

President:

The Earl of Derby, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., J.P.

Volume I.

No: I.

EARLY LIVERPOOL VESSELS AND TRADE

A Paper read to The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

on 11th May, 1938,

by

Mr. Arthur C. Wardle.

To submit this paper as a comprehensive survey of Liverpool ships of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would be presumptuous. It is merely the chronological arrangement of a few notes taken whilst engaged in other research, and now put forward in the hope that they might form an elementary basis for the more exhaustive study which the Society must ultimately undertake if its records are to be complete.

Although for several centuries Liverpool was regarded as a creek of the port of Chester, its maritime advantages were earlier recognised by King John, who built a military stronghold above the Pool and granted, in 1207, the little town its first charter. During the next two hundred years, with the exception of occasional references to the transport of troops to Ireland, the records contain little evidence of the number or type of vessels owned or built on the Mersey. Robert Dunne, writing from Carlisle on 29th March, 1548, to the Lord Protector, refers to his search for ships for transport purposes: "I viewed also the creeks and havens thereabouts for boats and crayers for conveying the victuals and found fourteen between 7 and 15 tons, and others of greater burthen belonging to Liverpool". From this, we may assume that the Mersey ships, even at that date, were the largest on the north west coast of England.

It is to the Liverpool Town Books, however, that we must look for the earliest recorded local vessels. In 1558, the port boasted thirteen merchant ships, including one of 100 tons and one of 50 tons, and among the entries for 1565 is the following list of locally-owned ships, with their tonnages and owners:-

EAGLE	Robert Corbett, owner.	40 tons.	12 men.	1 boy.
GEORGE	John & Thomas Winstanley.	36 "	10 "	
SAVIOUR	Thomas Uttyn. <i>hazebk</i>	30 "	8 "	
BARTHOLOMEW	Wm. Lawrence.	16 "	6 "	
FALCON	George Ashton.	16 "	6 "	
MIGHULL	Edward Nicholson & <i>bc</i> John Williamson.	20 "	7 "	
SONDAYE	Wm. Walker & Tho. Mason. <i>bk</i>	15 "	3 "	
MARIA GEORGE	Thomas Fisher & Rd. Baker.	15 "	5 "	

PETER	Peter Starkie.	12 tons.	5 men.
SWALLOW	Thomas Batyswell.	3 "	3 "
GOOD LUCK	Thomas Bradshaw.	6 "	3 "
ELIZABETH	Nicholas Richardson.	12 "	
MIGELL, Wallazie.	Gilb. Dobb and Jas. Robinson.	14 "	
JOHN, Wallazie.	John Aynesdale.	24 "	8 "
LARK, Wallazie.	H. & R. Young.	8 "	3 "

In December of that year a dreadful storm overtook the Queen's ship SACAR, which sailed from Liverpool on the 22nd, with Sir Henry Sidney on board, for Ireland. This vessel was escorted by the GEORGE, of Liverpool, and "Thomas Uttyn and his bark; Edward Nicholson and John Williamson and their bark; William Walker and Thomas Mason and their bark; Mr. Corbet's bark; Nicho: Ricson and that small bark called Mr. Corbett's small bark" and the Recorder goes on to pray for their safe arrival.

Seven years later, the Liverpool fleet had increased to sixteen ships, one of 40 tons and three of 30 tons. According to the records for 1571 and 1572, bonds for discharge were issued to the following Liverpool vessels:-

1571	18 Jan.	BARTHOLOMEW	Nicholas Bound,	master
1572	19 Jun.	TRINITIE	Robert Laurence	"
1572	8 May	GUD LUCKE	Robert Laurence	"
1572	8 July	LUKE	John Corbet	"
1572	11 July	SAVIOUR	Thomas Uttyn	"
1572	8 July	ELSABETH	Thomas Bastwell	"
1572	26 March	SWANNE	John Winstanley	"

In February of the following year, the SWANN, of Liverpool, "Edmund Laurence, mayster under God", was wrecked on the Irish Coast and, in the quaint language of the period, the Recorder relates how "the good marchaunt mayster John Armetaije, of Farnley Tyes, in the county of Yorck, alias clothier, wyth his riche stocke from Liverpool to Knockfergus and other cutes gentelmen (blank) Hughies of (blank) after ship wrecke came to land and fell amongst the rebell kernes and were there most vilionously murthered, slayne, and cut to pieces as the vilyst kind of fleshe contrarie to the pleasure and will of God, I am not able to penne it, but by voyce of the countrie and cominitie of Irische and Englische tonges uncertain, but to trew, the mor pitie etc".

The ship or bark GEORGE, first recorded in 1565, was still afloat ten years later, for in 1574, we have an echo of the Earl of Essex's expedition to Ireland. The Recorder refers to "some of the soldiers dying upon the seas aboard the ships and baroques. Some got direct to Liverpool by the GEORGE, of Liverpool, Thomas Winstanley, captain".

On St. George's day, 1577, the little town received a visit from Henry, Earl of Derby, whilst en route to the Isle of Man. He was honoured with a procession, religious service and a military display and then embarked in the EDWARD, "Mr. Tarbocke's ship", which sailed accompanied by the MICHAEL and the BEE, of Liverpool, the ELIZABETH of Aulte, and the GOOD LUCK, of Douglas.

A note of early Liverpool shipbuilding is made by Mr. R. Stewart-Brown, who refers to Miles Fell, a Liverpool yeoman, having built a bark which he named the FELL. She was of 160 tons burthen, and he therefore applied at the Admiralty court for the bounty then offered for the construction of ships of over 100 tons.

The Town Books contain much information concerning cargoes carried by these small local vessels, which traded

principally to Ireland and the north west coast of England. Baines, in his History of Liverpool, devotes several pages to this trade, which included the shipment of coals from the Mersey, and I have extracted the following list of Liverpool-owned vessels of 1586, with their masters:-

STRANGE	18 tons	John Strong,	master.
MICHAEL	16 "	Evans Thomas	"
MARIE	6 "	Richard Johnson	"
ELIZABETH	10 "	Robt. Pemberton	"
HOPE	34 "	Cuthbert Lawrence	"
GOLDEN GRAY	19 "	Robert Kettle	"
LITTLE MICHAEL		John Williamson	" -
LITTLE MARGARET	12 "	Henry Shaw	"
PETER of Wallazie	16 "	James Johnson	"
EDWARD	10 "	William Blackmore	"
GREAT MARGARET	10 "	John Robinson	"
MICHAEL	16 "	Richard Gyneson	"
MICHAEL	16 "	John Williamson	" -
MARYGOLD	20 "	-	

The STRANGE is mentioned in an entry, April 13th, 1581, in the Town Books: "Rauffe Serocold of Manchester gave four marks to the town to be allowed to make his best market for his train oil and iron which came to Liverpool in the good ship the barque STRAUNGE". This period is noteworthy as recording one of the earliest letters of marque, granted to the Liverpool ship RELIEF, 20 tons, owned by Giles Brookes and Benjamin Mainwaring, Liverpool merchants. She was armed with 10 cast pieces and victualled for six months. Her master was Humphrey Brocke, who brought the news to London, in August 1586, of the readiness of part of the Spanish Armada. The earliest news of the preparations for this invasion of England, however, was attested in July of that year, before the mayor of Weymouth, by Nicholas Abraham, a Liverpool merchant, and John Lambert, a shipman, of that town. Liverpool men and vessels were evidently actively involved in the Elizabethan intelligence system, for among contemporary State Papers is a letter dated 19th September, 1588, written from St. John de Luz by Edward Palmer, a priest, to Secretary Walsingham, giving information as to how the Spaniards had received news of the disaster which overtook the invincible Armada. This lengthy despatch was carried to England on a Liverpool ship by Thomas Wofull, a servant of Lord Derby.

Another letter of marque was the Liverpool ship FRANCES, of 90 tons, for which a bond was given in 1590, and an indication of the trade in which other Liverpool ships were employed is given in a letter dated 5th July, 1593, written by Giles Brooke, mayor of Liverpool, to John Fytton, mayor of Chester, announcing that six vessels had been stayed at Liverpool for the transporting of half "of the 1200 soldiers now ordered to cross from Liverpool or Chester to Dublin". Local records contain many references to the numbers of soldiers almost continuously encamped during these years on the Heath, where St. George's Hall now stands, whilst they awaited embarkation or favourable winds.

Records of early seventeenth-century local shipping are very meagre. The Moore Deeds contain several interesting references, one document being a certificate granted to Henry Mullenax, owner of the ship GIFT OF GOD, of Liverpool, for frames of timber sent by the mayor of Chester to Londonderry. Other documents, dated April/May 1633, mention two Liverpool vessels, the PHENIX, Bryan Blundell, owner, and the TRINITIE, Gilb. Balshay, owner. In that year, local shipping was troubled by pirates. A letter contained in the Cowper MSS reports: "A new pirate has come upon the coast of Ireland who took one Tarleton's ship of Liverpool, and in her goods to the value of £300. He has pillaged two Dutch

ships, one he set on fire. It burned a day and a night in view of the whole country near Dublin, to their grief and shame. This Biscayan Spanish rogue outbraves the two Kingdoms, undoes the poor merchant and spoils many an honest gentleman. I hope my Lord will hasten to clear the coast of this pilfering villain, and other the like, else all trade and commerce between the two kingdoms is spoiled. Another letter, dated May 20th, 1633, addressed to Viscount Wentworth, evidently relates to the same marauder: "Here lies a pirate in the mouth of this bay of Dublin that takes all that comes. He took a bark of Liverpool worth £400 yesterday, in which was a trunk of damask and other linens of your Lordship. He fought with a Dutchman the day before. He hath taken divers vessels on this coast". Among the State Papers of Charles the First's reign is the record of an examination of Thomas Browne and others, taken on 30th March, 1636 concerning the misconduct of Anthony Lowmes, press-master, and the mayor of Liverpool in discharging seamen pressed for the King's service and pressing in their places the examinants who had never been to sea before. This is one of the earliest references to the press-gang in Liverpool.

Documents calendared by the Historical MSS Commission (Appendix to 5th Report) include several receipts signed in 1641, for the transportation of horses and men to Ireland. The following Liverpool vessels and their masters are therein named:-

ANNE	Richard Williamson and partner Brian Mercer.
EDWARD	William Johnson
SWAN	Richard Harrison
MARY	William Rimmer
HOPEWELL	Thomas Andowe.

Another document, dated 1642, is an examination of William Lorting, mariner, who came out of Bordeaux in the GEORGE, of Liverpool. The Lortings or Lurtings appear frequently in local annals as a seagoing family. One, Thomas Lurting, born at Liverpool in 1629, was impressed into the King's service in 1646 and served in the wars against the Irish, Dutch and Spaniards. In his autobiography: "The Fighting Sailor turned peaceable Christian manifested in the convincement and conversion of Thomas Lurting", published in 1710, he gives a graphic account of a sea-fight under Admiral Blake at Santa Cruz against the Spaniards. Lurting came under the influence of the Quakers, and at the time of his conversion to that faith he was boatswain's mate on the BRISTOL frigate. After restoration of Charles the Second, Lurting was several times impressed but refused to do King's work or eat King's victuals. Once, after five days fasting, he was put ashore. Lurting became mate of a ship captured, in 1663, by an Algerine pirate, but the British sailors, following Lurting's instructions, managed to turn the tables and make the Turks their prisoners. Instead of selling the pirates for slaves, as they had the opportunity to do, they put them ashore not far from an Algerine town. The pirates marvelled so greatly at this unexpected treatment that both captives and ex-captives took an affectionate farewell of each other. This narrative was written, dated, and signed at Liverpool in 1680, and is printed in George Fox's "To the Great Turk and His King at Algiers!"

The Moore Deeds contain a copy of a petition dated 15th June, 1644, to Prince Rupert, from the seamen of Liverpool, to which the following names are appended: Richard Harrison, Thomas Thompson, John Sutton, Gilbert Richardson, Richard Norris, Thomas Abraham of Formby, and Ellis Rymer, of Ansdale.

The seventeenth century witnessed Liverpool's entry into the West Indian trade and into commerce with the American plantations. In 1649, the Common Council, being troubled with an abnormal number of vagrants, ordered all beggars in the town to be shipped off to the Barbadoes. Another early reference to the West Indies is

contained in A Cavalier's Note Book, wherein William Blundell writes, under dated 12th September, 1666: "I did engage with my cousin Henry Blundell of Ince Esq to join £40 with him as an adventure to the Barbadoes in the good ship the ANTELOPE of Liverpool. The ANTELOPE went from Liverpoole, September 15, towards Barbadoes, 1666. August 19, 1667. The ANTELOPE returned to Liverpoole from the Barbadoes".

Baines, in his History of Liverpool, refers to an early Liverpool policy of marine insurance, on "Captain Tarleton's good ship the ANN AND SARAH, by which she is insured to Barbadoes and home again for a premium of four per cent on the ship and cargo."

Blome, writing in 1673, mentions the town's eminent merchants and tradesmen, whose trade and traffic, especially into the West Indies, makes it famous; its situation affording in greater plenty and at reasonabler rates than most parts of England such exported commodities proper for the West Indies; as likewise a quicker return for such imported commodities, by reason of the sugar-bakers and great manufactures of cottens in the adjacent parts, etc" Among the local merchants prominently engaged in this trade was Thomas Johnson who, with Richard Norris, has provided posterity with a remarkable picture of the shipping and commerce of those days in a collection of letters contained in the Norris Papers, housed at the Picton Library, Liverpool. A letter dated Barbadoes, 11th July, 1692, states that 20 years previously there was a constant trade between Barbadoes and Liverpool "from whence came nails and all sorts of ironware, cheese, butter in pots, all sorts of sadlery ware, jeans, best white bermillions, Manchester wares, Scotts cloaths, flannels, woolseys, Kendall cottons etc". At that time Johnson and Norris appear to have been joint owners of the ships CHARITY, BLESSING and MERCY, and among the Norris Papers is a bill of lading for a cargo shipped per the MERCY, which reads as under:-

"Shipped by the Grace of God in good order and well conditioned by John Mead & Thomas Wood in and upon the good ship called the MERCY of Liverpoole, whereof is Master under God for this present Voyage, Timothy Smalshaw, and now riding at anchor in the Bay of Cadiz and by God's Grace bound for Liverpoole, to say Two hundred barrills two @ gage Sixty barrills foure @ gage of Raisins of the Sun, one frayle fruit, three pipes of Malaga wine, three pypes of oyle, fifty barrills of Anchoves & tenn butts Sherry Wine being marked and numbered as in the Margent, and are to be delivered in the like good order and well conditioned at the aforesaid Port of Liverpoole (the danger of the Seas only excepted) unto Messrs. Thomas Johnson & Compne or to there Assigns, he or they paying Freight for the said Goods according to agreement with Primage and Average accustomed. In witness thereof, the Master and Purser of the said Ship hath affirmed to 3 Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, the one of which 3 bills being accomplished, the other 2 to stand void. And so God send the good ship to her desired Port in safety. Amen.

Dated in Cadiz ye 5 March, 1695, a.d.

sgd. Timothy Smalshaw. "

By the close of the century, Liverpool merchants were driving a lucrative trade with the American plantations of Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas; and their ships, in addition to freighting tobacco and English manufactured goods, were engaged in the transport of young apprentices to serve in the Plantations.

Local municipal records contain several lists of these apprentices, or servants, as they are described, and the names of the ships which transported them. A list of the vessels and their masters is appended:

ANN & SARAH	John Marshall, master, for	Virginia.
SUBMISSION	Thomas Seacomb "	"
FORMBY	Wm. Leivesley "	"
LOYALTY	Henry Brown "	"
IRISH LAWRELL	Wm. Middleton "	Newfoundland.
YORKSHIRE LAWRELL	Edward Tarleton "	"
PLANTER	John Rimmer "	"
VIRGINIA MERCHEANT	Edward Ball "	"
EXPERIMENT	Cavaliero Christian "	Pennsylvania.
ELIZABETH	Gilbert Lievesley "	Virginia and Maryland.
ELIZABETH & JULIET	Wm. Part "	Virginia.
ELEANOR	Nich. Reynolds. "	"
ELIZABETH & ANN	Wm. Benn "	Montserrat.
ANN & SARAH	Henry Smith "	Virginia.

In the year 1700, however, the ventures of Liverpool shipowners and merchants were diverted to a more sinister transportation of human beings. The following transcription of a document contained in the Norris Papers is probably the earliest recorded evidence of Liverpool's association with the slave trade:-

" Leverpole, ye 10. 8. 1700. Mr. Tho. Brownbell & Mr. Jno Murray, Gentlm. Ye being Capt & supercargoe of ye good ship ye Blessing by gods grace bound for Guinea, our Ordrs to ye are as follows. Wee Ordr ye with ye first fair Wind & weather yt presents to make ye best of ye way to King-sail in ye Kingdom of Ireland where apply y selfe to Mr. Arthur Izeik Merchnt there who will ship on board such provisions & other necessarys as ye shall want for yr intended Voyage & if ye find wee have omitted anything in our Ordrs to him ye may take anything yt shall be necessary for ye Voyage. Make all dispatch there ye well can & ye will ye first wind & weather make ye best of ye way to ye coast of Guinea where make to ye Windermost pt of ye gold coast so you will have opportunity of ye whole coast to trade in, where dispose of whatt of ye Cargo is most proper & purchase whatt Slaves ye can if you find no Encouragement on ye gold coast goe directly for Wida, where if ye find Encouragement dispose of all yr Cargoe & slave ye ship to her full reach if ye can, and of any remaindr be left lay it out in teeth and dust as you have opportunity ye will quickly find weather, ye can do ye business on ye gold coast & Wida. If ye find ye cant sell only such goods of ye cargoe as will be improper for Angola & make ye haste if ye can down to Angola where ye Doctor is well acquainted & who will inform ye whatt goods most proper for yt place when ye arrive at Angola dispose of ye remaindr of ye cargoe there and slave ye ship to her full reach as she will conveniently carrye. I hope there ye will slave ye ship easy A whatt shall remain over and above slaveing ye ship lay out in teeth wch are there reasonable & when ye have disposed of ye Cargoe & slaved ye ship make ye best of ye way to ye West Indies. If yo slave at ye gold coast & Wida touch at Barbadoes where if ye find ye marketts reasonable good sell there, if dull goe down to Leewrd to wch Island ye shall see convenient where dispose of yr Negroes in our best advantage & with ye produce load yr ship with sugr Cottons Gingers if to be had - wth all

remaining over and above loading your own ship invest in ye same commodities take freight for England to London of this place. Wherever ye sell ye slaves & load sugar dispatch your own ship as soon as possible and make ye best of ye way home & whatt effects of ours ye cant stay to be freighted home leave in ye hands of some honest man in ye Island where ye load, if at Barbadoes apply to Mr. Moor, at Antegua, att Monseratt, Mr. Chancey, att Nevis, Solomon Isarell, but if ye goe down to Angola where ye are there laden make ye best of ye way directly to Jamaica where whatt slaves ye purchased on ye Gold coast will sell well & ye Angola slaves will turn to good acct att Carthagena, where if ye see convenient send Mr. Murray and ye Dr. down with a pcell thither where there never fails of a good price. When ye have disposed of all ye slaves relade ye ship with Sugr Cottons Ginger & Indigoe & whatt ye have over & above ye loading bring hom in Weighty pieces of eight for att Carthagena whatt Negroes y dispose of will be for good pcs of 8 so if whatever is over ye loading bring home in ye specie & if you should have occasion for any assistance or to leave any concerns behind ye in Jamaica apply yr selfe to Mr. Holested merchant there. When ye have loaded ye ship make ye best of ye way homeward butcall at Kingsaile for Ordrs. Ye concern wee here intrust ye with is very considerable & will require all ye care and diligence to manage it to ye best advantage both of ye selfe, consult together with ye Dr. who is ye only man ye have to trust to to assist ye in ye trading in ye Country & ye management there I should doubt not will doe good service. Read over yr Invoice frequently if you may be better acquainted wth yr goods. Wee have not limited you to any place only if ye cant do ye business on ye gold coast & Wida, to goe to Angola your ship wee think not proper to goe into ye Bight Wee leave ye whole management of ye concern to you & hope ye Lord will direct ye for ye best.

Be cautious of speaking with any shipps at sea for ye seas are dangerous. Endeavour to keep all ye men sober for intemperance in ye hot Country may destroy ye men and goe ruin yr Voyage. Lett everything be managed to our best advantage pray be good husband let nothing be embezell'd. We cannot pretend to give ye directions of all ye Management of our affairs in Guinea but reffer itt to ye and ye Doctor who hath been there before & shipt on purpose for ye design. Pray be diligent & carefull & prudent in all our affairs & be assur'd yr diligence shall not goe unrewarded. We committ ye to ye care & protection of ye Almighty who wee hope will preserve ye from all Dangers & Crown all our endeavours wth success & bring ye home with safety which shall be ye constant prayr of

Gent. Yr Loveing Friends.

Be sure make all ye despatch ye can through ye course of ye whole voyage take such Notice of all ye Methods of Management of ye trade on ye Coast yt may be able to inform us truly in all things Materiall in ye Trade wch will be yr own profitt as well as our advantage - write from all places where ye can have convenience of sending. "