

ART. XV – *Whitehaven and the eighteenth-century British Slave Trade*

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IT is widely recognised by historians that Bristol, Liverpool and London dominated the eighteenth-century British slave trade. Most of the literature on the trade has naturally focused therefore on these three ports.<sup>1</sup> Recent studies have shown, however, that slaving voyages to Africa were also fitted out at other ports in Britain and that, at times, the contribution of these voyages to the growth of the British traffic in slaves was quite significant.<sup>2</sup> A growth of interest in the trade at these ports seems to have been particularly marked during the third quarter of the eighteenth century and coincided with a major expansion in British slaving at this time. Among the smaller ports that became active in the trade in these years were Lancaster, Poole and Whitehaven. Studies relating to the participation in the slave trade of the first two of these ports have recently been published.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this paper is to examine the history of Whitehaven's involvement in the trade.

## I

The century after the Stuart Restoration witnessed a substantial growth of Whitehaven's population and general prosperity.<sup>4</sup> The cornerstone of this prosperity was the coal trade which, according to available figures, may have grown six-fold between 1688 and the middle of the eighteenth century and employed the lion's share of the 17–18,000 tons of shipping that cleared the port each year for foreign destinations in the early 1750's.<sup>5</sup> It is also evident, however, that, as with other west coast ports in the eighteenth century, Whitehaven's prosperity was influenced by the general expansion of British trade with America. Some expansion of trade between the Cumbrian port and the West Indies at this time is discernible, but the central element in Whitehaven's links with the colonies was the import of tobacco from Maryland and Virginia.<sup>6</sup> Stimulated by its proximity to Scotland and Ireland, neither of which could legally import tobacco directly from the English colonies in America before 1707, Whitehaven's tobacco imports rose to almost 2 million pounds per annum by the first decade of the eighteenth century. Imports then stagnated for almost three decades after the Act of Union of 1707 allowed direct shipments of tobacco to Scotland from the Chesapeake colonies. However, growth in tobacco imports resumed again from the mid-1730's as re-export markets first in Holland and then in France developed, and, with annual imports of 9–10 million pounds, Whitehaven was by the mid-1740's the second largest tobacco importing centre in Britain after London.<sup>7</sup> Heavily dependent on the re-export trade to France, imports at Whitehaven thereafter fell back again as the tobacco trade from Scottish ports to France expanded, and by 1771–2 were perhaps no more than a third of the level attained a quarter of a century earlier.<sup>8</sup> Despite their decline after 1750, tobacco imports were, according to most recent historians, a powerful influence on Whitehaven's

fortunes during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century and, particularly in the 1740's, brought unprecedented prosperity to the port.

Compared to the tobacco trade, Whitehaven's involvement in other colonial trades, including the slave trade, has generally been neglected by historians of the port. In the case of the slave trade, it was commonly believed for many years that the port's participation in slave trafficking was very limited. Writing in 1956, Williams claimed that there was "little evidence to show that Whitehaven was involved in the slave trade", although he acknowledged that one Whitehaven vessel – the *King George* – had been engaged in it.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in a study published in 1981, Beckett wrote that while Whitehaven traders were modest participants in the sugar trade, "the slave trade was almost completely ignored, at least before the 1750's".<sup>10</sup> A recent study by Tattersfield of slave trading at the "minor ports" of England has shown, however, that some slaving voyages to Africa were fitted out by Whitehaven merchants before 1725. Tattersfield has also suggested, without seeking specifically to quantify their involvement, that during the 1750's the merchants of the port "entered the trade in earnest".<sup>11</sup>

The low survival rate of Whitehaven port books in the eighteenth century hinders any attempt to evaluate these conflicting claims regarding the port's participation in the slave trade.<sup>12</sup> However, there exist several other series of shipping records such as naval office lists and Mediterranean passes, and together with a number of contemporary reports and surveys of the slave trade before 1776 these allow one to trace with some degree of confidence the scale of Whitehaven merchants' involvement in slaving.<sup>13</sup> The data gleaned from these sources are presented in Table 1. From this table, it appears that no less than 69 voyages to Africa for slaves were fitted out by Whitehaven merchants in the eighteenth century, with the first being fitted out in 1710 and the last in 1769. Of these voyages, 65 were fitted out at Whitehaven itself, with the remaining four being dispatched from Liverpool and London in 1759–65. During some sixty years of active involvement in the trade, therefore, Whitehaven merchants invested on average in just over one slaving voyage a year. Further inspection of Table 1 also reveals that the level of participation of Whitehaven merchants in the African trade varied considerably. An initial and somewhat spasmodic involvement in slaving in 1710–21 – during which eight slaving voyages were dispatched to Africa – was then followed by a disregard of the trade that, despite some evidence of possible interest in it by at least one Whitehaven merchant in the mid-1730's,<sup>14</sup> seems to have remained total until 1749. In 1750, however, interest in slaving revived, and over the following two decades, some 61 slaving ventures were dispatched to Africa by Whitehaven merchants. Interest in slaving was especially noticeable in 1761, 1763–65 and 1767, when between five and nine voyages a year to Africa were invested in by the port's merchants. On known costs of fitting out slaving voyages, annual investment in the African trade by Whitehaven merchants probably amounted in these six years to £20–40,000.<sup>15</sup> Overall, the evidence presented in Table 1 clearly contradicts Williams' claim that the port was uninvolved in slaving during the eighteenth century, and supports Tattersfield's contention that, in the 1750's and 1760's, Whitehaven's involvement in the trade "was not a casual one".<sup>16</sup>

Compared to the premier eighteenth-century British slaving ports, Whitehaven's involvement in the slave trade, even at its height in 1750–69, remained fairly modest. Available figures suggest that while 61 voyages to Africa were being fitted out by

Cumbrian merchants in the two decades after 1750, almost 1,250 were fitted out at Liverpool, nearly 500 at London, and over 470 at Bristol.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, even allowing for the fact that, because of the exceptional length of slaving voyages, figures on annual numbers of clearances of vessels understate the demands of the trade on shipping, it is unlikely that the traffic in slaves occupied more than a very small fraction of Whitehaven's merchant fleet during the 1760's.<sup>18</sup> Despite this, it appears that clearances from Whitehaven contributed almost 10 per cent of the increase in trade from ports in north-west England to Africa between the 1740's and the 1760's.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, within Whitehaven itself, the rise in enthusiasm for the trade in the 1750's and 1760's represented a significant diversification in the commercial activities of the port's merchants at a time when their control over the tobacco trade was in decline. The growth and characteristics of the Whitehaven slave trade therefore merit closer attention than they have received to date. In Part II we briefly examine the merchants who invested in the slave trade at Whitehaven and try to uncover their reasons for doing so. In Part III we explore some of the features of the Whitehaven traffic in slaves, and seek to explain why the port's merchants abandoned it after 1769. Part IV offers some brief conclusions.

## II

As is the case with other eighteenth-century British slave ports, information about the investors in Whitehaven slaving voyages is very incomplete. However, it appears from the surviving port books and other sources that Whitehaven's early interest in the slave trade was largely dominated by Thomas Lutwidge sr. and Thomas Rumball.<sup>20</sup> Lutwidge was, in fact, responsible for five of the eight African ventures known to have been fitted out at the port in 1710–21, while Rumball was investor in and master of one voyage – that of the *Princess* in 1718 – and commander of four of the five voyages controlled by Lutwidge. One other voyage before 1721 was fitted out by Robert Biglands, while the owners of another ship, fitted out in 1710, are unknown. There is little information about Rumball before 1710, but in that year he was appointed by Lutwidge to command the *Hannah-Maria* on a voyage to Dublin and Jamaica and, on his return in 1711, was immediately given command of the *Swift* for its first voyage to Africa. As indicated, he subsequently commanded three further African voyages for Lutwidge; this presumably provided him with the means to fit out the *Princess* for Africa in 1718. As for Lutwidge, he seems to have had Irish connections, and after setting up as a wine merchant at Whitehaven around 1690, succeeded over the following twenty years in promoting occasional voyages to the sugar colonies in the West Indies and establishing himself as one of the principal tobacco traders at the port. To some extent, therefore, his participation in the slave trade from 1710 onward may be seen, as Tattersfield has suggested,<sup>21</sup> as a simple extension of his evolving interests in the American plantation trades. A closer inspection of the evidence shows, however, that Lutwidge's entry into the slave trade also coincided with a sharp downturn in the tobacco trade at Whitehaven during the decade or so after the Act of Union in 1707.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, despite a general growth of slave imports into Virginia after 1710, none of Lutwidge's vessels delivered slaves to the Chesapeake, the area with which he had most trading connections; all the

slaves delivered to America in Lutwidge's vessels were sold, in fact, in the Caribbean. While the growth of commercial links with the plantations cannot be ignored, therefore, it is possible that Lutwidge's entry into the slave trade in 1710 reflected an attempt to diversify his commercial activities at a time of readjustment in Whitehaven's role in the tobacco trade.

The series of Whitehaven port books ceases in 1743, and in order to trace patterns of merchant involvement in slaving voyages at the port in 1750–69 we have to resort to information found in other sources, particularly the naval office lists.<sup>23</sup> From these, it has been possible to unearth evidence on investors in 27 slaving ventures from Whitehaven in the 1750's and 1760's. These represent 43 per cent of Whitehaven slaving voyages in this period. In most instances, the records give the name of only one shareholder in voyages, the rest being subsumed under the term "& Co.", but in the case of four voyages apparently full lists of shareholders have survived. These show that only two individuals – John Copeland sr. and jr. – were shareholders in the *Happy* in 1765 and that three individuals – John Kennedy, William Scott and Joseph White – owned shares in the *William* in the same year.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, it appears that ten individuals or firms had shares in the *Betty* on her slaving voyage to Africa and South Carolina in 1759–60 and that nine held shares in the voyage of the *Venus* to Africa and Barbados in 1763–4.<sup>25</sup> Perusal of the lists of owners of the last two vessels reveals that three firms – Griffith, Kelsick & Co., Hall & Fletcher, and Thomas Hartley & Co. – were shareholders in both vessels. The other shareholders in the *Betty* were listed as William Fletcher, Elizabeth Frower, R. Gale, William Peper, T. Waken, Joseph White, and the vessel's master, John Kennedy – the last two being shareholders in the *William* also – while the remaining shares in the *Venus* were reportedly held by Coupland [Copeland?] & Finlay, Edward Fletcher, Peter How, William Gilpin, Messrs Spedding & Co., and Walter Wright & Co. Little is known about several of these individuals or firms, but the Fletchers, Gale, Gilpin, Hartley, How, Kelsick and Spedding were either major Whitehaven merchants in their own right or closely connected with some of the most prominent families in the area in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, some of these men were also investors in other slaving voyages from the port in 1750–69. Thus, of the other 23 voyages in these years for which we have information about investors, John Kelsick invested in seven, Edward Fletcher in three, and Peter How, William Scott and James Spedding in one each. Investors in the other ten Whitehaven slaving ventures in 1750–69 were Daniel Baynes, John Copeland (or Coupland), John Dyson, John Hartley, John Kennedy and Thomas Troughear.<sup>27</sup> Little again is known of some of these men, but Copeland was, as we have seen a shareholder in the *Happy* in 1765, while Baynes, Kennedy and Troughear all appear to have served as masters of slave ships before becoming investors in voyages, and together are known to have invested in seven slaving ventures from Whitehaven in the 1750's and 1760's.<sup>28</sup> As in 1710–21, therefore, investment in the slave trade at Whitehaven in 1750–69 seems to have been dominated by a few members of the commercial elite of the town as well as by former masters of slave ships.

First-hand experience of slaving as well as the accumulation of wealth from the trade may largely explain the investment in African voyages by former masters of slave ships such as Daniel Baynes, John Kennedy and Thomas Troughear.<sup>29</sup> But why members of

the merchant elite at Whitehaven chose to invest in the trade in the 1750's and 1760's is rather less clear. Part of the explanation may lie in demand conditions for slaves in America. Available evidence suggests that expansion of output of plantation crops in both the British and foreign colonies in America helped to push up slave prices in British America during the twenty years or so after 1748, thus creating a generally favourable climate for investment in slaving voyages.<sup>30</sup> Since merchants such as Edward and William Fletcher, Peter How and John Kelsick had established trading connections with the plantations and were probably familiar therefore with changing market conditions for slaves, it is perhaps not surprising to find them drawn into the slave trade at this time. A letter to the Liverpool slave trader, John Hardman, from Walter Lutwidge in 1749 also suggests, however, that, while investment in the slave trade may have appeared attractive after 1748, Whitehaven merchants faced some problems in entering the trade and were only induced to invest in it because of difficulties in the tobacco trade. Thus, writing on 15 October 1749, Lutwidge suggested to Hardman that

it wo'd not be disagreeable to me to be concern'd a little in the Guinea trade from your place as I have ships and no Employ'm't for them that I am at present fond (I mean the Virg'a Trade). I wo'd readily send at least one of them to Guinea in case you sho'd incline to take me in for a share of the cargo as a quarter, third, half or as was most agreeable to yorself, you to have the nominating the Capt'n and other officers necessary to be skilled in the Trade, people here being strangers to it.<sup>31</sup>

On this occasion, Hardman appears to have been unresponsive to Lutwidge's offer. Furthermore, Lutwidge's own interest in the slave trade seems in the end to have been only temporary since he appears not to have invested in slaving voyages in the following years. Nevertheless, it is evident that, largely as a result of Scottish competition, Whitehaven's position in the tobacco trade deteriorated from about 1748 onward and that at the height of Whitehaven's involvement in the slave trade in 1759–67 imports and re-exports of tobacco at the port were substantially below the levels attained in the 1740's.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, several of those most involved in promoting slaving ventures at Whitehaven at this time – Peter How and James Spedding in the early 1750's and Edward Fletcher and John Kelsick after 1759 – were earlier associated with some of the principal tobacco importing firms in the town.<sup>33</sup> It is quite conceivable, therefore, that, as with the initial period of the port's involvement in slaving, investment in the slave trade by Whitehaven merchants in 1750–69 largely stemmed from efforts by some of the town's leading merchants to find new outlets for their capital as part of a readjustment to changes in market conditions in other trades, particularly tobacco. What is also clear, however, is that, as with their earlier dealings with the trade, Whitehaven merchants were unable to sustain their new-found enthusiasm for the slave trade for more than a decade or so, and in the late 1760's a substantial withdrawal of ships from the trade took place before they finally abandoned it altogether after 1769.<sup>34</sup> The reasons for their loss of enthusiasm for slaving in the late 1760's are uncertain, but it may be possible to throw some light on the matter by exploring some of the problems faced by Whitehaven merchants in their pursuit of the trade and the patterns of their slaving voyages. These will be the subject of Part III of the paper.

## III

The slave trade is generally recognised to have been a complex, competitive and uncertain economic activity. Linking several continents, the trade required a substantial financial outlay from investors, often running over a number of years, and involved the exchange of European and East Indian manufactures for slaves at the African coast, the transport of the slaves to America in the notorious middle passage and their sale to sugar, rice and tobacco planters, and finally the remittance to Britain in produce or other forms of the proceeds of the voyage. Each stage or leg of the voyage was surrounded with difficulties and uncertainties, and the successful financial outcome of slaving ventures depended in part on good fortune, particularly with respect to the avoidance of heavy slave mortality in the Atlantic crossing, but also, as Walter Lutwidge acknowledged in his letter to John Hardman in 1749, on the skill of those entrusted with their command. Charged with negotiating the purchase of slaves in Africa and the terms of their sale in America, masters carried a heavy responsibility for ensuring the profitability of voyages. However skilful the master was in discharging his duties, problems such as slow trade in Africa, sickness or rebellion among the slaves, or poor harvests or prices for plantation crops could still ruin voyages financially. Overall, it appears that slaving was profitable to British merchants but that rates of profit varied substantially between voyages and even from one year to another.<sup>35</sup> As a result, investment in slaving voyages was often seen as high risk or speculative in nature.<sup>36</sup>

The absence of merchant papers makes it extremely difficult to establish how well Whitehaven merchants conducted the slave trade. It is clear that, in entering the trade, merchants at the Cumbrian port had to overcome several handicaps. Lacking a tradition of involvement in the trade, the seafarers of Whitehaven were initially “strangers”, as Lutwidge observed in 1749, to the skills necessary for its pursuit. The inexperience of Whitehaven sailors in slaving was paralleled to some extent by that of those responsible for fitting out ships for the African coast. Thus, for instance, a misunderstanding by Peter How of the breadth and thickness of iron bars appropriate for barter at the African coast obliged him in 1751 to reheat, roll and slit three tons of spruce bar iron that he had imported from Russia for the cargo of the *Providence*, Thomas Troughear master. Since the Board of Customs judged that the imported iron had been subject to a process of manufacture in Britain, How’s claim for a return of import duties on the iron’s re-export to Africa was subsequently refused, thus enhancing the cost of the iron shipped to the coast.<sup>37</sup> A further example of the inexperience of Whitehaven merchants in the trade was provided in 1757 when, on its return from Africa and Jamaica, the Liverpool ship, the *Nicholas*, Robert Jennings master, was wrecked at Whitehaven. Included in the ship’s cargo was a parcel of Guinea grains or malaguetta pepper from the Windward Coast of Africa. Unfamiliar with this commodity – which was quite regularly imported at other ports involved in the slave trade – Whitehaven customs officers and merchants had to seek the advice of local apothecaries in order to try to assess the damage to the salvaged goods.<sup>38</sup>

Such inexperience of the African trade diminished, of course, as Whitehaven seamen and merchants were drawn more fully into it. Indeed, as we have seen, a number of the port’s merchants, including John Kelsick and Edward and William Fletcher, became regular shareholders in slaving voyages and several local masters held command of three

or more African ventures.<sup>39</sup> It is quite likely, therefore, that merchants and shipmasters became more proficient over time in managing the trade in Africa and America. However, even if their skills in managing voyages improved, other factors may still have handicapped Whitehaven traders in their pursuit of the trade. It is possible, for instance, that in procuring trade goods for Africa, Whitehaven merchants suffered from some disadvantages compared to merchants at other British ports. Evidence relating to other ports, together with documents for proposed voyages to Africa found in the papers of Walter Lutwidge, reveal that cargoes of goods shipped to Africa normally consisted of a wide variety of goods of both British and foreign origin, with the precise composition of cargoes being dependent on the intended trading destination in Africa.<sup>40</sup> Among the goods exported were East Indian cottons, Swedish bar iron, Italian beads, and German linens, as well as British textiles, brass and copper wares, firearms, gunpowder, glass and earthenware, spirits, and tobacco. In addition, ships bound for Africa normally carried large quantities of shipstores and provisions, together with beans and other foodstuffs to feed to slaves in the middle passage. On the whole, the main supply centres for many of the trade goods were located some distance from Whitehaven, at or near to the principal slave ports of London, Liverpool or Bristol.<sup>41</sup> At such places a regular flow of returning slave ships was available to provide up-to-date information on changes in demand for goods in Africa. This may help to explain why at least four slaving voyages in which Whitehaven merchants invested after 1750 were fitted out at Liverpool and London.

Although they were probably less well placed than their rivals to obtain trade goods suitable for Africa from established suppliers, Whitehaven merchants were almost certainly able, nevertheless, to draw on their general commercial contacts as well as the products of their local or regional economy to ease their entry into the slave trade. It is known, for instance, that some of those involved in the trade had agents in Liverpool, London and Manchester, three of the main sources of supply in Britain of trade goods for Africa.<sup>42</sup> In addition, illicit supplies of East Indian goods, brandy, and Dutch trade goods were sometimes available at the Isle of Man, a place with which Whitehaven traders had regular contact.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, trade links with the Baltic, as Peter How's dispute in 1751 with the Board of Customs attests, offered access to supplies of bar iron, while links with Ireland provided a ready source of ship provisions. Whitehaven slave ships quite often called at Irish ports, in fact, on their way to Africa.<sup>44</sup>

Like merchants at other slaving ports, however, Whitehaven merchants were probably able also to call on supplies of goods for the African trade from their own hinterland. Whitehaven itself was, for example, the centre of an important local brewing industry by the middle of the eighteenth century, and Kendal was said in 1769 to produce worsted stockings and "a coarse sort of cloth, called cottons, for the Guinea trade".<sup>45</sup> Gunpowder was also reported to be produced at Kendal as well as at Ambleside, while guns, gunshot, ironware, and brass and copper goods – some of the last reputedly for the African trade – were all manufactured in the Furness area.<sup>46</sup> As for provisioning ships, the Isle of Walney was reported by the mid-eighteenth century to be a source of beans for feeding "the poor enslaved negroes in the Guinea trade" and, together with the Plain of Furness, was also noted as an important grain-producing area.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, as Cumbria may have been a relatively low wage area at this time, it is possible that Whitehaven slave ships could have been manned and fitted out more cheaply than ships at the larger slaving ports.<sup>48</sup> In entering the slave trade, therefore,

merchants at Whitehaven may have been hindered by their port's location, but access perhaps to supplies of cheap labour, expansion of their general commercial connections, and developments in Cumbrian agriculture and industry may all have facilitated their involvement in the African trade in the mid-eighteenth century.

Exactly how successful Whitehaven merchants were in pursuing the trade still remains difficult to gauge, particularly since information about the financing of their voyages, the prices they paid and received for their slaves, and the remittances they obtained from slave sales in America is, as yet, unavailable. However, the availability of port books, colonial naval office lists and Mediterranean passes, as well as certain sources of evidence relating specifically to the African trade, allows one to compile information on some important features of the Whitehaven slave trade in both the second decade of the century and the third quarter of the century.<sup>49</sup> In particular, it is possible to obtain evidence on the tonnage of ships, the distribution of slave purchases and sales in Africa and America, the number of slaves delivered per ship to America, the loadings of ships on their homeward journeys, and the overall duration of slaving voyages from the port. Such evidence provides important insights into the economics of Whitehaven slaving. Moreover, by comparing evidence of this sort for Whitehaven voyages with that available for voyages from other British slaving ports, one can begin to shed some light on the relative performance of Whitehaven merchants as slave traders. In discussing these aspects of the trade we shall focus primarily on the period 1750–69, though some references to the situation in 1710–21 will be made. We begin by looking at the major characteristics of the Whitehaven trade, focusing first on the tonnage of ships, then at the patterns of trade in Africa and America, and finally at the loading rates of ships and the overall duration of voyages. Thereafter, we shall attempt to examine the performance of Whitehaven slave traders relative to that of traders at other British ports.

Evidence relating to tonnages has been found for most of the ships involved in the Whitehaven slave trade, and is summarised in Table 2. It should be emphasised that data on ship tonnages in the period before 1786 are problematical, partly because several measures of tonnage were used in registering ships and partly because, as the figures in Appendix I show, the reported tonnage of ships sometimes varied considerably from one source of information to another.<sup>50</sup> Appendix I indicates that on the whole the tonnages reported in the naval office lists tend to be lower than those given in the Mediterranean passes and other records. Despite this, in compiling Table 2 we have largely relied on evidence from the naval office lists, though data from other sources have been used where gaps in the naval office lists exist. As the naval office lists are the source upon which several other recent studies of the slave trade have been based,<sup>51</sup> this allows one to make comparisons between the tonnages of Whitehaven slave ships and those of ships from other ports.

From Table 2 it appears that the average size of ships used by Whitehaven merchants in the slave trade rose from about 65 tons in the 1710's, to about 70 tons in the 1750's, and to just over 110 tons in the 1760's. This rise in mean tonnages of ships tended, as the other data in the table indicate, to mirror that at the major British slave ports, although Whitehaven slavers were normally smaller than those employed at these other ports between 1710 and 1769. However, a comparison with other smaller ports in north-west England reveals that while Whitehaven merchants employed, in the 1750's, ships of similar size to those employed by merchants at Lancaster, they employed rather larger

ships in the trade in the 1760's than their neighbours.<sup>52</sup> Thus, although more ships sailed to Africa from Lancaster than from Whitehaven in the 1760's, it is possible that the total level of investment in slaving voyages at the Cumbrian port was similar to that at the north Lancashire port at that time.

As noted, the growth in mean tonnage of Whitehaven slave ships was part of a general growth in the size of British slave ships between 1710 and 1769. But it also seems to have been connected with changes in the pattern of Whitehaven slaving in Africa and America during the twenty years after 1750. Of the 61 ships that left Whitehaven for Africa in this period, four – the *Whittington*, *Black Prince*, *Ann Galley* and *Four Brothers* – were seized in 1756–61 by enemy privateers en route to or at the African coast.<sup>53</sup> Among the remaining 57 ships, we have detailed evidence regarding the trading centres in Africa for 19 ships, while a further eight were reported as being bound for or having traded at Guinea. The other 30 ships are simply reported as bound for or at Africa. It is impossible to say exactly where those said to be destined for or at Guinea traded, but of the other 19 for which we have information, one was reported as bound for Senegal, seven were said to have traded at the Windward Coast or places thereon, two traded at both the Windward Coast and Gold Coast, four traded at Anamaboe or the Gold Coast, and five traded at Bonny in the Bight of Biafra.<sup>54</sup> Given the relatively small number of ships whose trading locations are known, it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions from these data, particularly as the evidence on ships trading at the Windward Coast gives figures for slave purchases during the course of trade rather than at the time of departure from the African coast. It is, in fact, likely that some of the ships reported as trading at the Windward Coast completed their slave purchases elsewhere along the coast.<sup>55</sup> A close inspection of tonnage data shows, nevertheless, that the ships reported as trading at the Gold Coast and Bonny tended to be among the largest in the Whitehaven fleet of slave ships, and that most of the known Whitehaven voyages to these parts of the coast were undertaken between 1762 and 1767.<sup>56</sup> It is quite possible, therefore, that some coastal redistribution of Whitehaven slaving activity toward the Gold Coast and Bight of Biafra may have occurred between the 1750's and the mid-1760's, thereby encouraging an increase in the size of ships used in the trade.

Although some detail is still missing, there is much fuller information available about the markets at which Whitehaven ships sold their slaves in 1750–69. Overall, information relating to markets has been unearthed for some 47 Whitehaven slaving voyages in this period.<sup>57</sup> This amounts to 77 per cent of all African ventures fitted out at the port in these years and over 82 per cent of those believed to have reached America with slaves. The evidence shows that Whitehaven ships delivered slaves to at least eight markets in America between 1750 and 1769, but largely concentrated on Barbados and Jamaica. Thus, of the 47 ships for which we have information, 16 discharged their slaves at Barbados and 23 at Jamaica, while the remaining eight ships sold their slaves at six other markets, with St Kitts and Guadeloupe each receiving two cargoes and Antigua, Havana in Cuba, South Carolina and Virginia one each. The three cargoes sent to Cuba and Guadeloupe were all sold there during periods of British occupation of these islands in 1759–63. Further analysis of the evidence also shows that the relative importance to Whitehaven traders of Barbados and Jamaica as slave markets varied, with Barbados receiving slightly more cargoes than Jamaica in the 1750's and Jamaica taking nearly twice as many cargoes as Barbados in the following decade. Despite the fact that the

largest cargo known to have reached America in a Whitehaven ship – 340 in the *Venus* in 1764 – was sold at Barbados, Jamaica, as the premier slave mart in eighteenth-century British America, seems consistently to have attracted larger Whitehaven ships and cargoes of slaves than its rival colony in the eastern Caribbean.<sup>58</sup> As in Africa, therefore, adjustments in the pattern of Whitehaven's slave trade in the Caribbean may have contributed to the growth in mean size of ships employed in the trade between the 1750's and 1760's.

It is impossible on the basis of available sources to account for the changes that took place in the pattern of Whitehaven slaving in Africa and America in 1750–69, but a comparison with the trade of Lancaster – the other port in north-west England outside Liverpool to enter the slave trade in a significant way in this period – reveals that major differences in the pattern of slaving of these two northern ports existed.<sup>59</sup> Thus, whereas Whitehaven merchants seem to have shifted the centre of their trade in Africa from the Windward Coast toward the Gold Coast and Bonny during the 1760's, Lancaster merchants appear to have purchased the great majority of their slaves at Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast throughout the third quarter of the eighteenth century. As these areas of the coast tended to attract smaller ships than those employed elsewhere in Africa, the mean tonnage of Lancaster ships was, as a result, significantly less than that of Whitehaven ships by the 1760's. Similarly, in America, Whitehaven traders showed some interest in supplying slaves to colonies captured by Britain in wartime but, on the whole, seem mainly to have sold their slaves at Barbados and Jamaica, where competition from established Bristol and Liverpool traders was normally strong. By contrast, Lancaster traders, while not ignoring markets in Barbados and Jamaica, became much more substantially involved in supplying slaves to other colonies in British America such as South Carolina, Grenada and St. Vincent. As the last two came into British hands only after 1763, it appears that, in America at least, Lancaster slave traders were rather more alert to new market opportunities than their Cumbrian rivals. This, in turn, may help to account for the ability of Lancaster traders to sustain their interest in the slave trade after 1763 rather longer than their counterparts at Whitehaven.

The evidence so far adduced sheds little immediate light on the competitiveness of Whitehaven slave traders, but data on loading levels of ships and voyage times may provide some measure of their performance. In the case of loading rates, little evidence has survived regarding the numbers of slaves loaded per ship in Africa. Moreover, that which is available probably gives an incomplete picture of slave purchases per ship.<sup>60</sup> There is, however, evidence relating to the numbers of slaves imported into the American colonies by 45 Whitehaven ships between 1711 and 1769, or almost 70 per cent of the port's ships which are reported to have reached the colonies with slaves in these years. As some slaves died in the Atlantic crossing, these data obviously understate the loadings of ships with slaves at the African coast.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, they may slightly understate imports per ship into America as it is possible that some ships discharged some slaves at colonies other than the ones for which figures have survived. Nevertheless, we believe that our figures on slave deliveries provide a reasonable basis upon which to begin to evaluate the performance of eighteenth-century Whitehaven slave traders.

The data on slave deliveries are presented in Table 3, together with evidence on the mean tonnages of Whitehaven ships involved in the trade and related slaves per ton ratios. From the table, it is clear that the number of slaves delivered per ship varied

considerably throughout the period from 1710 to 1769, with the lowest number of slaves per ship being 50 per cent or more below the mean load and the highest 50–65 per cent above the mean. On the whole the range of variation of sizes of slave cargoes from the mean seems to have grown. It is also evident, however, that the mean number of slaves delivered per ship doubled between 1710 and 1769, rising from just over 100 slaves per ship in 1710–21 to 126 in 1750–9 and to over 200 in 1760–9. This increase in slaves per ship reflected to some extent an increase in the size of ships used in the trade. But it is also clear that a significant improvement in loading rates of ships occurred, particularly between the 1710's and 1750's, and that this made an important contribution to the general rise in slave deliveries per ship experienced over the period. The figures show, in fact, that loading rates rose by about 20 per cent from 1710 to 1769, or from just over 1.5 slaves per ton in 1710–21 to 1.85 slaves per ton in the 1760's, with most of this rise occurring before 1760. On the basis of the data presented in Table 3, therefore, a significant increase in the productivity of Whitehaven slave ships occurred between 1710 and 1769.

The loading rates of ships on their arrival in America is, however, only one measure of the performance of Whitehaven slave traders. Given the triangular nature of the slaving voyage, other factors affecting their performance were the loading rate of their ships on their homeward voyage and the overall length of voyages. Evidence on the return cargoes of Whitehaven slave ships in 1710–21 gleaned from port books and other records has recently been published by Tattersfield.<sup>62</sup> From this it is plain that, while the port's early slavers usually managed to obtain a cargo of colonial goods for their homeward journey, the size of return cargoes varied considerably, with some ships returning with large cargoes and others with substantial amounts of unused cargo space in their holds.<sup>63</sup> As noted earlier, the Whitehaven port books cease after 1743, but information on the return loads of ten of the port's slave ships from Jamaica, the largest market for Whitehaven traders after 1750, has been found in the naval office lists between 1753 and 1768. A complete listing of the homeward cargoes of these ships is presented in Appendix II. An inspection of this evidence shows that, as in 1710–21, Whitehaven slave traders after 1750 were usually able to secure some goods in the colonies for their voyage home. At the same time, however, it appears that the quantities of goods carried by these vessels were generally relatively modest, and probably occupied no more than a small part of their available cargo space. Precise comparisons with the situation in 1710–21 are difficult, since the units in which goods were recorded in the port books varied from those used in the naval office lists, but the indications are that the loads of colonial goods carried by slave ships returning to Whitehaven after 1750 were, on the whole, very similar to those on ships returning home some two generations earlier.

A third and final indicator of the performance of Whitehaven slave traders may be provided by evidence on voyage times. Here we may use information provided by Tattersfield from the port books on the dates of loading and unloading of ships at Whitehaven to measure the length of voyages before 1721, and compare this with evidence on applications for and returns of Mediterranean passes for the period after 1750. It should be emphasised that problems exist in comparing evidence on voyage times derived from these two sources, for while the dates of loading and unloading ships recorded in port books seem to be close to the actual dates of sailing and arrival of ships at port, passes were normally applied for some time in advance of sailing and were often

returned to the Admiralty several weeks or even months after the conclusion of a voyage. Compared to the port books, therefore, data relating to applications for and return of passes tend to exaggerate voyage times, perhaps by as much as two to three months.<sup>64</sup>

Bearing this in mind, it seems that the time taken by masters of Whitehaven ships to complete slaving voyages may have changed relatively little during the eighteenth century. The evidence from the port books shows that the length of slaving voyages in 1710–21 averaged about 14 months, with the shortest voyage of 10 months being achieved by the *Swift*, Thomas Rumball master, in 1712–13, and the longest of 16 months by the *Whitehaven Galley*, also commanded by Rumball, in 1715–17. By comparison, data from the Mediterranean passes relating to 23 voyages show that mean voyage times were about 16 months in 1750–69, with the shortest voyage of 11 months being achieved by the *Providence*, Thomas Troughear master, in 1751–2, and the longest of 24 months by the *Planter*, Roger Fleming master, in 1759–61. Although, on these figures, the range of voyage times grew and their mean length rose by some two months between the 1710's and the third quarter of the century, the bias inherent in the records of passes suggests, nevertheless, that Whitehaven masters after 1750 largely completed their slaving voyages to Africa and America in about the same length of time as their predecessors. Since, as we have seen, the number of slaves delivered per ship and per ton tended to rise, this in turn reinforces the view that a real improvement in the economic performance of Whitehaven slave traders may have occurred between 1710 and 1769.

Despite this improvement in trading efficiency, Whitehaven merchants largely withdrew from slave trading in the late 1760's and effectively abandoned the trade after 1769. The reasons for this are unclear and, in the absence of merchants accounts or detailed evidence on the profitability of Whitehaven voyages, are unlikely to be fully uncovered. Some light may perhaps be thrown on the issue, however, by comparing evidence on the performance of Whitehaven slave traders after 1750 with that of traders from other British slave ports. In this respect, it appears that voyage times in the Whitehaven trade in the 1750's and 1760's were, on the whole, similar to those in the Bristol trade but rather longer than those in the Lancaster trade.<sup>65</sup> With regard to the loading rates of ships on their homeward voyage, the indications also are that the amount of sugar per ton carried by returning Whitehaven ships from Jamaica in the 1760's was similar to that attained by all British slave ships leaving Jamaica in 1764.<sup>66</sup> As far as voyage times and securing return cargoes for their ships were concerned, therefore, Whitehaven slave traders seem, on available evidence, to have performed as well as some of their rivals after 1750.

With regard to the loading rates of ships on their arrival in America, however, analysis of the naval office lists shows that Whitehaven ships delivered fewer slaves per ton to Jamaica in the 1750's and 1760's than either Bristol or Liverpool ships, though they do seem to have attained higher slaves per ton ratios than London ships.<sup>67</sup> Thus it appears that London ships entering Jamaica in these years carried on average no more than 1.6 slaves per ton, or some 15 per cent less than Whitehaven ships, whereas those from Bristol and Liverpool normally carried some 2.3 slaves per ton, or nearly 0.5 slaves (or 24 per cent) more than their Cumbrian rivals. Precisely why Whitehaven ships failed to achieve loading rates of slaves equal to those of their outport rivals is, as yet, unclear. But given that, on available evidence, the performance of Whitehaven ships in other aspects of the trade was no better than that of ships of other ports, it is quite likely that the

profits earned by Whitehaven merchants from slaving were significantly lower than those obtained by their Bristol and Liverpool counterparts.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, it is not inconceivable that, despite generally buoyant slave prices in America and quite significant improvements in the productivity of their ships, Whitehaven merchants found it difficult to make the slave trade pay during the 1750's and 1760's. And it was perhaps this factor above all others that finally persuaded Whitehaven merchants, after two decades of erratic though at times quite substantial investment in the trade, to abandon their interest in the slave trade after 1769.

#### IV

For many years it was thought by historians that Whitehaven merchants very largely ignored the slave trade in the eighteenth century, and built their prosperity instead on the coal and tobacco trades. Although the tobacco trade unquestionably dominated Whitehaven's trans-Atlantic commerce at this time, it is now clear that the port's merchants became involved in slave trafficking in the 1710's, and after an interval of thirty years of lack of interest in the business, became even more heavily involved in it during the 1750's and 1760's. Overall, Whitehaven merchants dispatched some 69 slaving voyages to Africa between 1710 and 1769, with the vast majority being fitted out after 1750. As a result, Whitehaven merchants were probably the fifth largest group of slave traders in Britain in 1750-69, with several merchants at the port regularly investing in the trade.<sup>69</sup> It also appears that the proficiency of Whitehaven merchants as slave traders may have improved over the century as delivery rates of slaves per ship and per ton both rose significantly. However, comparisons with other ports also indicate that delivery rates of slaves by Whitehaven ships in the 1750's and 1760's still lagged noticeably behind those attained at major British slaving ports such as Bristol and Liverpool, and, given the competitive nature of slaving, probably resulted in profits from Whitehaven voyages being significantly lower than from voyages fitted out at these more traditional slaving ports. The reasons for this remain obscure, but, prompted initially perhaps by difficulties in the tobacco trade to diversify into slaving, Whitehaven merchants seem ultimately to have found the African trade an unrewarding outlet for their capital and effectively abandoned it toward the end of 1760's.

The story of Whitehaven's involvement in the slave trade is perhaps most appropriately seen as a failed attempt at commercial diversification on the part of some of the port's leading eighteenth-century merchant families. And it is perhaps a measure of the commercial problems facing Whitehaven merchants at the time that, despite severe competition from other ports and the handicaps posed by their port's location and their own lack of experience of the business, they persisted for two decades after 1750 in fitting out ships for the African coast and, at times, investing over £20,000 a year in the trade. However, their failure to sustain their interest in slaving beyond 1770, together with their loss of influence in the tobacco trade, effectively signalled the beginning of the end of Whitehaven's position as a substantial trans-Atlantic port. From the 1770's onward, Whitehaven merchants very largely abandoned their Atlantic trading ambitions, and chose instead to concentrate their energy on the pursuit of more mundane activities closer to home.

TABLE I  
*Numbers of Whitehaven ships departing on slaving voyages to Africa 1710 to 1769*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Ships</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Ships</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Ships</i>
1710	1	1750	1	1760	2
1711	1	1751	2	1761	5
1712	1	1752	2	1762	2
1713	1	1753	3	1763	9
1715	1	1754	1	1764	6
1716	1	1755	1	1765	8
1718	1	1756	3	1766	2
1721	1	1758	1	1767	8
		1759	4	1769	1

Note: (1) Only years in which Whitehaven ships are known to have departed for Africa are included.

(2) The great majority of these ships were fitted out at Whitehaven. We have, however, included in our figures four ships which were said or known to belong to Whitehaven but which were fitted out at other ports. These were the *Woodford*, John Hale, master, which cleared from London in 1759; the *Betty*, Roger Fleming, which cleared from Liverpool in 1762; the *William and Mary*, James Baird, which was reported as lying in the Thames at the time that an application for a Mediterranean pass was made in 1765; and the *Happy*, Jonathan Harrison, which cleared from Liverpool in 1765. In addition to these, it should be noted that the *Ann Gally*, John Kennedy, took on goods at Bristol for Africa in 1757 (P.R.O. E190/1219/5, ff.20, 26), though it eventually cleared for the coast at Whitehaven in 1758. Three other Whitehaven ships – the *Experiment*, the *Carlisle* and the *Olive* – which were all reported as lying in the Thames and applied in early 1759 for passes for voyages to Gibraltar, Africa, the West Indies and America have not, however, been included in our list of Whitehaven slaving voyages. It is likely that the *Experiment* and *Olive* were troop transports, since the naval office lists show that each entered Virginia from Quebec in ballast in December 1759 and January 1760 respectively. The same is probably true of the *Carlisle*, which despite a lack of evidence regarding its entry at Virginia, cleared from the Rappahannock district of the colony for Whitehaven in June 1760. There is no evidence that any of these ships carried slaves to Virginia at this time. We have also excluded from our analysis the involvement of Whitehaven ships in the inter-colonial trade in slaves. That some Whitehaven ships participated in this traffic in slaves is clear from the records of Virginian imports of slaves from Barbados and other Caribbean islands (Elizabeth Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1930–5), IV, 178–223; W.E. Minchinton, C. King and P. Waite (eds.), *Virginia Slave Trade Statistics 1698–1775* (Richmond, Va., 1984)) but these shipments were usually small and formed part of direct trading voyages from Whitehaven to the West Indies and Virginia rather than of African slaving voyages.

Sources: see note 13.

TABLE 2

*Mean tonnages of ships employed in the Whitehaven and other sectors of the British slave trade 1710-1769*

Period	Mean Tonnages			
	Whitehaven Ships	London Ships	Bristol Ships	Liverpool Ships
1710-19	65 (5)	111 (111)	90 (175)	80 (45)
1750-59	72 (16)	136 (23)	104 (107)	97 (127)
1760-69	111 (25)	159 (47)	118 (58)	107 (128)

Note: figures in brackets refer to numbers of ships.

Sources: P.R.O. Naval office lists; David Richardson, "The costs of survival: the transport of slaves in the middle passage and the profitability of the 18th century British slave trade", *Explorations in Economic History*, 24 (1987), 190; W.E. Minchinton, "Characteristics of British slaving vessels, 1698-1775", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20 (1989), 61-2.

TABLE 3

*Slave deliveries by Whitehaven ships 1710-1769*

Period	Mean number per ship	Highest number	Lowest number	Mean tonnage	Slaves per ton
1710-21	101 (6)	140	50	65.4	1.54
1750-9	126 (10)	200	54	72.1	1.75
1760-9	206 (29)	340	47	111.4	1.85

Note: figures in brackets refer to numbers of shiploads of slaves.

Sources: P.R.O. Naval office lists; P.R.O. Barbados Treasurers accounts.

## APPENDIX I

*Recorded tonnages of Whitehaven slave ships 1751-1767*

Name of ship	Date voyage	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Betty I	1762		122	170	
Betty II	1764	126	100(a)	130	126
Betty II	1767	126		140	
Happy I	1751	160	80		
Happy II(b)	1763		110	140	165
Happy III(c)	1765	150	-(d)	150	180
Happy III	1767	150		140	

Hope(e)	1763		150	150
Hope	1764	185	150	130
King George	1763		132	150
King George	1765	159	132	140
Lady Walpole	1766	117	104	120
Montgomery	1763		120	130
Montgomery	1764	132	120	140
Planter(f)	1759	167(g)		160
Prince George	1759	134		130
Prince George	1761		100	120
Prince George	1762		100	110
Prince George	1764	134	100	130
Providence	1751	47(h)	30	
Tyger	1763		80	100
Tyger	1765	101	80	101
Tyger	1767	101	80	70
Venus	1763		127	150
Venus	1764	152	127	140
Venus	1767	152		140
Whittington	1755	86(i)	60	
William	1765	122	122(j)	120
William	1767	122		120
Woodford	1759	180	180	100

- Notes: (a) Reported as 60 tons in the Liverpool plantation register.  
 (b) Formerly the *Planter*, see below.  
 (c) Formerly the *Hope*, see below.  
 (d) Reported as 150 tons in the Liverpool plantation register.  
 (e) Later *Happy* III, see above.  
 (f) Later *Happy* II, see above.  
 (g) The ship's tonnage was given as 160 tons in 1756.  
 (h) The ship's tonnage was given as 40 tons in 1753.  
 (i) The ship's tonnage was given as 66 tons in 1752.  
 (j) Reported as 70 tons in the Liverpool plantation register.

- Sources: (1) Pass tonnages, P.R.O. Mediterranean passes.  
 (2) Registered tonnages, P.R.O. Naval Office lists.  
 (3) Tonnages given in Board of Trade report, P.R.O. BT 6/3.  
 (4) Tonnages given in *Lloyd's Register*, 1764, 1768.

## APPENDIX II

*Cargoes on slave ships clearing from Jamaica for Whitehaven 1753–1768*

<i>Name of Ship</i>	<i>Tons</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Cargo</i>
Providence	30	1753	41 hogsheads 12 tierces sugar
Black Prince	128	1755	91 hogsheads sugar, 9.5 tons wood
Prince George	100	1762	110 casks sugar, 11 butts 2 barrels and 1 cask rum, 33 planks mahogany, 3 tons fustic, 1 hogshead Madeira
Prince George	100	1764	14 hogsheads sugar, 4000 feet mahogany
Montgomery	120	1765	102 hogsheads sugar, 1 puncheon rum, 2000 feet mahogany
Betty	100	1765	144 hogsheads 13 casks sugar, 11 puncheons rum, 26 bags cotton, 51 planks mahogany
Tyger	80	1765	40 hogsheads sugar, 1 puncheon rum, 20 planks mahogany
Prince George	100	1765	52 hogsheads 1 cask sugar, 10 puncheons rum, 4 bags cotton, 148 planks mahogany, 5 tons fustic and logwood
Tyger	80	1766	6 casks sugar, 252 planks mahogany
Tyger	80	1768	6 hogsheads sugar, 6 puncheons 4 casks rum

*Source:* P.R.O. CO 142/15–17.

**Acknowledgements**

Most of the information on Whitehaven voyages to Africa contained in this paper was collected over the last decade by Maurice and Eunice Schofield. An earlier version of the paper was drafted by Maurice Schofield, but Maurice died before this version of the paper could be revised for publication. The present paper was written by David Richardson and includes material on Whitehaven slave merchants collected by him. He is grateful to Eunice Schofield for her comments on the paper and for giving approval for the inclusion in it of material collected by herself and her husband. David Richardson accepts sole responsibility for any remaining errors of fact or interpretation that it contains. Eunice Schofield wishes, on behalf of her late husband, to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for financial support for the research underlying the paper. David Richardson acknowledges similar support from the Nuffield Foundation for the research done on the papers of Samuel Sandys.

**Notes and References**

<sup>1</sup> See for example Roger Anstey and P.E.H. Hair (eds.), *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition*, Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, occasional series, no. 2 (1976, reprinted 1989), which includes

- essays on the Bristol and Liverpool slave trades, and J.A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: a History* (New York, 1981), which has specific chapters on Bristol, Liverpool and London, and a small section on the slave trade from other ports in Britain.
- <sup>2</sup> David Richardson, "The Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade: Estimates of its Volume and Coastal Distribution in Africa", *Research in Economic History*, 12 (1989), 185–95; Nigel Tattersfield, *The Forgotten Trade* (London, 1991).
  - <sup>3</sup> M.M. Schofield, "The Slave Trade from Lancashire and Cheshire Ports Outside Liverpool, c. 1750–c. 1790", *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 126 (1976), 30–72. This article has been included in the reprinted edition of Anstey and Hair (eds.), *op. cit.* Some evidence on the involvement of Lancaster and Poole in the trade is to be found in David Richardson, "The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina", *Slavery and Abolition*, 12 (1991), 137–51.
  - <sup>4</sup> On the general history of Whitehaven in this period, see J.E. Williams, "Whitehaven in the Eighteenth Century", *Economic History Review*, second series, 8 (1955–6), 393–404; Daniel Hay, *Whitehaven: a Short History* (Whitehaven, 1968); and J.V. Beckett, *Coal and Tobacco: The Lowthers and the Economic Development of West Cumberland 1660–1760* (Cambridge, 1981).
  - <sup>5</sup> For figures on coal shipments see Percy Ford, "Tobacco and Coal: a Note on the Economic History of Whitehaven", *Economica*, 9 (1929), 192–6; Williams, *op.cit.*; Beckett, *op.cit.*, chap 2. For shipping data see An Account of the Tonnage of All the Ships and Vessels Belonging to Each Respective Port in England, by J. Dally, in B.L. Add Ms 11255; J.D. Marshall, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* (Barrow, 1958), 32.
  - <sup>6</sup> Material on Whitehaven's tobacco trade is to be found in Ford, Williams and Beckett, cited above, as well as J.M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1973), I, 588–617.
  - <sup>7</sup> Price, *op.cit.*, I, 590; Williams, *op.cit.*, 397.
  - <sup>8</sup> Price, *op.cit.*, I, 603.
  - <sup>9</sup> Williams, *op.cit.*, 402. This vessel seems to have been involved in two slaving voyages in 1763 and 1765. Hay notes that this is "one of the few references that can be traced to the port's association with the trade [in slaves]" (*op.cit.*, 33).
  - <sup>10</sup> Beckett, *op. cit.*, 104.
  - <sup>11</sup> Tattersfield, *op.cit.*, 326–49 (quotation 347) and appendix 6. Peter Fryer claims that four ships a year left Whitehaven for Africa for slaves in 1758–69 (Peter Fryer, *Staying Power* (London, 1984), 51).
  - <sup>12</sup> Port books exist for various years in 1707–22 and 1739–43 but are missing for other years. The surviving Whitehaven port books are to be found in P.R.O. E190 series.
  - <sup>13</sup> The naval office lists are largely contained in the Colonial Office (CO) series at the P.R.O., where returns are indexed under each colony and referred to as "shipping lists". Many of the returns have not survived, particularly in the case of the Leeward Islands (Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis and St Kitts). There are, however, good though incomplete runs of returns for Barbados (CO 33), Jamaica (CO 142), South Carolina (CO 5) and Virginia (CO 5). Information on slave imports at Barbados and South Carolina is also available in Treasurers accounts for these colonies. For Barbados there is a good run of accounts for the third quarter of the century (P.R.O. CO 28/33–34) and for South Carolina there are accounts from 1735 onwards (South Carolina Department of Archives, Columbia, S.C.). Evidence on ships leaving Whitehaven for Africa is to be found in the series of Mediterranean passes (P.R.O. Admiralty series), which contain details from 1730 onwards of applications for passes for ships seeking protection from attack by Barbary pirates. These give details of vessels, their home port, the port at which they were lying when a pass was applied for, the dates of application for and return of passes, and the intended voyages of vessels. The last is often listed, in the case of slave ships, as Africa and America, though sometimes more precise destinations in America are given. For this article, we have checked pass registers for the years from 1730 to 1792 (P.R.O. Adm 7/77–110). Dates attached to pass details given in the article refer to the date of application for passes, though some use of dates of return is made to estimate voyage times. For a fuller description of the background to and evidence contained in the pass registers see David Richardson (ed.), *The Mediterranean Passes* (Wakefield, 1981). In addition to these series of shipping records and Treasurers accounts, data on Whitehaven slave ships are to be found in a number of contemporary surveys of the African trade. These include a list of ships clearing for Africa in 1709–10 (P.R.O. CO 388/13, L87); an account of the number of ships and their tonnage that cleared out from Great Britain to Africa from 1734 to 1754 (P.R.O. T 64/276A, no. 273); and an account of the tonnage of the several ships cleared from Great Britain to Africa from 1757 to 1777 (P.R.O. BT 6/3, ff. 150–89). For further details of ships and their voyages, we have also used the surviving volumes of *Lloyd's Register* for 1764 and 1768 as well as *Lloyd's List*, the *Manchester Magazine* and *Manchester Mercury*, and

*Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser* and *Gore's General Advertiser*. The Manchester newspapers are held at Manchester Public Library; the Liverpool ones at Liverpool Public Library. No Whitehaven newspaper has survived for the years before 1774.

- <sup>14</sup> The letter books of Walter Lutwidge of Whitehaven contain a "Scheme of a cargo to purchase 300 slaves in Angola according to three several voyages made anno 1733, 35, 36 and 37". It was accompanied by another list of goods relating to the purchase of slaves at the Gold Coast. It appears that Lutwidge supplied goods for the last of the Angolan voyages. Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle), DX 524/1-2. One historian has interpreted these documents as implying that three voyages were fitted out at Whitehaven at this time (Edward Hughes, *North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1965), II, 45-8), but as no trace of African voyages from Whitehaven in the years mentioned by Lutwidge has been found in other records, we have not included them in our calculation of Whitehaven voyages to Africa.
- <sup>15</sup> For data on the outfitting costs of slave ships at Liverpool in the 1760's see David Richardson, "Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade: the Accounts of William Davenport, 1757-1784", in Anstey and Hair (eds.), *op.cit.*, 82-7.
- <sup>16</sup> Tattersfield, *op.cit.*, 347.
- <sup>17</sup> Richardson, "British slave trade", *op.cit.*, 190-2.
- <sup>18</sup> Figures compiled by Dally (see note 5) and presented by Marshall (*op.cit.*, 32) indicate that, counting vessels once a year, the tonnage of ships at Whitehaven trading to foreign parts (including Ireland) was about 20,000 tons annually in the early 1760's. Of this, slave ships probably accounted at most for about 1,000 to 1,500 tons, or 5-7.5 per cent.
- <sup>19</sup> For figures on Liverpool see Richardson, "British slave trade", *op.cit.*, 188-92; for figures on Lancaster see Schofield, "Slave trade", *op.cit.*, 46-55.
- <sup>20</sup> Details of owners derived from port books are given in Tattersfield, *op.cit.*, appendix. Much of the discussion in this paragraph is based on Tattersfield. Additional information on ships and their owners in this period has been gleaned from P.R.O. CO 33/15, ff.9-12 (*Swift, Thomas and Susannah*); CO 142/14, ff.45, 60 (*Swift and Whitehaven*); and CO 157/1, ff.75-6 (*Princess*).
- <sup>21</sup> Tattersfield, *op.cit.*, 339.
- <sup>22</sup> Beckett, *op.cit.*, 105-6.
- <sup>23</sup> For the naval office lists see above note 13. Some information on owners of ships has also been found in the registrations of Whitehaven ships copied into the Liverpool Plantation Registers between 1744 and 1786, held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool. These include the *Happy* (formerly *Hope*) and the *William*, both of which sailed to Africa from Whitehaven in 1765. Another Whitehaven vessel entered in the Plantation Registers was the *Betty* whose register was copied at Liverpool in 1763. Its owners at this time were Thomas Birch of Liverpool and John and Thomas Hartley and John Gale of Whitehaven. In 1763 the vessel was put into the Virginia trade, but following re-registration at Whitehaven in February 1764 (P.R.O. CO 142/17) its owners - named as John Hartley & Co. in the Jamaican naval office lists - applied for passes for voyages to Africa and Jamaica from Whitehaven in October 1764 and January 1767. Details of these as well as other, non-slaving Whitehaven vessels whose registrations were copied at Liverpool may be found in David Richardson, Kathy Beedham and M.M. Schofield (eds.), *A computerised edition of the Liverpool Plantation Registers 1744-1786* (Economic and Social Research Council Data Archive, University of Essex, 1992). Further information on owners of Whitehaven slave ships is to be found in the Bead Book kept by William Davenport of Liverpool in 1765-8 and included in the papers of William Davenport held in the Archives of the University of Keele.
- <sup>24</sup> These details derive from the Liverpool Plantation Registers.
- <sup>25</sup> For the *Betty* see P.R.O. CO 5/510; for the *Venus* see P.R.O. CO 33/17, f.6.
- <sup>26</sup> Beckett, *op.cit.*, 110-15; Price, *op.cit.*, 594-604.
- <sup>27</sup> The Jamaica naval office lists name Daniel Baynes & Co. as owners of the *Prince George* in 1762 and 1763, but a list of vessels under convoy from the island on 5 June 1762 names Kelsick & Co. as owners (P.R.O. Adm 1/1704, letter of Sir James Douglas). It is likely therefore that John Kelsick's role in the Whitehaven slave trade was even greater than the figures given in the text suggest.
- <sup>28</sup> Baynes commanded seven Whitehaven slaving voyages between 1752 and 1765 while Kennedy commanded six between 1756 and 1767 and Troughear six between 1750 and 1756. Other prominent masters of Whitehaven slave ships were Roger Fleming, who commanded five voyages and James Grayson, Jonathan Harrison and William Harrison, each of whom commanded four. In all these seven men were responsible for the command of 36 or about 60 per cent of Whitehaven's slaving voyages between 1750 and 1769.

- <sup>29</sup> On masters' commissions and other earnings from slaving voyages see, for example, the accounts of Samuel Sandys & Co. of Liverpool, in P.R.O. Chancery Masters Exhibits C 109/401. On the role of former masters as agents at Bristol see David Richardson, *The Bristol Slave Traders: a Collective Portrait* (Bristol, 1985).
- <sup>30</sup> On slave price trends see R.N. Bean, *The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1975), 210.
- <sup>31</sup> Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle), Lutwidge letter books, DX 524/1-2; Hughes, *op.cit.*, II, 45-8.
- <sup>32</sup> Price, *op.cit.*, I, 590, 600-1.
- <sup>33</sup> For tobacco importers at Whitehaven in 1743 see Beckett, *op.cit.*, 112.
- <sup>34</sup> We have not searched systematically through the sources for evidence of Whitehaven slaving in the late eighteenth century, but there is only very limited evidence of connections with the African trade at the Cumbrian port after 1783. Two applications for passes for voyages to Africa have been found. The first was on 30 October 1783 for the *Africa*, master Jonathan Bell, of Whitehaven, for a voyage from London to Africa. According to *Lloyd's Register* in 1783, the vessel was formerly known as *Civility*, and seems to have been a Cork transport. It returned to London from Africa, William Letton master, paying seamen's sixpences there on 21 April 1785 (P.R.O. Adm 68/205). Another application for a pass was made on 3 October 1792, this time for the *Hannah*, Thomas Huddleston master, for a voyage from Whitehaven to the Isle de Los on the Windward Coast. The vessel is listed in *Lloyd's Register* for 1791-5, but without indication of an African voyage. A third reference to Whitehaven ships involved in the African trade is contained in Parliamentary papers, 1789 (xxiv), 629, where the *Tarter*, registered at Whitehaven on 15 August 1782, is reported to have entered Grenada from Africa on 16 July 1785. A pass with the same date as the ship's register describes the vessel as of London but lying at Whitehaven and intending to sail to Jamaica. *Lloyd's Register* for 1782 shows that the vessel was built at Workington in 1782 and owned by Gale & Co., a well known Whitehaven family. However, *Lloyd's Register* for 1782-6 provides no evidence of a slaving voyage, and the entry in Parliamentary papers is explained by the naval office list for Grenada (P.R.O. CO 106/4), where it is reported that the vessel entered St George on 26 July 1785 from Cape Verde with 50 oxen, 60 goats and 5,000 bushels of salt, and cleared the island on 27 July with the salt, bound for Virginia.
- <sup>35</sup> On the variability of profits see Richardson, "Davenport", *op.cit.*, 77.
- <sup>36</sup> On the uncertainty of the trade, see, for instance, D.D. Wax, "Black immigrants: the slave trade in colonial Maryland", *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 73 (1978), 43.
- <sup>37</sup> 6 November 1751, Whitehaven Collector to Board of Customs; 17 December 1751, Board of Customs to Collector, Customs House Letter Books, Archives Department, Customs House, London.
- <sup>38</sup> 21 January, 25 February 1757, Whitehaven Collector to Board of Customs, Customs House Letter Books. As late as 1766, Whitehaven merchants were uncertain about duties payable on looking glasses imported from Holland for the African trade; 22 April 1766, Whitehaven Collector to Board of Customs.
- <sup>39</sup> For the names of masters see note 27.
- <sup>40</sup> For Lutwidge see Hughes, *op.cit.*, II, 45-8; for the more general picture, David Richardson, "West African consumption patterns and their influence on the eighteenth-century English slave trade", in H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1979), 303-30.
- <sup>41</sup> See, for example, the sources of the goods exported on vessels owned by Samuel Sandys & Co. of Liverpool in 1771 in P.R.O. Chancery Masters Exhibits, C 109/401. Most of goods came from Liverpool, Manchester, London and Birmingham. For the role of Lancashire manufacturers in supplying goods to the slave trade, see M.M. Schofield, "Shoes and ships and sealing wax: eighteenth-century Lancashire exports to the colonies", *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 135 (1985), 74-6.
- <sup>42</sup> Beckett, *op.cit.*, 142; Hughes, *op.cit.*, II, 31-2. Entries in the Bead Book of William Davenport reveal that Davenport supplied beads to William Scott & Co. of Whitehaven, owners of the *William*, in 1767 (Davenport papers, University of Keele archives).
- <sup>43</sup> Williams, *op.cit.*, 397. For an indication of the sorts of goods available at the Isle of Man, see R.C. Jarvis (ed.), *Customs Letter-Books of the Port of Liverpool 1711-1813* (Manchester, Chetham Society, 1954), 68. At least one Whitehaven ship - the *Lady Walpole* in 1766 - seems to have visited Rotterdam, presumably for supplies of trade goods, before going on to Africa; *Lloyd's List*, 25 December 1767.
- <sup>44</sup> Tattersfield, *op.cit.*, 377-8.
- <sup>45</sup> Beckett, *op.cit.*, 143, 153; C.M.L. Bouch and G.P. Jones, *A Short Economic and Social History of the Lake Counties 1500-1830* (Manchester, 1961), 263.
- <sup>46</sup> Bouch and Jones, *op.cit.*, 246-54; Marshall, *op.cit.*, 31.
- <sup>47</sup> Marshall, *op.cit.*, 61.

- <sup>48</sup> The Liverpool merchant, John Hardman, claimed in 1750 that ports such as Chester and Lancaster were able to fit out ships for the slave trade 5 per cent cheaper than either Bristol or Liverpool (*Journal of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations*, 9 (1932), 15–25). Hardman did not explain the basis of this claim, nor did he refer to Whitehaven, but wage rates may have been lower in the Lake counties at this time than at Liverpool and may have helped Whitehaven traders to economise on outfitting costs. For a discussion of the situation at the smaller ports in Lancashire and Cheshire see Schofield, “Slave Trade”, *op.cit.*, 39.
- <sup>49</sup> For detailed references see note 13.
- <sup>50</sup> On the general problem of tonnage measurements, see J.J. McCusker, “The tonnage of ships engaged in British colonial trade during the eighteenth century”, *Research in Economic History*, 6 (1981), 73–105.
- <sup>51</sup> W.E. Minchinton, “The slave trade of Bristol with the British mainland colonies in North America 1699–1770”, in Anstey and Hair (eds.), *op.cit.*, 39–59; *idem*, “Characteristics of British slaving vessels, 1698–1775”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20 (1989), 53–81. Cf. Schofield, “Slave Trade”, *op.cit.*, where data on tonnages are drawn mainly from Mediterranean passes.
- <sup>52</sup> The average tonnage of Lancaster slave ships was 55 tons in 1755–9 and 66 tons in the 1760’s; Schofield, “Slave Trade”, *op.cit.*, 48.
- <sup>53</sup> The *Whittington*, John Kennedy master, was reported taken near Cape Verde by *Lloyd’s List*, 17 May 1757; the *Black Prince*, Daniel Baynes, was reported taken on the coast of Africa in January 1757 by *Lloyd’s List*, 22 July 1757; the *Ann Gally*, John Kennedy, from Bristol and Whitehaven was reported “taken June last on the African coast” by *Manchester Magazine*, 9 January 1759; and the *Four Brothers*, John Kennedy, was reported taken off the Western Isles on its way to Africa and sent into Bayonne “some time ago” by *Lloyd’s List*, 16 April 1762. Evidence on the loading of goods at Bristol on the *Ann Gally* in 1757 may be found in the Bristol port books (P.R.O. E 190/1219/5, ff.20, 26). Another ship – the *Africa*, James Grayson – was reported taken, apparently after trading at the Gold Coast, but then retaken and sent into Plymouth (*Lloyd’s List*, 24 February 1761).
- <sup>54</sup> Evidence on the locations of trade in Africa has been obtained from P.R.O. T 70/1263, Register of ships trading at the Gold Coast 1755–68 kept by Gilbert Petrie; John Newton, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, eds. Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell (London, 1962); *Lloyd’s List*; and the Liverpool and Manchester newspapers cited in note 13.
- <sup>55</sup> The *Tyger* was reported on 23 January and 1 April 1768 as having traded at Bassa on the Windward Coast, where it was said to have bought 30 slaves by 27 October 1767, but was reported on 9 September 1768 to have arrived at Jamaica from Anamaboe on the Gold Coast with 120 slaves.
- <sup>56</sup> Ships known to have traded at either the Gold Coast or Bonny included the *Betty* (122 tons), Roger Fleming master, in 1762; the *Happy* (110 tons), John Yowart, in 1763; the *Happy* (150 tons), Jonathan Harrison, in 1765 and 1767; the *Hope* (150 tons), Roger Fleming, in 1763 and Jonathan Harrison, in 1764; the *Montgomery* (120 tons), James Grayson, in 1763 and 1764; and the *Venus* (127 tons), William Briggs, in 1763.
- <sup>57</sup> Information on markets for slaves has been obtained from the naval office lists and colonial treasurers accounts as well as *Lloyd’s List*, newspapers and Customs House Letter Books. Some evidence on American destinations is given in the Mediterranean passes, but as this refers to intended rather than actual destinations and some ships did not sell their slaves at the colonies specified in pass applications we have preferred not to use it as an indication of markets for slaves carried in Whitehaven ships.
- <sup>58</sup> The number of slaves recorded on 15 Whitehaven ships entering Barbados averaged 162, with the largest cargo amounting to 340 slaves and the smallest 47. For 21 ships entering Jamaica, the average cargo was 196 slaves, with the largest amounting to 286 slaves and the smallest 38. However, only five of the cargoes reaching Jamaica were under 150 slaves compared to nine of those reaching Barbados.
- <sup>59</sup> For details of the pattern of Lancaster’s trade see Schofield, “Slave Trade”, *op.cit.*
- <sup>60</sup> Thus, for instance, the *Prince George*, William Harrison master, was reported on 29 January 1769 to have had 120 slaves on board at Bassa on the Windward Coast on 25 September 1768, yet paid duty on 171 slaves entered at Barbados on 10 December 1768.
- <sup>61</sup> We have found information on slave mortality only for one Whitehaven ship; this was the *Happy*, Jonathan Harrison master, which was reported by *Lloyd’s List* on 12 August 1768 to have arrived at St Kitts on 27 May with 269 slaves, having lost 57 during its passage of 13 weeks from Bonny.
- <sup>62</sup> Tattersfield, *op.cit.*, 377–9.
- <sup>63</sup> Figures gleaned by Tattersfield from the port books show that the *Swift* discharged 940 cwt of muscovado sugar at Whitehaven in August 1713. The return cargoes of other ships, including the *Whitehaven Gally* in 1717, the *Princess* in 1719 and the *Susannah* in 1722 were much smaller.

<sup>64</sup> Richardson (ed.), *Mediterranean passes*, *op.cit.*

<sup>65</sup> Voyage times for 94 ships in the Bristol slave trade averaged 14.5 months in 1763–7, but varied from 15.5 months in the case of voyages to Jamaica to just under 13 months in the case of those to the smaller islands; David Richardson, *The Bristol Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century*, Unpub. MA thesis (University of Manchester, 1969), 73. Figures compiled by Schofield from Mediterranean passes suggest that the average duration of 109 slaving voyages made by Lancaster ships between 1736 and 1776 was 13.5 months, or 2.5 months less than Whitehaven voyages in 1750–69.

<sup>66</sup> W.E. Minchinton, "The Triangular Trade Revisited", in Gemery and Hogendorn (eds.), *op.cit.*, 343.

<sup>67</sup> Calculations based on the Jamaican naval office lists for 1751–7 and 1761–9; P.R.O. CO 142/15–17.

<sup>68</sup> For rates of return in the Liverpool trade in the 1760's see Richardson, "Davenport", *op.cit.*, 74. For profits in the British trade as a whole, see Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760–1810* (London, 1975), chap. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Of the other minor ports involved in slaving, the most important seem to have been Plymouth, Poole and Portsmouth, but evidence found in trade surveys for 1736–54 (P.R.O. T 64/276A, no. 273) and 1757–76 (P.R.O. BT 6/3) indicates that none of these ports dispatched as many voyages to Africa as Whitehaven in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.