

CHESTER SLAVE TRADING PARTNERSHIPS 1750-56

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Since the publication in *Transactions* volume 126, of a summary of the evidence for Chester men and vessels taking part in the slave trade, further work on the Colonial Naval Officers' Lists have added some more detail, and particularly a list of the owners of the snow *St. George*. When she was entered at Barbados from Africa on 19 February 1753 with 208 slaves, the ownership was copied in full, which was not always done by Colonial Naval Officers in other colonial ports.¹ The owners with some identification from Chester Freeman's Rolls and other sources, are as follows:

Owners of the St George of Chester, registered at Chester 17 May 1750²

Bagnall	John	Will 1766 of Chester gentleman
Barnston	Robert	Freeman 1739 apprenticed to a merchant
Bushell	Henry	Freeman 1724 apprenticed to a wet glover Will 1763 of Chester merchant
Corless	Lawrence	Freedom to sons of Lawrence, wet glover and skinner, 1752 and 1758 Will 1771 of Chester wet glover
Goodwin	William	Freeman 1713 apprenticed to an ironmonger Will 1751 of Chester grocer
Hincks	John	Freeman 1747 as merchant
Pardoe	James	Freeman 1750 'by order of the assembly' Bankrupt 1753 as of Liverpool merchant and died later that year
Penkett	John	Freeman 1732 son of an ironmonger Will 1758 of Chester ironmonger
Perkins	Henry	Freeman 1727 as roper Will 1761 of Chester merchant
Whitfield	William	Freeman 1732 as ironmonger Will 1757 of Chester merchant

The Jamaica Colonial Naval Officers' Lists usually give only one name in the column for entry of names of owners of a vessel. John Bagnall appears as chief owner in the entry of two Chester slavers. On 6 May 1755 the *Duke* of Chester was entered from Africa with 184 slaves, and on 25 September the *Black Prince* was entered from Africa with 260 slaves.³ John Bagnall's will gives no indication of mercantile activity, and he was not a freeman of Chester, though his uncle Samuel, from whom he inherited much Chester property, was freeman in 1714 when an apprentice to a tanner.

Four of the owners of the *St George*, Bagnall, Barnston, Hincks, and Perkins, were also owners of the *Duke*, registered at Liverpool in 1754. By this date, William Goodwin was dead and by his will in 1750 he left to his son Charles all 'stock in trade, parts or shares in ships and vessels, goods and chattels'. Charles continued his father's interest in Chester slave trading by taking part in the ownership of the *Duke*.⁴ But apart from Charles Goodwin, Chester merchants do not appear to be much interested in the colonial trades, as far as present information indicates. Five of the owners of the *St George*, Bushell, Corless, Perkins, Penkett and Whitfield, did not invest in the *Duke*.⁵

The surprising name in the list of owners of the *St George* is that of James Pardoe, a prominent Liverpool merchant and slave trader. The Liverpool Plantation Registers give him as involved in the ownership of 23 vessels in 30 different registrations between 1744 and his bankruptcy in 1753. Of these registrations, 16 vessels in 19 registrations were slave traders, and the other vessels sailed to the West Indies, America and the Mediterranean.⁶ The fact that he was made a freeman of Chester by order of the assembly, a procedure usually employed in favour of the Cheshire landed gentry, suggests that his participation in the newly organised slave trade voyages from Chester was counted as important by Chester merchants.

Another connection with Liverpool slave traders was through John Penkett. His brother William had been master of a Liverpool slaver, the *Hardman Galley*, in five voyages between 1730 and 1736, and he is given in the Liverpool Plantation Registers from 1744 as an owner in four slavers registered between 1744 and 1747, and in three vessels in other trades, between 1744 and 1755. None of these vessels

included James Pardoe as a co-owner. John Penkett could doubtless call on his brother's experience for the benefit of the co-owners of the *St George*. Certainly the brothers were closely connected, for William after being declared bankrupt in 1759, complained that false rumours of his brother's financial circumstances at his death in 1758 had adversely affected his own commercial standing.⁷

Though all the evidence points to the predominant share of Liverpool in providing the model for Chester slave trading, one tantalising piece of evidence suggests some London influence. On 2 December 1748 was entered at Jamaica the *Chester* from Africa with 227 slaves, and on 9 June 1749 she was cleared to Chester. Her master was Joseph Seaman, the master in two voyages 1750-3 in the *St George*, but she was registered at London on 2 December 1747, and her owners given as John Townson and Co.⁸ This partnership, in view of the names of the vessel and her master, and her clearance to Chester, must have included some Chester men, but details are unlikely to be found. John Townson certainly had connections with north-western ports. In the Liverpool Plantation Registers was copied the registration made at Poulton le Fylde on 24 September 1750, and her owners were resident in Poulton, Kirkham, Preston, Blackburn and Lancaster, together with John Townson of London. He was probably the man made freeman of Lancaster in 1755-6 described as of London merchant.⁹ In the papers of Robert Gillow, founder of the famous furniture manufacturing business in Lancaster, there are many references to John Townson of London, and to the firm of Townson and Bagnall of London. The business they handled was chiefly insurance on vessels and cargoes between Lancaster and the West Indies, in which Gillow and his associates were concerned.¹⁰ London directories between 1749 and 1754 list John Townson and John Bagnall as resident in London, both described as merchants in 1753 and 1754. Thereafter Bagnall does not appear and John Townson continues as merchant at Salters Hall.¹¹

NOTES

- 1 Public Record Office, Colonial Office papers (hereafter given as PRO CO) Barbados 33/16 Part II; no clearance from Barbados has survived. *St. George* is described as a snow of 90 tons, built at Chester 1750; hence a new, possibly purpose built, vessel.
- 2 See *Rolls of the Freemen of Chester*, II, Lancs. Chesh. Rec. Soc. 55 (1908), and *Wills Proved at Chester*, Lancs. Chesh. Rec. Soc. 25, 27, 28 (1892, 1898, 1899). In the *Manchester Mercury* advertisements are the announcements of James Pardoe's bankruptcy 21 August 1753, and of the sale of his house in Liverpool 23 October 1753 when he was described as deceased.
- 3 PRO CO 142/16. *Duke* cleared to Chester 19 August 1755; for her registration details, see *Transactions*, 126 (1977), 40-1. She was a snow built at Parkgate, Cheshire in 1737, but so far not traced as a slaver previous to registration as *Duke*. *Black Prince* cleared to London 9 February 1756, but her arrival there has not been traced, and she was on sale at Chester 13 August 1756. She was a snow of 110 tons built at Newbury, New England in 1752, registered at Chester 20 August 1754.
- 4 Wills of John Bagnall, made and proved in 1766, of Samuel Bagnall, made 1759 and proved 1760, and of William Goodwin, made 1750 and proved in 1751, are in Cheshire County Record Office.
- 5 Only two of the co-owners of *St George* and *Duke* appear in addition to Charles Goodwin in the owners of vessels in the Liverpool Plantation Registers 1744-73 and 1779-84. Bushell was co-owner in *Mount Pleasant* of Chester registered at Liverpool 14 April 1761, and Hincks co-owner in *Sulton* of Dublin, registered at Liverpool 19 January 1764. Both vessels appear to have been engaged in coastal trade to British and Irish ports.
- 6 Pardoe's ownership of slavery is based on the Liverpool Plantation Registers *passim* between 28 April 1744, register of *Scarisbrick*, and 20 July 1753, register of *Ellen*, together with Mediterranean passes in PRO Admiralty 7/80-87, and other voyage details based on *Lloyd's List* and newspapers. The passes also show the schooner *Pardoe* as making three West India voyages 1734-7, and then slaving voyages to 1747 when she was re-registered at Liverpool; ownership by Pardoe is confirmed by CO Barbados 33/16 Part I entry 16 March 1738 from Africa. Other vessels of which Pardoe was co-owner are in Liverpool Plantation Registers between 15 July 1745, register of *Seahorse*, and 7 October 1752, register of *Grampus*.
- 7 On Penkett as master see Mediterranean Passes 1730-36, and as co-owner of Liverpool vessels, Liverpool Plantation Registers between 4 June 1744, register of *Old Noll*, and 24 March 1755, register of *Grove*. His bankruptcy was announced in *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser* 15 June 1759 and on 22 June appeared an advertisement about his brother's financial affairs. On 23 May 1760 was announced another bankruptcy of William Penkett and three Liverpool partners.
- 8 PRO CO Jamaica 142/15; she is described as a ship of 80 tons, a prize of war.
- 9 Liverpool Plantation Registers copy made between 22-25 September 1750. *Lloyd's List* and Mediterranean Passes give voyages to S.

Carolina and the Baltic until she was lost in 1753. Townson's freedom of Lancaster is in *Rolls of the Freemen of Lancaster*, Lancs. Chesh. Rec. Soc. 90 (1938).

- 10 Brief notes were made many years ago from the Gillows papers when they were kept at Gillows furniture works at Lancaster, from volumes then known as a "Waste Book" 1742-53 and a "Letter Book" 1746-59. The papers are now in Westminster Public Library.
- 11 I am grateful to the Keeper of Enquiry Services at the Guildhall Library, London, for information from London Directories.