to be revised and reprinted until the 18th Century.

This copy is believed to have been owned by Sir Francis Drake, though this claim cannot be verified. As a major English seafarer and explorer, Drake would have been well aware of the maps and charts included within this book, but would also have made use of many others.


TABVLA TER
OCEANVS OCCIDENTAL
ISABELLA
SPAGNOLLA
Tropinis Cancri
Equinoctia
TERRA INCOGNITA
Tropinis Captirorm

Development of trading routes

Two companies were chartered by James I in 1606 - the Virginia Company and the Plymouth Company - with the goal of establishing settlements on the east coast of North America. The Virginia Company established the settlement of Jamestown in Virginia, though the Plymouth Company was unable to fulfill its charter. Later, the land they identified was claimed when the *Mayflower* and its passengers settled there in 1620. Both of these expeditions to colonise North America began their journey in Plymouth.

Colonisation had huge implications for the indigenous populations these areas, leading to the destruction or displacement of entire communities and societies.

Britain also began to colonise Caribbean islands such as Bermuda, St Kitt's and Barbados in the early 17th Century. It also took Jamaica from Spain in an armed conflict.

The Caribbean colonies were carved up by plantation owners who needed workers - to fulfill this need, Britain re-entered the business of transatlantic slavery. By the late 17th century Britain had become the dominant nation leading and profiting from transatlantic slavery.
At the same time as this, Britain also established or took-over a series of trading posts along the coast of West Africa. These trading posts were fortified and became holding places for enslaved people. They served as 'processing' areas prior to transportation across the Atlantic.

Through the 17th Century Plymouth had gradually lost its status as a major trading port. A lack of major facilities for the processing of sugar and tobacco meant that ships returning from British colonies regularly docked elsewhere. Despite this, a relatively small number of slave ships did leave Plymouth during the late-17th to mid-18th Centuries.

The development of a Royal Navy Dockyard at Plymouth Dock (now HMNB Devonport) in 1690 brought a different focus. The dockyard was the second significant building for military use in the area, joining the Citadel on the Barbican, built in 1660. The dockyard brought prosperity to Devonport and boosted the population to far above those of Plymouth or Stonehouse.

Manillas

Bronze

1919.219.1

Manillas were a traditional form of currency used in West Africa before Portuguese traders became aware of and exploited their use as a means of exchange. They are metal bracelets or armlets with a high copper content that would have been worn by some African peoples as a decorative item.

The name ‘manilla’ is thought to derive from the Portuguese for ‘hand-ring’ or the Spanish for ‘bracelet’. Manillas were first used in Calabar, Nigeria and the traditional name for them - ‘okpoko’ - means money or brass.

Between 1504 and 1507, Portuguese traders imported around 287,000 manilllas into Guinea alone. A manilla mould found in Exeter dates to before 1625, the earliest example found in Britain to date. After 1690, through improvements to production within the brass industry, Britain dominated this highly profitable export market. In the 18th Century, foundries in Birmingham and later Bristol produced manillas for export, though with some produced elsewhere in Britain on a smaller-scale.

Manillas were taken as cargo along with other items such as cooking pots and household wares, then traded for enslaved people when the ships arrived on the African coast.

Shackles

Iron

1918.221.1x
1918.221.2x

These leg shackles would have been used to join the legs of enslaved people together when they were being transported from Africa across the Atlantic by ship, as an attempt to restrict the possibility of mutiny or resistance.

Shackles were generally made from cast iron or wood. A foundry located in Exeter is known to have made shackles for export to Africa. Most enslaved people would have worn the shackles for long periods at a time, including most of the two-month journey from Africa across the Atlantic, known as the 'Middle Passage'.

During this, enslaved people would have been forced together into cramped ship hulls, and they were not able to stand up or walk around. Dysentery, malnutrition and small pox were common causes of death on board ship. Hunger strikes and suicide were also reported - resistance to enslavement took many forms.

Daily rations may have included yam, biscuits, rice, beans, plantain and occassionally meat. This was served in buckets - one bucket between ten people. Water was part of the rations, but generally unpleasant to drink.

Between 1501 and 1866 it is estimated that over 12.5 million enslaved people were transported from Africa. Portugal was responsible for 5.8 million of the people related to this figure, with Britain a close second with 3.2 million of the total.

Many lives were not recorded. Enslaved people would die before they reached other shores, or awaiting sale in 'slave forts' on the coast of Africa. Some estimate that these unrecorded deaths could also be as high as 12 million.

Sugar cone mould sherds

Earthenware

These fragments of sugar cone mould were discovered during the archaelogical exacavations of a kiln at Plympton and date to the 17th Century. These sherds are known as ‘wasters’, as they were not successfully fired at the time of manufacture - possibly becoming broken or mishapen in the kiln.

The clay is believed to be local, sourced from rivers running off Dartmoor and shows similarities to pottery manufactured in St Germans and Totnes from the same period.

These small sherds appear to be the earliest known manufactured sugar cones in the UK. Sugar moulds such as this were used to mould boiled molasses into cone-shaped ‘loaves’ ready for transportation or sale to the general public.

Although the exact site of the kiln is not known, it would not have been far from the waste dump that these sherds were found within. Many other fragments of sugar cone were found, along with fragments of syrup jars used with the cones for collecting liquid molasses during the cooling process. That these were being produced locally at a time when a sugar refinery (page 20) was being developed would suggest a link.

The ‘Sugar House’

Lease, Castle Sugar Refinery, Sutton Road
Parchment, 1873

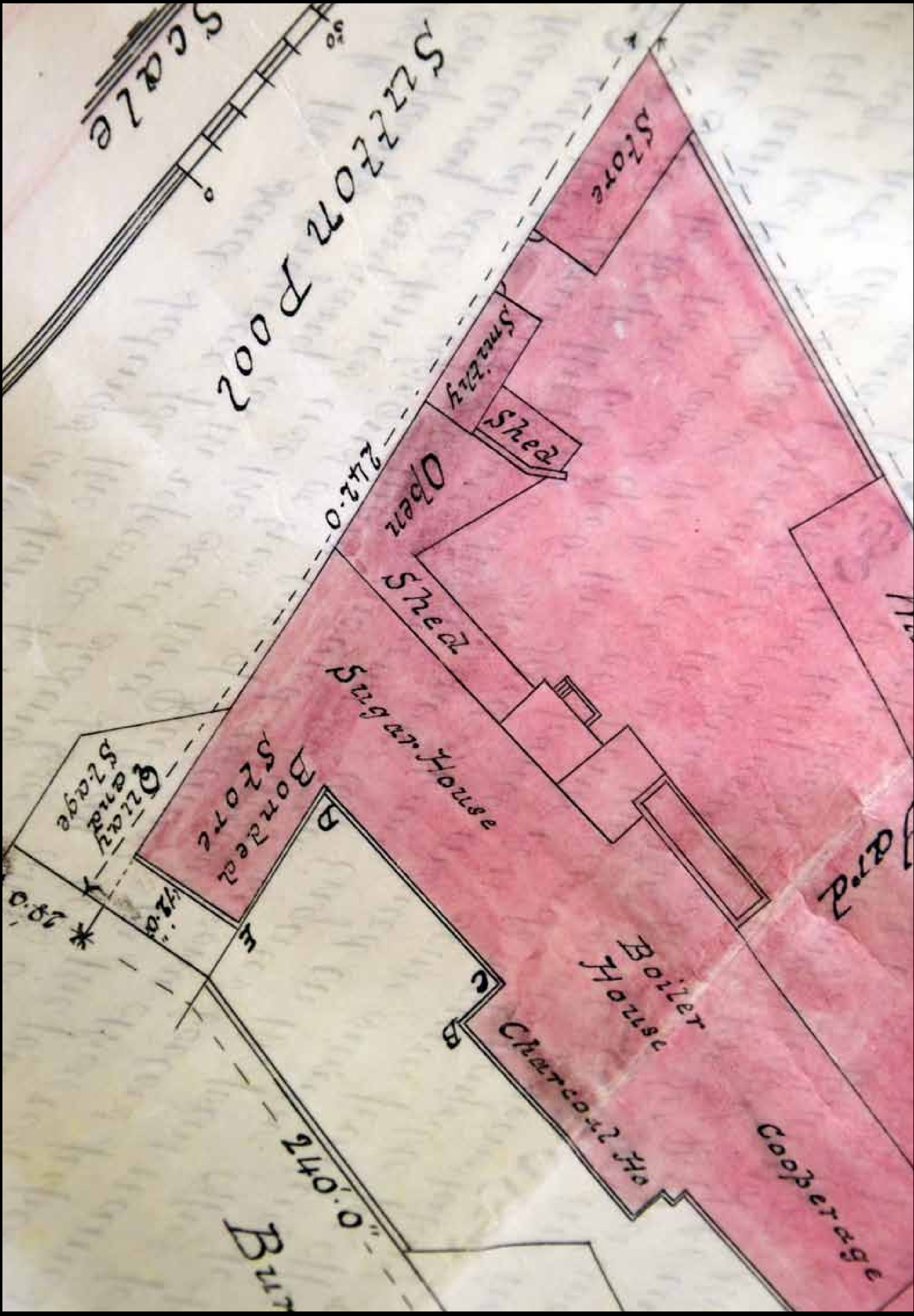
500/42

Plymouth had a sugar processing industry during the 17th Century, with a ‘Sugar House’ located at Coxside, owned by sugarbaker Samuel Buttall. The most likely use for the Sugar House would have been for refining imported molasses, with separate spaces set aside for boiling, cooling, drying and storage for imported barrels of molasses and the completed loaves.

The Sugar House was part of the same complex that included the China House and Marrowbone Slip, still located at Coxside today. This complex represents a major phase of reclamation that occured when the City had control of the foreshore during the Commonwealth. The image on the next page, from a much later lease agreement from 1873, still shows the site being refered to as a Sugar House, with the possible re-use as a refinery once more.

The use of buildings in this complex also changed many times - the China House was a likely storehouse or possible factory for William Cookworthy’s porcelain production (see page 26) but was also used as a prison during the mid-18th Century, a woollen manufactory, a Navy storehouse or victualling office and a Board of Ordnance gunwharf. The Sugar House was also used as a hospital for prisoners-of-war during the mid-18th Century and later as a timber yard.

The location of this complex within 1000 yards of the Customs House on the Barbican allowed it to be used by merchants for import and export.


Scale
Sutton Pool
242.0
Store
Smithy
Shed
Open
Shed
Sugar House
Bonded Store
Quay and Stage
12.0
28.0
D
E
C
B
Boiler House
Charcoal Ho
Cooperage
240.0"
Bu

Abolition

Plymouth had a major role to play in bringing transatlantic slavery to an end through its strong links to the abolition movement in Britain. A Nonconformist religious organisation known as the Quakers called for an end to trading in enslaved people at a meeting in Plymouth as early as 1727. They were instrumental in developing a ground-swell of support within the general public that contributed to the eventual signing of the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*.

During his travels across Britain collecting evidence in support of abolition, Thomas Clarkson laid the foundation for the 'Plymouth Committee of Abolitionists'. He met with a small group of active people from the city, including local banker Sir William Elford and clockmaker Samuel Northcote.

In 1789 the 'Plymouth Committee of Abolitionists' published a pamphlet that included an image that was to become one of the most enduring visualisations of the reality of this trade and one of the important tools of the abolitionist campaign - the engraving *Stowage of the British slave Ship Brookes under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788*.

The scaled image of the vessel fully-laden with enslaved people, showing the legal capacity of 'slaves-per-tonne' of ship was compared by a clergyman of the time as akin to Dante's *Inferno*, a vision of hell.

Despite the passing of the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, the Royal Navy, sailing from Plymouth and other ports, played a significant role in enforcing the newly passed act. Between 1807 and 1866, the Royal Navy captured well over 500 slave ships, and prevented many more from trading.

Following the Abolition Act, the Royal Navy were directed to stop other nations from filling the gap in the market left by Britain, however limited resources and finance were committed to this endeavour.

The Royal Navy continued to patrol the seas, searching for ships carrying enslaved people long after the British Government passed the *1833 Act for the Abolition of Slavery*.

This act was meant to bring an end to the illegal trade, though it remained a reality in many British colonies long after its abolition.

William Cookworthy

by John Opie RA
oil on canvas, 1780
Harmsworth Collection

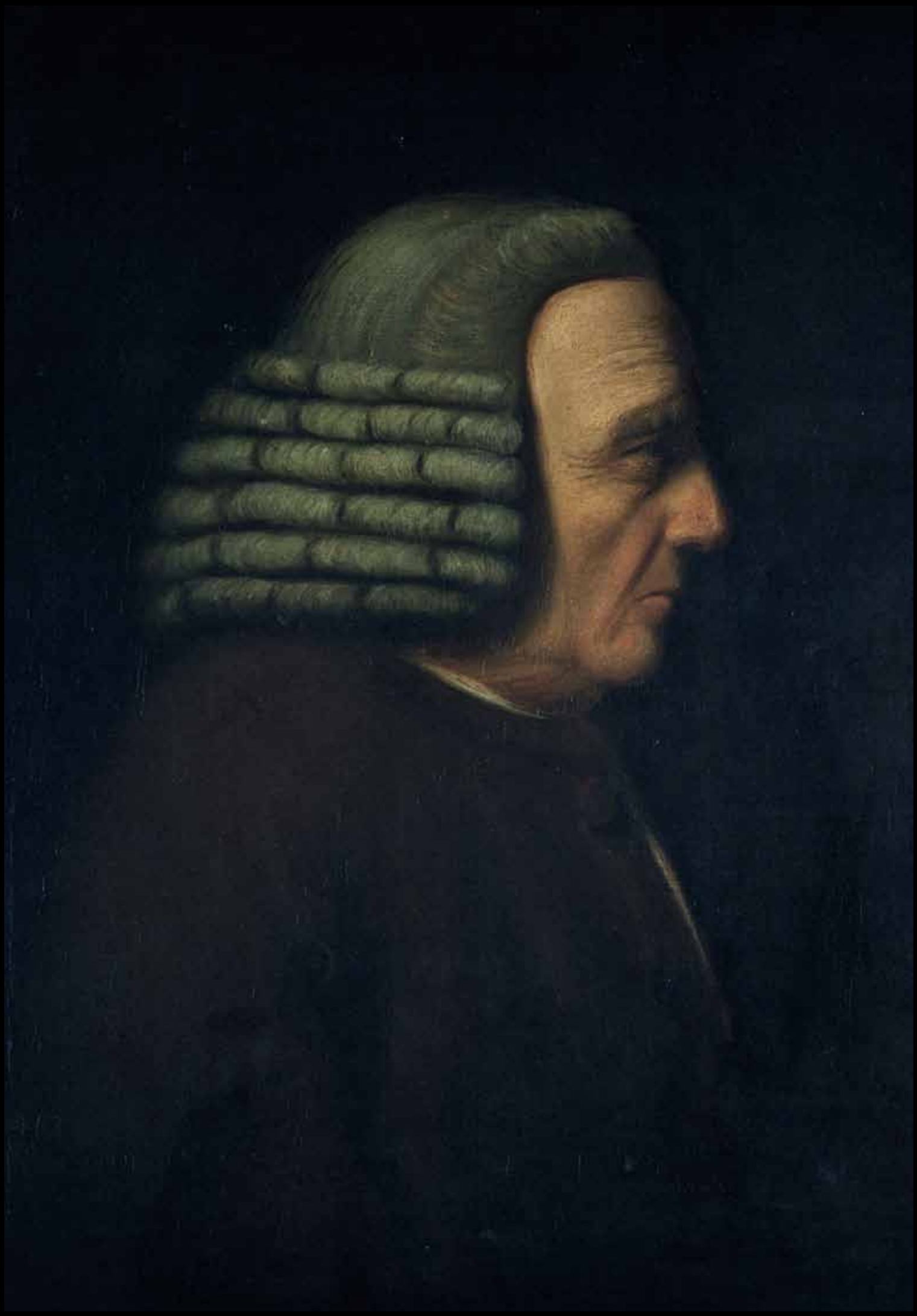
1929.13

Cookworthy was an outstanding chemist and an active Quaker, a faith group committed to working for equality and peace. He was linked to both local and national groups interested in the abolition of the slave trade, including as a member of the 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade', founded by Thomas Clarkson and Grenville Sharp in 1787. He joined Charles Fox and John Prideaux as three Plymouth-based members. George Harrison, a member on the founding committee, was married to Susanna, Cookworthy's daughter.

The Society was formed seven years after Cookworthy's death in 1780, so perhaps his financial contribution was formed as a legacy in his will, or perhaps in his honour by a family member. His business parter, Richard Champion was also a Quaker and had strong links to the abolitionist cause in Bristol, particularly through is association with Edmund Burke MP. His daughter Sarah married Charles Fox and was very active in abolitionist circles, including friendships with the evangelist John Wesley, the writer Hannah More and indeed with Thomas Clarkson.

Clarkson mentions Cookworthy in his 1808 book *The History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. It reads "*At Plymouth I laid the foundation of another committee. The late William Cookworthy, the late John Prideaux, and James Fox, all of the society of the Quakers, and Mr George Leach, Samuel Northcote, and John Saunders, had a principal share in forming it. Sir William Elford was chosen as chairman*".

This perhaps indicates Cookworthy's importance as a senior member of society in Plymouth and his influence in galvanising support for the cause, prior to any official committee being formed.



Olaudah Equiano ('Gustavus Vassa')

by Daniel Orme, after W. Denton
stipple engraving, published 1789

1489.g.50

Olaudah Equiano was the most prominent person of African heritage to be involved with the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

He wrote an autobiography highlighting the horrors of the trade, which were all first-hand experiences as Equiano was himself an emancipated slave.

This autobiography provided fuel to the abolitionist movement at the end of the 18th Century. '*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*' was first published in 1789, and put him firmly on the frontline of the abolitionist movement. When Equiano returned to England as a free man, he landed in Plymouth.

Later in his life, Equiano became involved with the 'Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor' in London and supported the creation of a resettlement colony in Sierra Leone.

He later helped the development of the Sierra Leone Company and was given the position of Commissary of Provisions and Stores for the company in Plymouth. His job was to receive the food and equipment needed for the ships sailing to Sierra Leone and ensure its safe arrival and usage by the inhabitants, not the ships crew.

He discovered that the officials in Plymouth were corrupt and the colonies would have suffered as a result. He was sacked from his job, even though the Navy Board stood up for him, and was later proved correct, as only 60 of the 374 people the company moved to Sierra Leone survived the first four years.

Olaudah Equiano,

or

GUSTAVUS VASSA,

the African.

Thomas Clarkson

by Charles Turner, after Alfred Edward Chalon
mezzotint, published 1828
Given by Miss Clarkson, 1963

NPG D33313

Thomas Clarkson was among the foremost British campaigners against both slavery and the slave trade. In 1780 Clarkson wrote an essay for a Cambridge University competition that first stirred his interest in the abolition of slavery. This was published in 1786 as '*An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*'.

By 1787, Clarkson had co-founded the 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade' along with other influential figures of the day such as Granville Sharp, one of the first campaigners for the abolition of slavery.

The formation of this Society had a direct contribution to the eventual signing of the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. During the period before the Act had been passed, Clarkson is known to have visited Plymouth to gain support for the Society. While in Plymouth he helped lay the foundation for the 'Plymouth Committee of Abolitionists' by encouraging local supporters to gather and discuss possible action.

Clarkson was the most active of campaigners, tirelessly gathering information about the trade in enslaved people. Clarkson was said to have travelled over 35,000 miles on his horse over a period of seven years to gather information.

Clarkson was instrumental in setting up the Sierra Leone Company to resettle Black Loyalists after the American Revolutionary War. Building upon earlier work by Granville Sharp through the St George Bay Company, the Sierra Leone Company helped resettle over 1,000 settlers in the newly founded city of Freetown. The situation was far from perfect however, with 'apprentices' settled in Sierra Leone effectively remaining as enslaved people bought by British colonists.

The Brookes engraving

Engraving

BRO 17652

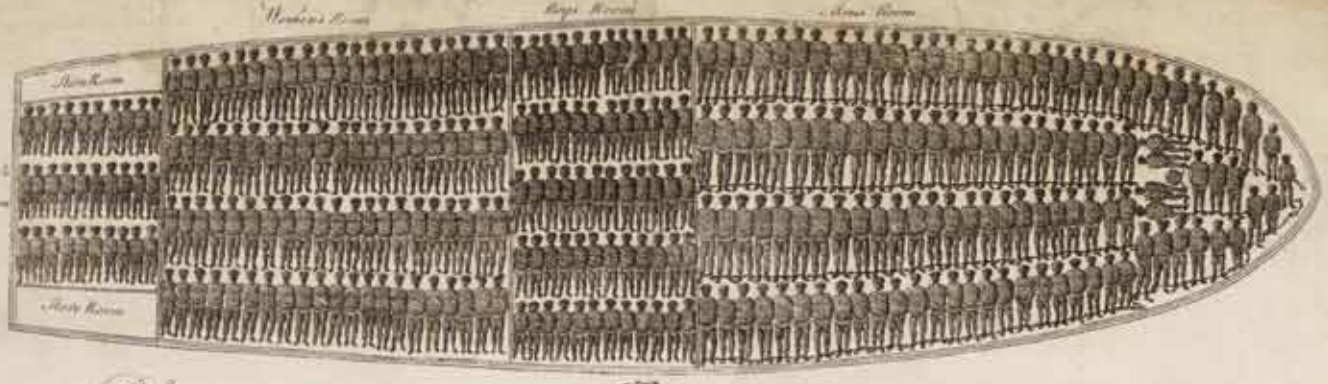
The Brookes engraving was first used by the 'Plymouth Committee of Abolitionists' to draw local attention to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It shows the slave ship Brookes of Liverpool with its cargo of 454 enslaved people, as it would have sailed the thousands of miles from the coast of Africa across the Atlantic ocean.

Look closely at the engraving. The largest compartment shows males shackled together. It also shows women, boys and girls unshackled - all would have been forced to lie down for the majority of the journey.

The first version of this powerful image was used by the 'Plymouth Committee of Abolitionists' in 1789 in a pamphlet. It proved to be so effective in showing the cruelty of slavery that it was reprinted all over the country many times. Thomas Clarkson showed this engraving to the 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade' soon after it was published. It was said to "*make an instantaneous impression of horror upon all who saw it, and as it was therefore very instrumental, in consequence of the wide circulation given it, in serving the cause of the injured Africans*".

The Brookes was known to have carried more enslaved people than the legal limit of the time, up to 609 on a previous voyage - 155 more people than are shown on the engraving. Many editions of the pamphlet were printed and most people who supported the abolitionists had access to one. It was an incredibly strong propaganda image for the anti-slavery movement and gained national attention.



Plan of an AFRICAN SHIP'S lower Deck  *with NEGROES in the proportion of only One to a Ton.*

THE above Plate represents the lower deck of an African Ship of 297 tons burthen, with the Slaves stowed on it, in the proportion of not quite one to a ton.

In the Men's apartment, the space allowed to each is six feet in length, by sixteen inches in breadth.—The Boys are each allowed five feet by fourteen inches.—The Women, five feet ten inches, by sixteen inches; and the Girls, four feet by one foot each.—The perpendicular height between the Decks, is five feet eight inches.

The Men are fastened together two and two, by handcuffs on their wrists, and by irons rivetted on their legs.—They are brought up on the main deck every day, about eight o'clock, and as each pair ascend, a strong chain, fastened by ring-bolts to the deck, is passed through their Shackles; a precaution absolutely necessary to prevent insurrections.—In this state, if the weather is favourable, they are permitted to remain about one-third part of the twenty four hours, and during this interval they are fed, and their apartment below is cleaned; but when the weather is bad, even these indulgences cannot be granted them, and they are only permitted to come up in small companies, of about ten at a time, to be fed, where after remaining a quarter of an hour, each mess is obliged to give place to the next in rotation.

It may perhaps be conceived, from the crouded state in which the Slaves appear in the Plate, that an unusual and exaggerated instance has been produced; this, however, is so far from being the case, that no ship, if her intended cargo can be procured, ever carries a less number than one to a ton, and the usual practice has been to carry nearly double that number: The Bill which was passed during the last Session of Parliament, only restricts the carriage, to five Slaves for three tons; and the Brooks, of Liverpool, a capital ship; from which the above sketch was proportioned, did, in one voyage, actually carry 609 Slaves, which is more than double the number that appear in the plate.——The mode of stowing them was as follows—Platforms, or wide shelves were erected, between the decks, extending so far from the sides towards the middle of the vessel, as to be capable of containing four additional rows of Slaves, by which means the perpendicular height between each tier, after allowing for the beams and platforms, was reduced to two feet six inches; so that they could not even sit in an erect posture; besides which, in the Men's apartment, instead of four rows, five were stowed, by placing the heads of one between the thighs of another.—All the horrors of this situation are still multiplied in the smaller vessels.—The Kitty, of 137 tons, had only one foot ten inches, and the Venus, of 140 tons, only one foot nine inches perpendicular height above each layer.

The above mode of carrying the Slaves, however, is only one, among a thousand other miseries, which those unhappy and devoted creatures suffer from this disgraceful Traffick of the Human Species; which in every part of its progress, exhibits scenes that strike us with horror and indignation.—If we regard the first stage of it on the Continent of Africa, we find that a hundred thousand Slaves are annually produced there for exportation, the greatest part of whom consists of innocent persons, torn from their dearest friends and connections, sometimes by force, and sometimes by treachery. Of these, experience has shewn, that five and forty thousand perish, either in the dreadful mode of conveyance before described, or within two years after their arrival at the plantations, before they are seasoned to the climate.—Those who unhappily survive these hardships, are destined like beasts of burthen, to exhaust their lives in the unremitting labours of a Slavery, without recompence, and without hope.

The *Inhumanity* of this Trade, indeed, is so notorious, and so universally admitted, that even the advocates for the continuance of it, have rested all their arguments on the political inexpediency of its abolition; and in order to strengthen a weak cause, have either maliciously or ignorantly confounded together the emancipation of the negroes already in Slavery, with the abolition of the Trade; and thus many well-meaning people have become enemies to the cause, by the apprehentions that private property will be materially injured by the success of it.—To such, it becomes a necessary information, that liberating the Slaves forms no part of the present system; and so far will the prohibition of a future trade be from injuring private property, that the value of every Slave will be very considerably increased, from the moment that event takes place, and a more kind and tender treatment will immediately be insured to them by their Masters, from the necessity every Planter will then be under to keep up his stock, by natural means; a practice which some humane inhabitants of the Islands have pursued with the greatest success, and upon whose estates no new Negroes have been purchased for a number of years, the death vacancies having been supplied by young ones, born and bred in their own Plantations.—Thus then the value of private property will not only suffer no diminution, but will be very considerably inhanced by the abolition of the Trade.—It now only remains to see how the Public and the Slave Merchants will be affected by it.

It is said by the well-wishers to this Trade, that the suppression of it will destroy a great nursery for seamen, and annihilate a very considerable source of commercial profit—In answer to these objections, Mr. Clarkson, in his admirable treatise on the impolicy of the Trade, lays down two positions, which he has proved from the most incontestible authority.—First, that so far from being a Nursery, it has been constantly and regularly a Grave for our Seamen; for that in this Traffick only, more Men perish in ONE Year, than in all the other Trades of Great-Britain, in TWO Years: And, secondly, that the balance of the trade, from its extreme precariousness and uncertainty, is so notoriously against the Merchants, that if all the vessels, employed in it were the property of one Man, he would infallibly, at the end of their voyages, find himself a loser.

As then the *Cruelty* and *Inhumanity* of this Trade must be universally admitted and lamented, and as the policy or impolicy of its abolition is a question which the wisdom of the Legislature must ultimately decide upon, and which it can only be enabled to form a just estimate of, by the most thorough investigation of all its relations and dependencies; it becomes the indispensible duty of every friend to humanity, however his speculations may have led him to conclude on the political tendency of the measure, to stand forward, and to assist the Committees, either by producing such facts as he may himself be acquainted with, or by subscribing, to enable them to procure and transmit to the Legislature, such evidence as will tend to throw the necessary lights on the subject.—And people would do well to consider that it does not often fall to the lot of individuals, to have an opportunity of performing so important a moral and religious duty, as that of endeavouring to put an end to a practice, which may, without exaggeration, be stiled one of the greatest evils at this day existing upon the earth.

By the Plymouth Committee,

W. Elford, Chairman.

William Wilberforce

by George Richmond
watercolour, 1833

NPG 4997

William Wilberforce was a Tory politician and abolitionist who led the parliamentary campaign against the slave trade.

Wilberforce made his first speech on the subject of abolition in the Houses of Parliament in May 1789, drawing heavily on evidence from Thomas Clarkson in publications such as '*The history of the rise, progress, and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave trade by the British Parliament*'. Clarkson provided Wilberforce with a plan-of-action and a network of influential supporters.

A bill was first introduced in 1791, but was easily defeated by 163 votes to 88. Petititions flooded into Parliament in support of immediate abolition. In 1792, 519 petitions from across Britain with 390,000 signatures had been delivered. Wilberforce continued to campaign in Parliament, shifting the focus from the abolition of slavery to the abolition of the slave trade.

It was hoped that campaigning against the slave trade rather than slavery itself would be a more realistic target and that slavery would cease as a natural consequence of the trade being abolished. The House of Commons eventually passed the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, tabled not by Wilberforce but by the Prime Minister Lord Grenville, to stop the trade of enslaved people.

Wilberforce was involved with the founding of the Sierra Leone Company. He, along with other social reformers known as the Clapham Sect, founded Freetown in Sierra Leone. This was supposed to be a safe haven for freed slaves, but in reality continued exploiting people with an 'apprenticeship' system of forced labour.

Sierra Leone Company report

Substance of the Report delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday 27th of March, 1794

1794

CB1526

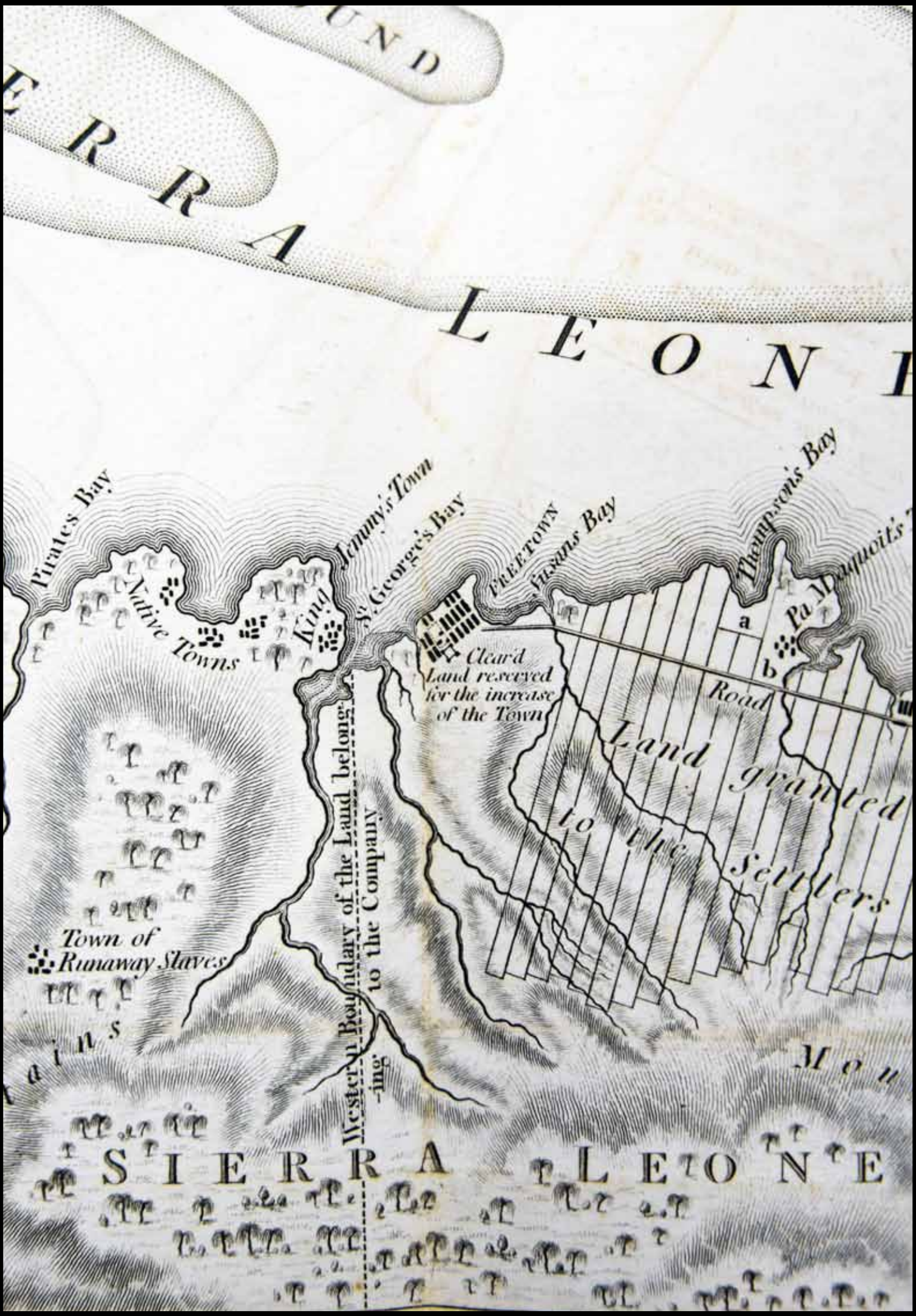
In 1853, the Cottonian Collection was relocated from the Cotton family home in Ivybridge to the Plymouth Propriety Library. It was transferred to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery in 1915 (now The Box).

This report comes from the Cottonian Collection and was probably added to the collection by William Cotton II. Cotton II inherited the collection in 1791 from his father, who had in turn inherited from his brother-in-law. Cotton II relocated the collection to his own home in Clapham Common.

At this time, a group of Church of England social reformers were based in Clapham. They shared common political views such as the liberation of enslaved people and the abolition of the slave trade. Although not a member of the Sect itself, Cotton II did attend Holy Trinity Church and mixed in the same social circles as other members. The Church rector, John Venn, was a leader of the Sect. Although we can't be certain that Cotton II was involved directly with the abolition movement, he did purchase a Wedgwood 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother.' medallion that sadly no longer survives in the Cottonian Collection.

The Clapham Sect were instrumental in establishing a colony in Sierra Leone through their subscriptions to the Sierra Leone Company. Cotton II rented a property in Clapham to the Sierra Leone Company in the 1790s, so was not only aware of the company, but had also profited from them.

Despite an initial social and moral motivation behind the foundation of Freetown, the Sierra Leone Company slowly transformed into a regulated colony that could be exploited. By 1795 the Company became incorporated and former slaves began to be brought to the colony.The premise of the company was that "*extensive commerce might be greatly facilitated*". This resulted in the continued exploitation of people and an extraction of wealth back to Britain.


Pirates Bay
Native Towns
King Jemmy's Town
St. George's Bay
FREETOWN
Sierra Leone
Thompson's Bay
Cleard Land reserved for the increase of the Town
Road
Land granted to the Settlers
Town of Runaway Slaves
Western Boundary of the Land belonging to the Company
SIERRA LEONE

Wilberforce letter

Ink on paper, 9th July 1814

710/465

This letter from William Wilberforce to the then Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Henry Woollcombe, is one of two letters from Wilberforce in the collections of The Box.

Henry Woollcombe was a solicitor in the city and founder member of Plymouth Athenaeum. He maintained a commitment to the abolitionist cause, appearing in a number of anti-slavery documents from Plymouth.

This particular letter dates to a period of ill health for Wilberforce, but shows his continued committment to the abolitionist cause. The text is as follows.

W London
July 9th 1814

Sir,

I am truly sensible of the honour done me by the meeting of the inhabitants of the town and vicinity of Plymouth by their note of thanks, and (unknown) with pleasure the great interest which you yourself will as they take in the good cause of the abolition of the African Slave Trade.

I remain
Sir
Your most at service
W Wilberforce

Henry Woolcombe Esq.
Plymouth

P.S I trust you will excuse my dictating as I have far more writing than agree with my health and eyes.

world as they take in the
good cause of the Aboli-
tion of the African Slave
Trade — I remain
Sir
your most ob.t serv.t
W Wilberforce

Henry Woolcombe Esq:
Plymouth

P.S. I trust you will excuse
my dictating as I have far

Petition of Parliament poster, Plymouth Guildhall

1/669/3

This poster was produced in 1828 for a meeting at the Guildhall, long after the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, which made it illegal for British nationals to be involved with the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It was crucial that the abolitionists' campaign continued until slavery was abolished altogether. The campaign consisted of public meetings where the brutality of slavery was discussed and petitions were signed and sent to London to put pressure on both Houses of Parliament. By the end of 1814, 864 petitions had been sent to London, bearing 755,000 signatures, in 1824 a further 777 petitions were sent to Parliament. This continued until the *1833 Act for the Abolition of Slavery* was passed.

The poster lists many important people from Plymouth who were involved with the abolitionist movement in the 19th Century. They include the mayor Richard Pridham and other names you may still find familiar today - David Derry, Samuel Rowe, John Prideaux and Henry Woollcombe (himself an ex-mayor).

The 'Plymouth Ladies Auxiliary' also contributed support to the gathering of signatures and raised funds to contribute to the campaign. Significant national pressure came from Elizabeth Heyrick and the 'Female Society for Birmingham', who suggested women's associations should withdraw their funding from the national Anti-Slavery Society if it did not support their new campaign calling for an immediate end to slavery.

The Box has five examples of anti-slavery posters in the collection that date from 1814 to 1828.

Borough of Plymouth.

Guildhall, May 20th, 1828.

HAVING received a Requisition of which the following is a Copy:---

"To the Worshipful the Mayor of Plymouth."

"SIR,

"We, the under-signed, request the favour of "your calling a MEETING of the Inhabitants of "this Town and Neighbourhood, for the purpose "of Petitioning both Houses of Parliament, to "carry into immediate effect the Resolutions of "Parliament, passed in May, 1823, and the con- "sequent recommendation of His Majesty, on the "subject of ameliorating Slavery in the Colonies "of the British Empire."

Plymouth, 20th May, 1828.

SIGNED,

HENRY WOOLLCOMBE	JOSEPH TREFFRY
JOHN PRIDEAUX	SAMUEL NICHOLSON
JOSEPH HINGSTON	DAVID DERRY
JOHN THICKNESSE	W. P. DAVIES
SAMUEL ROWE	

I do therefore, in pursuance of the said Requisition, hereby request a GENERAL MEETING of the Inhabitants of the Town and Borough of Plymouth and the Neighbourhood, at the GUILDHALL thereof, on FRIDAY next, the 23rd day of MAY Instant, precisely by Twelve of the Clock at Noon, for the above purpose.

RICHARD PRIDHAM,

MAYOR.

Contemporary legacies

It took many decades to shut down the Transatlantic Slave Trade after the *1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* and the *1833 Act for the Abolition of Slavery* were passed.

Its legacies remain with us today. Not only does slavery still exist in many parts of the world, but the attitudes that allowed it to flourish in and from Africa have not disappeared. The trade in enslaved people on such a scale arose from commercial pressure to make as much money as possible. Europeans had began to rationalise and justify their treatment of black people as 'inferior' human beings in order to exploit a labour supply that could not demand payment.

Racism underpinned the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the presence of racism in many parts of Europe and the Americas today is a damaging legacy of the trade. Racism is not just a set of ideas or beliefs, it has a very important economic function. It not only degrades and humiliates but it also robs and impoverishes the people who are its target. Racism made the cheap labour force that the capitalist system demanded - Europe became rich at the expense of the exploited.

Without the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the colonisation of vast areas of Africa, the Americas and later India, there wouldn't have been the wealth available to fuel the Industrial Revolution in Britain.

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century was based on getting raw materials cheaply, tightly controlling the use of labour and energy in manufacture and finding large markets for selling the finished product. In that period, the raw material, whether it was cotton, sugar, tobacco or timber, was available through the plantations, using enslaved peoples or indentured labour.

To maintain this industry, cheap labour and energy was found in the towns, villages, hills and valleys of the British Isles. The key to the success of many industrialists was the realisation that the markets could be found in the same places from which the slave and indentured labour came. the countries of the Empire.

Africa is a continent rich in human ingenuity and natural resources such as diamonds, gold, other metals, and timber. However, the people of Africa and those Africans in the Diaspora (through forced migrations) are still not enjoying the benefits the fair exploitation of these raw materials could provide.

International commercial pressures exist just as much today as they did 200 years ago. The Transatlantic Slave Trade involved the trafficking of people. The plantation system dealt in commodities that were the product of forced labour. Today's newspapers are full of similar stories, just with differing situations.

How can we say that slavery is truly history?

Discussion points

MEMORIALISATION AND COMMEMORATION

Look again at the portraits of Hawkins and Drake on pages 6 and 10. There is a 'Hawkins Square' close to the City Centre and you've probably spotted lots of things named after Sir Francis Drake across the city.

Considering their involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, do you think they should be memorialised in this way? You could explore this question as a whole class enquiry topic, or individual discussion with your students.

Look at the amount of money left to the poor of Plymouth in Margaret Hawkins' bond. Is it OK that this money indirectly came from the Transatlantic Slave Trade, if it was eventually used to help the poor of Plymouth?

Discuss this issue with your class. You could reference this to modern philanthropy by companies or individuals today.

RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

Look at the leg shackles on page 18. What do these tell you about how enslaved people reacted to their enslavement and transportation from Africa to the Caribbean and America?

Discuss the issue of resistance and rebellion with your class. You could also research other objects that demonstrate resistance and rebellion among enslaved people with your class.

ABOLITION

Revisit all of the paintings and documents associated with the abolition of the Tranatlantic Slave Trade in this resource. Discuss with your students which (if any) was the most important factor in bringing the slave trade to an end.

Invite your students to reflect on modern issues that they are not happy with. How could they make personal, collective or political changes to have an impact on that issue?

Teacher Ambassadors

The Engagement and Learning Team at The Box would love you to be involved with the development of our new schools offer.

We're working to develop three main strands of our new service.

- A set of curriculum-linked **facilitated sessions** for all key stages, that use our new galleries to explore history, science and art topics
- Brand new online resources - including games, quizzes, films and activity ideas
- A set of loan boxes of artefacts and resources that you can use in your classroom

We want to ensure that this new schools service meets your needs as a teacher, so we are setting up a consultant groups of Teacher Ambassadors for The Box.

Being a Teacher Ambassador will support your professional development through the chance to develop new skills in how to use objects to enhance curriculum learning. You will also be proud in the knowledge that you've made a real difference to how school pupils across the city and region experience The Box.

If you'd like to become one of our Ambassadors, please email.

museumvisits@plymouth.gov.uk

@theboxplymouth

theboxplymouth.com

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

heritage lottery fund

LOTTERY FUNDED