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## **AND THE CHILDREN'S TEETH ARE SET ON EDGE**

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• CHAPTER 4 •

## *The World Turned Upside Down*

If buttercups buzzed after the bee,  
If boats were on land, churches on sea,  
If ponies rode men and grass ate the cows,  
And cats should be chased into holes by the mouse,  
If mamas sold their babies, to the gypsies for half a crown,  
If summer were spring, and the other way round,  
Then all the world would be upside down.

As 1774 ended and 1775 wore on fewer and fewer vessels were clearing Liverpool for anywhere, either in Africa or the New World. From about August or September 1774 the number of vessels entering the port began to greatly exceed those leaving.<sup>1</sup> Slave voyages from Liverpool almost halved over 1775-76. The difficulties in the way of making voyages were the delay in getting certification, rising insurance costs, and the general uncertainty advising delay in putting to sea. On October 19<sup>th</sup> 1774 in consequence of the situation in America an Order in Council was issued prohibiting the export of any gunpowder, guns, ammunition or weapons of war. These orders were renewed in April and August of 1775.<sup>2</sup> Arms and ammunition were an important part of the African trade as well as being necessary for the security of the vessels, and in order to outfit vessels for the trade licenses had to be obtained from the Privy Council. The uncertainty, the increased insurance, and the loss of the American market for slaves, led to many ships being laid up on arrival in Liverpool. The American Revolutionary War had dropped a large spanner in the works.

The growing difficulties with the American colonies would have been well known to the Liverpool merchants; vessels were arriving from America with news almost daily. Many merchants in the country were in favour of a more conciliatory approach to America and some were sympathetic to the colonists. Curiously there exists a long letter from Ann Hulton in Boston to Elizabeth Lightbody in Liverpool dated April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1775.<sup>3</sup> Ann Hulton was the unmarried sister of the Boston Commissioner of Customs and a loyalist who was mortified by the activities of the rebels. By the end of the year she had seen enough of life in rebellious Boston and returned to England. Her second cousin, Elizabeth Lightbody, was the wife of Adam Lightbody a wealthy Liverpool Linen Merchant.<sup>4</sup> She was a dissenter who attended the Kaye Street Chapel in Liverpool, which was under the charge of Rev. Philip

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Taylor. The Rev. John Yates, confidante of James Currie, succeeded him in 1777 when Taylor transferred to Dublin.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Lightbody was a deeply religious woman, committed to charitable works, and perhaps something of a minor celebrity, as a direct descendant of Phillip Henry, the protestant divine, through the marriage of his daughter Katherine to John Tylston M. D. of Chester.<sup>5</sup> Despite her religious convictions it is clear from the letter that a number of prominent Liverpool slave merchants were among her friends and acquaintances, including the Gildarts and the Earles. Of course, both had extensive business interests beyond slaving including the American tobacco and timber trades. Half a dozen years later her eldest daughter married the slave merchant, Thomas Hodgson of Caton.

In her letter Ann Hulton described the battles of Lexington and Concord. *On the 18th instt at 11 at Night, about 800 Grenadiers & light Infantry were ferry'd across the Bay to Cambridge, from whence they marchd to Concord, about 20 Miles. The Congress had been lately assembled at that place, & it was imagined that the General had intelligence of a Magazine being formed there & that they were going to destroy it.*

*The People in the Country (who are all furnished with Arms & have what they call Minute Companys in every Town ready to march on any alarm), had a signal it's supposed by a light from one of the Steeples in Town, Upon the Troops embarkg. The alarm spread thro' the Country, so that before daybreak the people in general were in Arms & on their March to Concord. About Daybreak a number of the People appeard before the Troops near Lexington. They were called to, to disperse, when they fired on the Troops & ran off, Upon which the Light Infantry pursued them & brought down about fifteen of them. The Troops went on to Concord & executed the business they were sent on, & on their return found two or three of their people Lying in the Agonies of Death, scalp'd & their Noses & ears cut off & Eyes bored out - Which exasperated the Soldiers exceedingly - a prodigious number of the People now occupying the Hills, woods, & Stone Walls along the road. The Light Troops drove some parties from the hills, but all the road being inclosed with Stone Walls Served as cover to the Rebels, from whence they fired on the Troops still running off whenever they had fired, but still supplied by fresh Numbers who came from many parts of the Country. In this manner were the Troops harrassed in their return for Seven or eight Miles, they were almost exhausted & had expended near the whole of their Ammunition when to their great joy they were relieved by a Brigade of Troops under the command of Lord Percy with two pieces of Artillery. The Troops now combated with fresh Ardour, & marched in their return with undaunted countenances, recieving Sheets of fire all the way for many Miles, yet having no visible Enemy to combat with, for they never woud face 'em in an open field, but always skulked & fired from behind Walls, & trees, & out of Windows of Houses, but this cost them dear for the Soldiers enterd those dwellings, & put all the Men to death. Lord Percy has gained great honor by his conduct thro' this day of severe Service, he was exposed to the hottest of the fire & animated the Troops with great coolness & spirit. Several officers are wounded & about 100 Soldiers. The killed amount to near 50, as to the Enemy we can have no exact acct but it is said there was about ten times the Number of them engaged, & that near 1000 of 'em have fallen.*

*The Troops returned to Charlestown about Sunset after having some of 'em marched near fifty miles, & being engaged from Daybreak in Action, without*

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*respite, or refreshment, & about ten in the Evening they were brought back to Boston. The next day the Country poured down its Thousands, and at this time from the entrance of Boston Neck at Roxbury round by Cambridge to Charlestown is surrounded by at least 20,000 Men, who are raising batteries on three or four different Hills. We are now cut off from all communication with the Country & many people must soon perish with famine in this place.*

The elite of Liverpool would have heard rumours of these shocking events even before they appeared in the newspapers. No wonder, as matters developed in Liverpool over the course of the year, they would be cause for great consternation.

On the docks it would have been obvious that shipping was not being made ready for sea. The Hodgson's vessel the *Two Brothers* returned in April 1775 but did not sail again until the end of October.<sup>1</sup> By September the laid up Guineamen's crews were becoming restive. Those that could find a vessel found the merchants were attempting to reduce their wages by as much as a third. The *Derby* belonging to John and Thomas Yates arrived in port on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1775 after a voyage to the Cameroons and Antigua.<sup>1</sup> In August it was fitting out again, by which time there was a great surplus of seamen from the African trade available for hire, several thousand were reported, along with men from ships laid up from the Greenland trade.<sup>6</sup> No doubt vessels in the America and West India trades were also affected by the increasing uncertainty. There were reports that one salt vessel had been burned on the coast of Virginia and another had returned fully laden from Philadelphia.<sup>7,8</sup> Sometime Around Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of August the owners of the *Derby* seized the opportunity to lower the seamen's wages from 30s per month to 20s.<sup>9</sup> The crew retaliated by un-rigging the ship, which they had just rigged in preparation for weighing anchor, with little respect for the merchants' expensive property.<sup>10</sup> Ropes and stays were simply cut through and left lying on the deck. Bodies of sailors began to assemble and further ships, of the few that were preparing for sea, were unrigged. At this point a party of constables appointed by the magistrates arrested nine of the sailors and confined them in the goal in Water-street.<sup>9,11</sup>

Several thousand seamen assembled and marched on the goal determined to rescue their comrades. The riot act was read, but to no effect, and eight seamen were released in hopes of persuading the throng of angry sailors to disperse. This they did in highly exuberant mood.<sup>11,12</sup> Later, discovering that one prisoner had not been released, they returned to the goal and dictated his release, along with a woman said to have aided and assisted in the rioting. This renewed victory was followed by much carousing and parading around the town that continued throughout Friday night. Nevertheless, on Saturday morning, (the 26<sup>th</sup> of August) all was again quiet.<sup>12</sup>

However, the bone of contention at the root of the disturbances, the simple injustice of reducing the guinea sailors rates of pay, remained unresolved, and so the unrigging of ships continued for several nights more. On Tuesday the sailors met in a body in Ladies Walk, from where they marched on the Exchange to offer terms to the merchants.<sup>13</sup> The merchants seem to have agreed to the sailors' demands and they spent the rest of the day in festive mood. But a rumour began to be bruited about among the seamen that a number of men, 300 by one report, had been hired by the magistrates and Common Council of Liverpool, at the fabulous and provocative rate of 10s per day, to apprehend their ringleaders.<sup>14</sup> The sailors' ringleader went under the sobriquet of General Gage;<sup>6</sup> a curious choice, since Gage

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was the general who had been sent to impose martial law in America and deal with the rebellious colonists. They would not yet have been aware of his signal failure to accomplish this.

The magistrates and merchants stationed 120 of these armed men in the Exchange, probably because the seamen had threatened that, if their terms were not met, the Exchange would be torn down.<sup>15</sup> The Exchange, or 'Change as it was commonly known, was the commercial heart of Liverpool and its bass-relief frieze was decorated with symbols of the prosperous African trade, African heads, elephants, cornucopia and the like.<sup>16</sup> At nine o'clock on Tuesday evening, a throng of angry sailors surrounded the Exchange. At some point a missile was hurled which broke a pane of glass in one of the windows.<sup>14</sup> The assembled mob, who seem to have been unarmed, were fired on from within the building; some say after the reading of the riot act, some say without its having been read. The sailors then made a general attack on the windows with stones and anything that came to hand, but quickly retreated in the face of the overwhelming fire-power from within.<sup>11</sup> Could anyone have failed to hear echoes of the Boston Massacre? The only evidence that the riot act was read was of a somewhat cockamamie nature. The law demanded that the Riot Act should be read, ordering the rioters to disperse before they were fired upon, therefore, if they were fired upon, it must have been read. As a result of this ambush two sailors were killed and one died some time later from his wounds.<sup>15</sup> Some said that seven sailors were killed and many more wounded, perhaps as many as forty.<sup>14</sup> It is easy to imagine the sailors would have quickly embraced the enormity of the higher estimates.

However, at one o'clock that night, the sailors returned to 'Change in a body over 1000 strong after raiding Parr's gun shop. Parrs were the principle purveyors to the African trade of guns and ammunition probably manufactured in Birmingham and had invested in African voyages themselves in the 1750's and 60's.<sup>1</sup> The sailors made off from Parr's gun shop with some 300 muskets along with powder and ammunition.<sup>10</sup> Thus armed with pistols, cutlasses and their newly acquired muskets they marched on the exchange under a 'bloody' flag<sup>4</sup> which would have been intended as a pretty piratical provocation, indicating that no quarter was to be given or expected, but who knows whether it was in deadly earnest or simply high spirited bravado? From amongst the shipping, or perhaps from Parr's, the sailors managed to acquire six cannon, although some reports speak of only three.<sup>13, 14</sup> These were dragged into the streets around the Exchange. Assembling outside the Exchange the sailors fired six rounds of musketry and cannon. Whether through good sense, or from a conspicuous lack of it, the cannon were aimed, in provocative insult, at the 'merchants' goose'; the liver bird atop the Exchange building.<sup>6</sup> One cannon placed in Castle Street was so large that the confined blast took out all the windows in the neighbourhood.<sup>13</sup> The fighting was fairly chaotic, and many sailors were said to have been injured, possibly by 'friendly fire', in their ill planned sorties from the surrounding streets. Afterwards, many muskets were found to have burst, which is not surprising as many would have been of 'African quality' and it was a moot point as to which was the more dangerous end of one of these weapons. In the attack at least four sailors were killed. Next day 16 musket ball holes were found in the shutters of Miss Williamson's bookshop in Castle Street, and the floor inside was littered with musket balls.<sup>17</sup>

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The Exchange held and so the sailors proceeded to the house of the Guinea merchant Thomas Ratcliffe who lived in Richmond Street, in Whitechapel, which they fired upon and broke into, smashing up the furniture, ripping out the feather beds and upholstery and strewing feathers in the air. They then proceeded to destroy the house and everything in it. Their next target was the house of William James, in Rainford Gardens, which they proceeded to destroy – here they found a black page boy, concealed and terrified inside a long case clock. They also attacked the house of John Yates in Cleveland Square, whose attempt to lower wages had sparked off the disturbances, doing damage to the tune of £1000, and that of John Simmons in St Pauls Square and they threatened to attack the houses of all the Guinea merchants one by one.<sup>14</sup> This business of pulling down peoples house is a curiously personal form of revolt that seems to have been common at the time. It occurred during the anti-catholic Gordon Riots in London in 1780,<sup>18</sup> and it occurred in the rebellion against British rule in Boston.<sup>19</sup>

On Thursday the Royal Dragoons arrived from Manchester and the rioters quickly dispersed, hiding away wherever they could.<sup>6</sup> Some forty or fifty rioters were arrested and confined in Lancaster Castle pending trial. There was considerable fear among some of the residents that they had their own ‘Boston’ on their hands and there was concern that the trouble might re-emerge and even spread. Who knew where it might all end? As it turned out, there was neither the stomach nor organization for further rebellion and the riot remained an isolated instance of violent indignation at the sudden downturn in trade. Soon enough many of these men would be ‘pressed’ into serving King and Country. Some 14 of them were treated ‘leniently’, being ordered by the Judge, at their trial in Lancaster Assizes in April of 1776, aboard one of his majesty’s ships of war destined for America.<sup>20</sup> It seems they suffered greatly in prison during the winter of their confinement awaiting trial and surprisingly a subscription was raised among the people of Liverpool and Lancaster to relieve their distress.<sup>21</sup>

Also surprising is that the war with America and the stoppage of the Africa trade was later used as an example of how the slave trade could easily be abolished without any ill-effects. Port dues were said to have held up at this time despite the stoppage of the slave trade, the effects perhaps masked by increased convoy traffic to America and increased privateering. No-one, among the opposition to abolition, seems to have used this simple yet graphic example in contradiction of these assertions.<sup>22</sup>

Following the Guinea Sailors frolics John and Thomas Hodgson’s vessel the *Two Brothers* cleared out again from Liverpool for The Gambia at the end of October 1775, but after delivering slaves to St Vincent it returned direct to the African Coast.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hodgson seems to have regularly employed this tactic to increase the efficiency of his voyages. The question arises as to how the slaves were paid for on the African coast when this shortened voyage was used. Perhaps with access to a secure factory it was possible to take out several voyages worth of goods, or to accumulate some surplus after a few voyages. Perhaps a tender was sent out to resupply the slave ship after it left the coast. It is possible this could have been a smaller and faster, or even the converse a larger, lightly crewed vessel that could efficiently ply the route from Liverpool to Africa. Whatever the case may be the Hodgsons’ next voyage with the ship *Myers* (165 tons) was held back until June

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of 1776 when it sailed for Africa, bound for the Isles de Loss and Sierra Leone.<sup>1</sup> The fate of this vessel is unknown; it does not feature again in the Hodgson's fleet. It is possible that it was sent out as the tender to resupply the *Two Brothers* and it might then have served as a floating factory, or a protection vessel on the coast. *Two Brothers* next cleared from Liverpool in December 1777 so there was time for it to make at least one more voyage to Africa and back to the West Indies. It was not until December 1777 that *Two Brothers* made another triangular Liverpool, Gambia, Jamaica voyage, completed in March 1779.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the entry of the French into the American dispute in February 1778 deterred the Hodgsons from fitting out any new ventures for they did not do so until 1780. However, the American troubles now precluded selling slaves on the American mainland and markets in the West Indies were the only safe option so perhaps they struggled to find consignees. Nevertheless the downturn in trade and the associated dangers provided opportunity for those willing to take the risk. They would find falling prices on the African coast and a ready market in the West Indies through reduced competition.

The voyages of the *Two Brothers* and the *Myers* were in part financed by Samuel Sandys<sup>1</sup> who was also in partnership with Miles Barber. Samuel Sandys entered the slaving business in Liverpool about 1770 and was involved in at least 20 voyages with various partners including James Kendall and Andrew White until about 1773. Then this group of investors teamed up with Miles Barber and most of their voyages were despatched to the Isles de Loss.

When Samuel Sandys entered into partnership with the Hodgsons their voyages were targeted almost exclusively to the river Gambia.<sup>1</sup> Only the *Myers* had a different destination, the Isles de Loss. Sandys was also in partnership with Edward Bate in the ironmongery business – which was of no little importance to the slave trade, though not simply for the supply of shackles and chains, but also for knives, probably of 'African quality', as part of the trade goods.<sup>23</sup> This is but one instance of the vertical integration that slave-traders attempted to increase their profits and to spread the risks associated with slaving voyages. The Earles imported Venetian glass beads from Leghorn,<sup>24</sup> the Parr's supplied firearms, powder etc, and other merchants specialized variously in the supply of the tremendous variety of goods required for the trade.<sup>25</sup>

From 1773 until 1778, following his first bankruptcy, Miles Barber operated at least a dozen voyages out of Liverpool with partners, Samuel Sandys, James Kendall and Andrew White.<sup>1</sup> Of these most went to the Isles de Loss or Sierra Leone, one went to Cape Mount and Captain James Penny, who later appeared before the privy council investigation of the slave-trade, was employed specifically for three voyages to Bonny as master of the *Wilbraham*.<sup>1</sup> Because of the American situation none went on to disembark their human cargoes in America but instead were directed to the West Indies, principally Jamaica and Grenada with one voyage to St Kitts. James Penny's vessel was large, 180 tons, and could be packed with over 500 slaves. The other vessels operated by this consortium were smaller; *Tom* was very small, only 45 tons, and intended for about 100 slaves; the others were between 70 and 120 tons burthen. They probably transported about 3000 souls over the period.<sup>1</sup> Eight voyages were completely successful but the voyages of *Wilding*, *Tom* and *Bee* in 1773/4 were not. Precisely what caused these men to go bankrupt

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then is not clear, but in October of 1777 that is what happened.<sup>26</sup> And it seems to have been a rather murky business.

The first sign that things were going down the pan with the American War came with the collapse of the ironmongery business belonging to Edward Bate and Samuel Sandys. Edward Bate was first to go under, surrendering to the Commissioners in March 1777.<sup>27</sup> Together the partners surrendered to the Commissioners in April the same year.<sup>28</sup> Edward Bate was allowed by his Assignees to take up the bankrupt stock of the firm which was delivered to some Liverpool slave traders including, Richard Middleton, John Galley, and William Calvert. Calvert and Galley operated voyages with, among others, Robert Welsh. Middleton operated voyages with Ralph Fisher and Thomas Rigmaiden. No doubt the ironmongery was put to good use, but someone was reluctant to cough up for the goods and the bankruptcy dragged on and on.<sup>29</sup> Although it looked as though Bate and Sandys would get their certificate in September 1777,<sup>30</sup> in fact Edward Bate did not finally get his until November 1781<sup>31</sup> and Sandys in January 1782.<sup>32</sup> New assignees had to be appointed in 1784 where one had gone bankrupt and the other died.<sup>33</sup> The second dividend was not paid until June 1787.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the Assignees were still trying to recover £500 outstanding on the ironmongery and £753 outstanding from Samuel Sandys.<sup>30</sup> In the same year that Bate's and Sandys' business turned bad, Miles Barber entered his second bankruptcy and it had a curious preface.

In November 1776 a notice appeared in the press; "*LOST as is supposed the 28<sup>th</sup> of September last, seven bills of exchange*".<sup>35</sup> These included; a bill for £500 drawn by James Baillie & Co at Grenada on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1775 payable at 21 months sight, order Miles Barber, and accepted by Simon Fraser on February 16<sup>th</sup> 1776. There was another written in identical terms for £362 4s 5d. These were probably some of the proceeds of the voyage of the **Wilbraham**, Captain James Penny, belonging to Miles Barber, Samuel Sandys, James Kendall and Andrew White, which cleared Liverpool in April 1775 for Bonny and Jamaica but which may also have called at Grenada. 504 slaves were delivered with 27 dying on the middle passage.<sup>1</sup> It arrived back in Liverpool on February 16<sup>th</sup> 1776. There were also three bills drawn by Miles Barber in Liverpool on and accepted by Peter Thellusson & Co. Two were drawn on August 14<sup>th</sup> for £964 and £820 at 4 months date and another for £373 4s 7d was drawn on September 14<sup>th</sup>.

The vessel **Wilbraham** was sold by the candle at New Lloyd's Coffee House, over the Royal Exchange in August 1777, supervised by James Penny.<sup>36</sup> It was described as "*built for the African trade about 4 years ago, she is a very compleat Ship for that Trade; or for any other Trade, she is very well found and capable of mounting eighteen guns, and may be sent to sea at a small Expence, now lying off St Catherines's*". James Baillie was an agent in Grenada with Lancaster connections through the Thornton and Barrow families.<sup>37</sup> Peter Thellusson was a London banker, the son of a Swiss banker, who had originally run the London branch of the family bank, but who later opened his own house after taking British citizenship. He was also involved in the sugar, tobacco, and indigo trades from the West Indies and America and owned several sugar refineries. His will of 1790 left his £600,000 estate to the survivors of any children and grandchildren then living with the intention of tying up his estate until the income had turned it, by his estimate, into

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£14 million. The affair brought about a change in the law of inheritance and there are those who suppose that it inspired Dickens' story of the operation of the Court of Chancery, in the interminable case of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce in *Bleak House*.<sup>38, 39</sup>

A reward of five guineas was offered for the return of the 'lost' bills and the public was cautioned not to discount them as they were stopped at the bank. Accidents will happen, but then it was reported that a merchant at 2, Copthall Court, Throgmorton Street, in the City of London, had had his Counting House robbed of nearly £5000 in banknotes and bills on Sunday January 12<sup>th</sup> 1777.<sup>40</sup> This was the house of Mr. Peale, merchant, and a bureau had been broken into and the bills removed.<sup>41</sup> It was all too much for Mr Peale who died two weeks later. Before he died he advertised for their return<sup>40</sup> and it emerged that a red pocket book had been stolen containing various small denomination bank notes and bills and six foreign bills, each for £403.14s.11d, drawn by Dover, Taylor and Bell on Thomas Scott, dated October 1776; three payable at 20 months, and the other three at 25 months sight, to Miles Barber and Co. or order, and accepted in red ink on December 21<sup>st</sup> 1776, but not indorsed; two other foreign Bills, each for £403.14s.10½d drawn in favour of and accepted as above, at 30 months sight, not indorsed, and a foreign bill for £700 dated June 9<sup>th</sup> 1776, Castaigner, on French and Hobson, payable at 12 Months Sight to Miles Barber, Samuel Sandys, James Kendall and Andrew White, or order, accepted September 9<sup>th</sup> 1776, indorsed Miles Barber, Samuel Sandys, James Kendall and Andrew White; a foreign Bill for £435.10s.5d dated January 13<sup>th</sup> 1776, James Baillie and Co, on Simon Fraser, payable at 21 Months Sight, to Miles Barber and Co, or order, accepted April 13<sup>th</sup> 1776, indorsed Miles Barber and Co. Mr. Peale offered to pay £20 for the larger and £5 for the smaller Banknotes, and £30 for all the other Bills, or £5 for each Bill. This was not an inconsiderable reward for Bills which were stopped and difficult to negotiate.

The first batch of bills may relate to the subsequent voyage of the *Wilbraham* under James Penny to Bonny and Grenada in 1775,<sup>1</sup> but all clearly relate to payments received in the West Indies, almost certainly for slaves. The advertisement had the desired effect and two men, Henry Steel and Edward Carpenter, turned up on Miles Barber's doorstep, in Copthall Court, to claim the reward for the return of the pocket book. He directed them to an address in Henrietta Street, probably promising that his attorneys, Messrs Ward & Shaw, would deal with the matter of the reward. Instead he had them picked up by the Bow Street Runners. They appeared at the Bow Street Public Office on January 20<sup>th</sup> where Miles Barber accused them of being accessories to some person who stole them from his Counting House basing his accusations on the fact that they came directly to him, and not to the advertiser, and on some apparent contradictions in their account of how they came upon the pocket book.<sup>42,43</sup> They were supposed to have found it by chance in Mortgate or Moorfields. Nothing could be proved, one of the accused secured a character witness from a city gentleman, and the Bench had no option but to acquit. The press were not backward in coming forward to convey the impression that there was little doubt about their involvement. "*There was however, sufficient Reason to believe, that if these Men did not actually commit the Robbery, they were acquainted with, and employed by, the real Perpetrators of the Fact.*"<sup>42</sup>

The newspapers may well have been right for in October 1777 there were further developments when at the General Quarter Sessions, Guildhall, Ann

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Carpenter, Jeremiah Steel and Henry Steel were indicted for assaulting Charles Goldsmith.<sup>44</sup> *“An original Charge against the Defendants, upon an Affair of a criminal Nature, drew upon him their Resentment, which they excercised very heartily upon him. The Woman by his Description acted the perfect Virago, and indeed by her own Acknowledgement she belaboured the poor Fellow as lustily as a Pair of stout Hands could bestow a Drubbing. But in the Defence, the Prosecutors behaviour turned out to be far from unexceptionable, for he thrust his Head into the Defendant’s Window, and challenged them to an open Display of Abuse, which produced the violent Affray complained of. Carpenter, and Henry Steel were found guilty, and the other acquitted; the former received Judgement to be fined 1s. and to pay 39s. to the Prosecutor by way of Satisfaction for the Injury he had sustained; and when we consider that he was confined a Fortnight by the Blows, we cannot think he has met with any Prize in the Decision of his Cause, though considering his Degree in Life, he has no Reason to complain.”*

The reporter was in little doubt that they were all as thick as thieves. There is probably no reason to believe this influenced Miles Barber’s finances, still less that he was in any way involved. There was a perception of a rising tide of lawlessness in the country at this time, to which the appeal to the Bow Street Runners may be testimony enough. Nevertheless by the beginning of October 1777, Miles Barber had committed an act of bankruptcy for the second time.<sup>45</sup> His affairs were tangled and in November his Assignees called a meeting to discuss initiating legal action in pursuit of the assets of the business.<sup>46</sup> As a result the time for completing the deposition of his assets was enlarged for a further 49 days.<sup>47</sup> He became subject to three separate bankruptcy proceedings, his own, and in partnership with James Kendall and Andrew White, and also in partnership with Samuel Sandys, James Kendal and Andrew White.<sup>45</sup> In each case the time for deposition was enlarged to give time to sort out all the details of these interlocked ventures.<sup>47</sup> Miles Barber got his personal certificate in January of 1778,<sup>48</sup> but it was far from plain sailing to sort out his affairs and by May his creditors were meeting to consider submitting to arbitration the competing claims of the various assignees to each Commission of Bankruptcy.<sup>49</sup> Agreement was reached by November when the two estates of Miles Barber in partnership with Sandys, Kendall and White and that in partnership with Kendall and White were consolidated.<sup>50</sup> The web of debts involved was complex; they owed money to Thomas Hadley, gunsmith, of Birmingham, and Edward Bate of Liverpool and were owed money by various West India planters; efforts to sort all this out took years.<sup>51</sup>

Despite resolving their differences, further trouble loomed for the creditors when in March 1779 it emerged that the three Commissions of Bankruptcy could no longer be proved because Andrew Dickie, Miles Barber’s clerk, had disappeared.<sup>52</sup> The Commissioners placed an advertisement in the press stating that Andrew Dicke had until recently been a clerk in Barber’s Compting House at 33 Swithins Lane, London.

*“And there being great Reason to believe that the said Andrew Dickie absents himself, to avoid being served with the Summons of the said Commissioners, ...the said Andrew Dickie is hereby informed, that if he will attend at Mr. Winckley’s Chambers, No 4, Essex-court, Temple, in order that he may be served with such Summons, or if he will inform Mr. Winckley where he may be met with, for that*

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*Purpose, he will be handsomely rewarded. And notice is hereby given, that any Person giving Information ...where the said Andrew Dickie is, or may be found, ...such Person shall receive a reward of Five Guineas....”*

This held up proceedings against Barber and White and against Barber, Sandys and White until the end of June 1779.<sup>53</sup> It was not until the end of 1780 that the first dividend on these estates was paid<sup>54,55</sup> and not until October 1782 that certificates were granted.<sup>56</sup> Dividends continued to be paid until 1800.<sup>57</sup>

To make matters worse for the slave merchants the war with the American colonists took a more serious turn with the entry of the French in February 1778.<sup>58</sup> There followed a determined effort on both sides to pursue a mercantile war to destroy the enemy's trade. A House of Lords enquiry found 773 vessels had been destroyed or captured to a value of nearly £2 million.<sup>6</sup> Over 900 American vessels had also been taken to a similar value. By April 1778 John Paul Jones in the **Ranger** was cruising off the coast and Liverpool Council erected two shore batteries mounting 27 eighteen pounders to provide a spirited reception in the event of an attack on the port<sup>59</sup> as had happened at Whitehaven.<sup>60</sup>

In October 1778 the **Two Brothers**, 16 guns, Captain Ralph Fisher, owned by James and John Roberts, was on a cruise with the **Young Henry**, 18 guns, Captain Alex Currie, and according to Gomer Williams, owned by Messrs. Hartley & Co.<sup>6</sup> Alexander Currie, though no blood relation, was the brother-in-law of James Currie M.D. noted member of Liverpool's literati.<sup>61</sup> The records show the **Young Henry** was registered to Miles Barber,<sup>1</sup> thus Williams' attribution is curious, but could indicate that Hartley was acting for the Assignees during his bankruptcy. Both vessels were slavers operating under Letters of Marque and on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1778 they took into Spithead a deeply laden French East Indiaman, **La Gaston** out of Bengal. It was a valuable prize laden with 400 Bales of Muslin and White Bafts, 150 Tons of Saltpetre, 190 Bales of Cotton, 11 Pipes, 138 Half Pipes, 34 Bags of Sago, 4 Casks of Tortoise Shell, 40 Barrels of Coffee, 50,000 Billets of Ebony besides other packages of value.<sup>62</sup> The proceeds probably largely went to the Roberts brothers; Ralph Fisher was keen to play down the role played by the **Young Henry** in the capture. The **Young Henry** was later captured by the French on the African coast.<sup>63</sup>

By the end of May 1779 the French were reported to have captured Senegal.<sup>64</sup> Two 40 gun frigates were dispatched to attack James Fort which struck its colours on February 11<sup>th</sup>, “*being in no condition to repel even a sloop of war.*” Having captured numerous light draft vessels in the River Gambia the force sailed south with the intention of attacking and destroying the fortifications on Bance Island. The French squadron consisted of the **Resolve**, **Nymphe**, **Epervier**, and **Goree**.<sup>65</sup> In the fort they found, “*48 pieces of cannon, three mortars, different kinds of artillery and warlike stores.*” The **Goree** then went up the river, and took possession of all the English factories which the natives had not already destroyed. The French also took the islands of Tasso, Bobs, and Bance. At James Fort they took “*seventeen ships of various bulks in the harbour, laden with slaves, elephants teeth and other effects*”.

The ships taken were the **Juno**, “*sheathed with copper, of 14 guns, six pounders, and eight swivels,*” belonging to Samuel Sandys, Andrew White and Co.; the **Providence**, “*16 guns, six pounders, and four swivels,*” belonging to the Roberts brothers; the **Tom**, 12 guns, master James Colley, owned by James Clemens; the **Hereford**, six guns, belonging to Tarleton and Backhouse.<sup>1</sup> All were letters of

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marque. Also taken were, a 10 gun sloop, *Liberty*, an 18 gun brigantine *Edward and John*, and the cutters *Sally*, *Jenny*, and *Dolphin* whose ownership is unknown. The *Juno*, laden with 500 elephants teeth, dying wood, “and a chest of valuable effects,” was taken into l’Orient in France under the protection of the *Epervier*. The *Providence and Hereford*, laden with 500 slaves and assorted merchandise were sent to St. Domingo escorted by the *Nymphe*. The remaining vessels were destroyed.

By this time Samuel Sandys had lost three voyages *Molly*, *True Blue*, and *Juno* between 1775 and 1778, no doubt contributing in no small measure to his difficulties. In addition many of the forts on the coast, including the Isles de Loss, had been reduced by the French with, in some accounts, the involvement of Bostonians.<sup>66</sup> Interestingly both *Juno* and *Young Henry* were said by Gomer Williams to belong to Samuel Hartley, but both vessels were registered to Samuel Sandys and Miles Barber.<sup>1,6</sup> So by October 1779 the partnerships of Barber, Sandys, Kendall and White were all bankrupt, along with Sandys and Bate, iron mongers, and numerous of their suppliers. Miles Barber discharged his bankruptcy and re-entered the trade in 1783 but Sandys and White appear to have left the trade for good.

Following two successful trips to the African coast John and Thomas Hodgson’s vessel the *Two Brothers*, was fitted out for another voyage to Gambia and Jamaica in December of 1777, returning in April of 1779.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Sandys was no longer involved but his bankruptcy did not drag the Hodgson’s down with him. It was at this time that Samuel Hartley entered the trade in Liverpool. The years 1778 and 1779 went by without the Hodgson’s sending out a single slave ship but in January of 1780 the *Charlotte* was fitted out for a voyage to The Gambia which attracted investment from Samuel Hartley.<sup>1</sup> It appears that Hartley replaced Sandys as the backer and banker of both Hodgson and Barber. The Hodgson brothers did not make another voyage until February of 1782 again with the *Charlotte* bound for Gambia and Santo Domingo and again attracting investment from Hartley. Samuel Hartley on the other hand made about ten voyages before the end of the war.

The absence of Miles Barber from the shipping records between 1778 and 1783 is indicative of the constraints of his bankruptcy.<sup>1</sup> Hartley seems to have replaced Samuel Sandys as a major investor in the later voyages of Miles Barber following his bankruptcy and he began to invest in those of John and Thomas Hodgson. The involvement of Samuel Hartley in the slave trade from Liverpool is something of a conundrum. The firm of Hartley & Co feature prominently in Gomer Williams’ account as a major slave trading operation out of Liverpool in these years.<sup>6</sup> Between 1779 and 1790 he invested in at least seven of John & Thomas Hodgson’s voyages, there were seven or eight more voyages where he was the sole registered owner of the vessel and there were a handful more with other investors such as William Barrow and James Penny.<sup>1</sup> William Barrow was of a Lancaster family active in the slave trade.<sup>37</sup> However, Hartley was almost certainly a London financier and banker offering clearing house facilities, and thus the name of Hartley & Co appended to slave trading operations seems to hide more than it reveals. If Hartley is a London banker, who put the voyages together on the Liverpool docks?

***The French Connection.***

In September 1776 the American Continental Congress resolved to send representatives to France to seek financial and military assistance against the British Crown. To this end Benjamin Franklin, at the age of almost 70, and two other commissioners, were sent to Paris in December. Jacques Donatien, Le Ray de Chaumont, a French supporter of the United States, gave them use of a house in Passy. Franklin began negotiations with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Gravier, Le Comte de Vergennes, and treaties with France were signed in February 1778 guaranteeing substantial loans to the Americans as well as military assistance resulting in a French declaration of War on Britain.<sup>67</sup>

Let us now introduce one David Hartley (1732 –1813), the M.P. for Kingston upon Hull between 1774 and 1780, and elected again as an M.P. from 1782 to 1784. He was a radical and an associate of Charles James Fox. David Hartley made a reputation for himself as an opponent of the war with America and wrote *Letters on the American War*, published in 1778/79. Curiously, as it will come to seem, he was the first MP to move, in 1776, a resolution before the House of Commons condemning the slave trade; that "*the slave trade is contrary to the laws of God and the rights of men*". David Hartley M.P. was the son of another David Hartley, (1705-1757), who was a philosopher and considered to be the founder of the Associationist School of Psychology, but who made his way in the world practising as a physician. David Hartley the younger was the son of the elder David Hartley's first wife Alice Rowley who died in childbirth; David Hartley's second wife, Elizabeth Packer produced a half sister Mary and a half brother Wynchcombe Henry.<sup>38</sup> David Hartley the younger referred to Samuel Hartley as his cousin, the son of the elder David Hartley's brother. Samuel Hartley also had a brother Colonel James Hartley who served in India.<sup>68</sup> This is apparent from a letter that David Hartley wrote to Franklin in August 1785.<sup>69</sup> Franklin by then was returning to America and his vessel had called at Southampton. David Hartley was writing to express his regrets that he had missed seeing him.

*"My brother and sister desire to be most kindly remembered to you, as likewise my cousin, Mr. Samuel Hartley, whom you know, and his brother, Colonel James Hartley, desires to join, from his respect to your character, though he never had the pleasure of seeing you."*

Some years before, on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1778, Samuel Hartley had written to Benjamin Franklin in Paris.<sup>70</sup>

*"I am desired by my friend DH to forward you the enclosed Letter which I do thro' the hands of my Banker Mr. Veron. Should you have occasion to write our mutual friend under Cover you may address your Letter to my House under the firm of Messrs. Eyre & Hartley Negts. London. There is no doubt of its coming safe to my hand and you may rely upon my care and attention."*

Eyre and Hartley were merchants and bankers in London with international contacts, styling their business as negoceants. Eyre was undoubtedly the lawyer Francis Eyre who specialized in the affairs of the West Indian plantations and dealt in the conveyancing of West Indian properties and large country estates. He was for a time MP for Great Grimsby, Lincolnshire and died in 1797.<sup>71</sup> Samuel Hartley seems to have been acting as a convenient conduit for his cousin David to exchange views with Franklin.

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It is now necessary to introduce one Thomas Digges.<sup>72</sup> Thomas Digges was born in 1742 at Warburton Manor, a 1200-acre estate, on the Maryland shore of the Potomac River almost opposite the site of the future Mount Vernon. In his youth he spent time in Oxford and London. Before the American Revolutionary War he was employed as a shipping agent in London with contacts in Birmingham, Bristol, Lisbon and Bilbao. He was based in Lisbon from 1767 until 1774 when he returned to London. After the opening of hostilities he associated himself with American colonists who found themselves in England and helped to organize supplies to America through Lisbon.

In the summer of 1777 Mill Prison, Plymouth, and Forton Prison, Gosport were opened for the incarceration of captured American seamen. A meeting was held at Christmas, 1777, at the King's Arms Tavern in Cornhill,<sup>73</sup> *"for the Purpose of relieving the DISTRESSES of the AMERICAN PRISONERS."* A committee of twenty was appointed to administer the fund, including, four London aldermen, and a number of sympathizers with the American cause, such as Benjamin Vaughan and William Hodgson (no relation to Thomas Hodgson), and two Marylanders, *"Mr. Matthew Ridley and Thomas Digges, Esq."* Within a couple of weeks over £3,700, had been raised and among the subscribers were, Samuel Hartley (5 gns), David and Wynchcombe Hartley (10 gns each), the Marquis of Rockingham (100gns) and the Earl of Shelbourne (£100).<sup>74</sup>

It was perhaps through the relief committee that Digges met David Hartley. Digges distributed the assistance from the relief committee to the prisoners and additionally, at some personal peril, provided money to escaping sailors. For these activities he drew on Franklin for funds. Later he seems, through necessity, to have drawn on these funds for his own support and by April of 1781 Franklin was warning friends and sympathizers of his unreliability.<sup>75</sup> In the spring of 1779 Digges became involved with a peace plan developed by Hartley and traveled to Paris to visit Franklin.<sup>76</sup> Significantly on May 3<sup>rd</sup> of that year Digges took the Oath of Allegiance to the United States.<sup>77</sup> However, nothing came of these peace proposals and Digges continued to assist the American prisoners and escapees, assisted by Presbyterian ministers in both Portsmouth and Plymouth.

By the time we next here of Samuel Hartley in the context of Franklin's Embassy to Paris the French had entered the war. Up until this point there existed a feeling among the British authorities that the privateers and merchants were making poor efforts to go after the Americans and were deliberately surrendering their vessels to American privateers. They may have had a point, these after all were their trading partners, Britons, like themselves. But now there was very real fear of invasion with the fleet blockaded in Portsmouth,<sup>78</sup> and there had been American corsairs such as John Paul Jones active on the British coast. On the other side, life was being made very uncomfortable for American sympathizers in Britain. Captain Hutchins of the 60<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot and Engineers was arrested for treasonable correspondence with the enemy including Franklin at Passy and Wharton in Nantes.<sup>79</sup> As a result Digges began to keep his papers<sup>80</sup> *"in a safe and distant quarter"* but his activities continued; providing relief to the American prisoners of war, which was now becoming much more difficult, and developing schemes to send supplies to America. He colluded with Franklin to disguise shipments of freight to America and arranged for several vessels (six or more) to clear England

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with supplies for the Continental Army on passports issued by Franklin.<sup>81</sup> One of these was the *Penelope*, Isaac Cazneau, which cleared from Liverpool. He also involved himself in the difficult prisoner exchanges by Cartel, in which the British caviled at treating with “rebels”. In a letter to Franklin in January 1780 Thomas Digges first of all discussed the means to better keep their correspondence concealed from the prying eyes of the British authorities,<sup>82</sup>

*“I wish to have some other name than that of Franklin to direct to, & put under cover to Monsr. Grand; as it will pass better in the Post Office, & be more secure in point of my personal safety—in one of my late letters I mentiond that of B. Forbes, as a name which might be usd whenever I had any thing to say by Common post: as Capn. H——ns arrest brought on me much trouble, I am warnd by that, & other hostile appearances here, to be as cautious as possible. I have never yet faild in getting safely any Letter directed as the last from Mr Franklin Jur. Mr. W. Singleton Church Nandos Coffee House London, where I get a friend to take them up as Mr. Church; if made up in the common small manner the better.”*

Digges went on to introduce the bearer of his letter to Franklin and his connection with the American sympathiser, David Hartley.

*“This will be given you by Mr. Barber, who will return to Londn in a very few days & bear any thing safely from you. He is concernd with Mr. Saml Hartley in the African & Wt India Trade, & goes to Paris on some secret merchantile Business, which will be handed to Monsieur Sartine, & which will be best explaind by himself. S. Hartley is the Relation of & in close connexion with our honest friend David; He is a deserving man, & I hope from the circuitous trade He is upon with France & their West Indies, He will be a useful one to our Country; I therefore give Mr Barber a seperate introductory Letter to You, for any aid that you may have in your power to give to his scheme.”*

So, despite the restrictions of his 2<sup>nd</sup> bankruptcy and his absence from the shipping records, Miles Barber has teamed up with Samuel Hartley in some way. It seems they were involved in negotiations with the French Court for the supply of slaves; no doubt in pursuit of the contracts Barber held. The remainder of Digges letter to Franklin discussed the delays to the Cartel prisoner exchanges, and lamented at the expense of spiriting several escaped ship’s captains back to America, via Amsterdam. He also discussed the purchase and shipping, to Franklin’s nephew in Paris, of a complete set of maps of the British Isles and a crate of books including the most recent parliamentary and annual registers. It is surprising that Miles Barber, an associate of Samuel Hartley, the cousin of Franklin’s correspondent David Hartley, should require an introduction from Thomas Digges. However, the sensational nature of what Digges tells Franklin about Messrs Barber and Hartley’s activities may be explanation enough.<sup>83</sup>

*“My Friend Mr Barber, the Bearer hereof... takes a journey to Paris on some Commercial Business, in which He is connected with Mr Saml Hartley ... and which must lead to the attendance on some Men in power at your Court— This business will be best explaind by Himself; and I am a supplicant to you Sir for what aid and assistance you can give Mr. Barber in the prosecution of His plan.*

*His political sentiments, as well as those of Mr Saml Hartley, will not displease you; I have experiencd on many occasions Their willingness to oblige Us, and I am sure any scheme They may be upon will not be unbeneficial to our*

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*Country; I therefore beg leave to recommend Mr Barber to your usual civility and attention...*"

Digges was clearly informing Franklin that Hartley and Barber were American sympathisers, who had been helpful to the American cause. Digges did not spell out the nature of this help; it may simply have been help with the relief of American prisoners. It sounds like a great deal more, could they have been assisting in the spiriting of American prisoners out of the country? Could they have been secretly assisting in breaking the British embargo on supplying the Americans? It is far from clear. Barber, Franklin is told, has travelled to Paris in furtherance of "some *secret merchantile business*" and is to attend on some "men in power at court". This business, whatever it was, involved M. Sartine, and in some way Franklin has it in his power to aid and assist "in the prosecution of his plan".

Antoine de Sartine, Le Comte d'Alby, was a minister of state who served as Lieutenant General of the Paris Police (1759-1774) under Louis XV.<sup>84</sup> Responsible for the secret police, and for publishing and censorship, he had been one of the most prolific fillers of the Bastille with political prisoners using lettres de cachet. Under King Louis XVI he was appointed Secretary of State for the Navy (1774-1780). He was responsible for the improvements to the French navy, which helped defeat the British during the American War of Independence. He increased the Navy budget fourfold and built nine ships of the line in a single year. Later the finance minister Necker accused Sartine of grossly exceeding the Navy budget and adding to the woes of an already almost bankrupt state. He was dismissed by Louis XVI in October 1780.

Miles Barber also delivered letters from David Hartley to Franklin which concerned first, that he had heard nothing from Franklin for several months and second, his ideas for a truce between Great Britain and the colonists. Hartley speculated about reports that Mr Adams was coming to Europe to open negotiations with the British government. Finally Hartley enclosed a note from the Board of Sick and Hurt to illustrate where the negotiations on the exchange of prisoners of war had become bogged down.<sup>86,87,88</sup> Digges added yet another letter to Franklin dated January 11<sup>th</sup> 1780 to be delivered by Miles Barber. It gave the latest news on the prisoner exchanges and the Cartel Ships carrying British prisoners for exchange and in particular requested a favour for Samuel Hartley, in which Miles Barber was very intimately concerned.<sup>88</sup>

*"Mr Barber the Bearer of this & several other letters to you which was given Him yesterday, has been good enough to wait a day, for the good tidings I expected to forward relative to the Compliance of the Admiralty with the terms of the two Cartel Ships which came lately from Boston...*

*If you have it in your power, It would very much oblige our friend Mr Hartley, to get releasd or put into forwardance for the first Exchange by Cartel, a Captain and mate of His taken & carryd into Brest by the Renommé French Frigate they are probably at Dinant & their description are Capt. Colley of the Brigantine **David** & His Lieut Mr. Powel. Mr. Barber can more particularly describe them to you."*

In early February 1780 Franklin used Miles Barber to return letters to David Hartley and the London Merchant William Hodgson concerning the prisoner exchanges and Cartel ships.<sup>89,90</sup> Whatever Miles Barber's business with Sartine it took almost a month to complete. Little is known about the Brigantine *David*,

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Captain Colley and First Mate Powell except that the vessel itself was a French Prize and that the report was very current and the reason his request was added at the very last minute.<sup>1</sup> A press report for January 11<sup>th</sup> 1780 simply stated,

*“The Davy, Colly (late French) is taken by the Renommé French Frigate and carried into Brest after a close engagement of upwards of two hours.”*<sup>91</sup>

The *Renommé* was probably returning from St Domingo and Guadeloupe having sailed from La Rochelle in convoy with transports and supply vessels to strengthen the French West Indian garrisons there in February 1779.<sup>92</sup> At about this time, Samuel Hartley, and other Liverpool slavers, had a number of vessels run into trouble with the French.<sup>6</sup> The *Juno*, Captain Beaver, was taken along with two more Liverpool vessels, the *Hereford*, Captain Harrison, and the *Providence*, Captain Colley on the African coast. According to Williams, *Juno*, a vessel of 90 tons burthen, 14 guns, and 40 men, belonged to Messrs. Hartley & Co.

The *Juno* left Liverpool in September 1778 registered to Sandys and White who were bankrupt and the registration of the owners is different from that given by Williams.<sup>6</sup> In September 1781 Hartley’s vessel the *Charlotte*, Capt. Doughty, was captured by the *Franklin* privateer and plundered of its bags of cotton and stores and then ransomed to bring home the crew.

In reply to Digges, Franklin mentioned a second Captain whose release he had managed to procure.<sup>93</sup> *“Capt Cunningham is gone with Comm. Jones, on a Cruise. I procured the Discharge of Mr. Hartleys Captain Stephenson.”* Franklin acted very quickly to intervene and release members of the crew of the *David*, who were on the very next Cartel vessel out of Morlaix, and it did not go unnoticed in the press.<sup>94</sup>

*“Two cartel vessels, with English prisoners, have lately arrived from France; although there appears great readiness in the French to hasten forward the exchange of prisoners as fast as possible, in order to lighten the pains of captivity, ... The two vessels lately arrived at Gosport from Morlaix, bring over several hundred English prisoners, and they are indiscriminately shipped, without any attention to priority of capture. In the ship arrived last, there is a remarkable instance of the quickness of return to England of the officers and crew of the David privateer. This vessel was taken by two frigates, and carried into Brest, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December; they were only four days confined, and then sent to Morlaix, from which place they arrived at Gosport on the 15<sup>th</sup> instant.”*

In February Franklin issued two passports to Miles Barber and Barber had obtained two similar passports from Louis XVI.<sup>95</sup>

*“Two Passports nearly the same as the foregoing were given to Mr. Barber, the 13 Feb. 80. He having obtain’d the like from his most Catholic Majesty.”*

The details of these passports are unknown but Digges referred to *“the circuitous trade He is upon with France & their West Indies.”* This implies that Barber was trading with the French West India Islands in fulfilment of his contract with the French to supply slaves, for which he obtained a dispensation from the British Parliament, and for which he was paid a bounty by the French King. It looks as though Barber and Hartley were supplying slaves in British bottoms, with passports from both the American Plenipotentiary and the French King, effectively guaranteeing their safety from attack from all the belligerents. A British naval vessel or privateer coming across one of these ships on the high seas would find they were British. American or French vessels would find they had passports which ordered them to be left unmolested. No doubt what was good for the King of France was

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good for the alliance, and good for the United States. It was certainly good for Miles Barber and Samuel Hartley on the face of it.

It was not until August 1780 that Thomas Digges next used Messrs Barber and Hartley to get a letter to Franklin in Passy.<sup>96</sup> In the letter Digges mentioned some porcelain portraits of Washington and Franklin that had been despatched to him, though he feared that Franklin's had been broken as they seemed to be missing. He next referred to some skulduggery by one James Barnett who had fraudulently duped Digges and other American sympathisers into giving him cash. He then mentioned to Franklin how the letter was being forwarded to him,

*"This will be carryd abroad and put in the Post at Ostend by Mr. Saml H—tl—y whom I wrote you relative to Capt Cm & who offerd you the Jama Spirit. He is a considerable mercht. of this place & a uniform friend to the cause of our Country. He goes to Holland & thence to Paris on similar business to that Mr. Barber was some time ago upon. He takes Mrs Hy abroad with Him & they will wait upon you if they visit Paris."*

Digges' reference to Capt. Cm. was to Captain Coyningham, an American corsair. Samuel Hartley also carried a letter of introduction to John Adams, also at Passy with Franklin, written by David Hartley on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August.<sup>97</sup>

*"I take the liberty to introduce to your acquaintance my friend and relation, Mr Samuel Hartley. Some business carries him to Paris and he is desirous of that opportunity to be made known to you. ... All my political thoughts and views are comprised in that one word, - peace. I understand that it is the object of your appointment, and a most honourable one it is."*

Hartley seems to have been pursuing the negotiations with the French begun by Miles Barber. Perhaps they planned further voyages for which more passports would be needed. Hartley had sent Franklin a quantity of rum, which he had lying at Dunquerque. Why Hartley should have rum at Dunquerque in time of war is unclear. The rum may not have been much use to him if he was not able to safely get it out and so he could freely offer it to Franklin to oil the diplomatic process. However, it is not impossible that Barber was operating vessels out of French ports. Later Franklin would politely refuse a second consignment as he had hardly consumed the first when the second offer was made.<sup>98</sup>

Digges then told Franklin about a scheme he had hatched with Hartley to try to get the notorious and, by the British, much reviled American privateer Gustavus Coyningham released. He had written to Franklin in June on the same subject.<sup>99</sup>

*"I mentioned to Mr S. Hy Your thanks for a second offer of some Jama Rum, & your readiness to make him some acceptable return. I put in as from you, a hint for the release of Captain Cm, who has been again taken & about this period is expected to arrive at Dartmo in a privateer which Mr Hy partly owns. I told Him one good turn deserves another, & that you had by my recommendation got releasd from a french goal one of His own Captains about a year ago & for which He was very thankful. If Mr. Hys letter gets to Dartmo in time for the Captain of the Privateer before Capt. Cm is committed, I hope he will be releasd in consequence, but I fear if it gets to hand after Commitment, there will be no hopes of liberating Him his name being so offensive."*

In the same letter Digges painted a picture of the air of unreality pervading the country. David Hartley was apparently very despondent about the prospects for

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peace and Digges implied he favoured independence but the mood in Britain was belligerent.

*“So far from our wise heads thinking about, nothing but the extreem reverse is now talkd of. Since the affair of Chas. Town nothing but unconditional submission is talkd of. I do assure you Sir the great folks here look as much now upon America being in their power as they did the first day General Gage was sent to Boston. Nothing can exceed the infatuation. They look upon No Caroa. and Virga. as already theirs, that Maryland must follow, & they give out with confidence they have a considerable body of the people in Connecticut now in Arms for England. Since the quelling of the late Riots & Insurrections, & restord a little peace and order to a Capital that was for five whole days in possession of a Mob, they Think they can subdue the whole world. They Brag still of being masters of the Sea in the West Indies, (I dare say they will next claim a dominion over the air) That Rodney will infallably intercept & ruin the Spanish fleet, that Tearney's Squadrn. is a sure & easy prey to Adml Graves, & that the Channel fleet is to shut up the port of Brest & keep the Spanish fleet from again joining &c. &c. This is not only the language, but seemingly the firm beleif of the Court, the Ministry, & their out Runners; The flame has spread in the City, & many thinking people are led to a beleif of it & are actually purchasing pell-mell in the Stocks, which have risen upwards of five pr. Cent lately. There is no standing against the present torrent of folly & I lean towards it in order to make my exultation the greater when some future day of gloom & sorrow may turn up. We may expect great & important news both from Ama & the Wi Indies in a few days; If it does not turn up different from what is generally, nay almost universally, expected here I shall be very much deceivd.*

The Riots and Insurrections that Digges referred to were the Gordon Riots and Coyningham was a small but considerably annoying thorn in the side of the British during the early stages of the war up until the time of Digges letter. 1775 found him in command of the Brig, **Charming Peggy**, a merchant vessel operated by Cunningham and Nesbitt in Philadelphia. Under orders of the Continental Congress to purchase "powder, saltpeter, arms, medicines, and everything necessary for War" his vessel was captured. The crew retook the ship and put into Holland where the vessel was seized. Franklin awarded Cunningham a commission in the Continental Navy in March of 1777. Sailing out of Dunkirk in the **Surprise**, which he, and an American Agent named William Hodge, had purchased, he took two British prizes. Under protest from the British, the French, who had not yet entered the war, impounded the vessels. Cunningham next obtained the 14-gun cutter **Greyhound**, in which he cruised British waters capturing or destroying 20 vessels. Whilst sailing out of Spain he captured a neutral vessel from Sweden. He was expelled and took to prowling the Carribean taking 5 more prizes. The Continental Congress seized his vessel for the infringements of international law and his failure to pay his crew. However, Cunningham and Nesbitt re-purchased the vessel and returned his command, but he fell prey to a British Frigate and was returned to Britain in irons.<sup>100</sup>

Cunningham landed at Falmouth in June of 1779 aboard the **Grantham Packet** and was conveyed in heavy irons to Pendennis Castle where he spent the next few weeks.<sup>101</sup> A petition to the Board of Sick and Hurt got his irons removed and a transfer to the Mill prison in Plymouth.<sup>102</sup> On November 5th 1779 Cunningham, along with upwards of thirty other American prisoners, escaped from the Mill prison by undermining the wall.<sup>103</sup> By the 20<sup>th</sup>, assisted in his escape by Digges,

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Cunningham was sighted on the Amsterdam Exchange along with John Paul Jones.<sup>104</sup> However, instead of sailing with Jones' squadron he returned to Paris and it was supposed he would join the squadron at Brest.<sup>105</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1780 Jones, in the *Alliance*, 18 guns, arrived in Corunna, accompanied by Cunningham<sup>106</sup> and by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February they were reported to be at Alicante.<sup>107</sup> However news from Dartmouth in early April reported;

*“The Admiral Edwards privateer, of this port, Captain Mardon, has taken and brought in a Spanish packet, from the Havannah to Spain. Also the St Anna Experiment, from Corunna to Virginia, laden with salt, wine and bale goods; on board which was Captain Cunningham, and ten other Captains, going passengers for America.”*<sup>108</sup>

Digges, saw the report and passed the news on to Franklin.<sup>96</sup> It seems that Hartley was operating at least one privateer, possibly out of Dartmouth, about which not much is known. In Thomas Digges' August letter he explained to Franklin the scheme he has hatched to have Cunningham released by the vessel's owners before he falls into Admiralty hands. However the plan has come to nought.

*“I had laid a scheme conjointly with Mr. H (who owns part of the Ship wch took Capn. Cm) to get Capn C releasd in consequence of Your having got two of Mr Hys Captains liberated in France. The proper letters were written to the other owners at Dartmo, but it was Capn Cms fate to be recommitted & put in the Black hole before our letters could get to hand.”*

Digges then discussed the lack of concrete news from America, and his belief that matters would be decided in the West Indies and that the current armed neutrality would bring an end to Britain's Dominion of the Sea.<sup>96</sup> Cunningham spent the rest of the war in prison but not for want of resistance.<sup>109</sup>

*“On Sunday night several American Prisoners escaped from the Mill-Prison in this Neighbourhood, among whom was the well known Capt. Cunningham, taken only about 2 months ago; they were luckily stopped Yesterday Morning, on the Point of setting-off in a Post-Chaise for Exeter, and safely lodged in the Black-Hole, where Mr Cunningham's Golden Key, which he has twice successfully made use of, will probably be of no further Avail.”*

And so it was that Samuel Hartley travelled to Ostende in August 1780, and there placed Thomas Digges' letter in the post for Franklin and made his way via Amsterdam to Paris accompanied by his wife Charlotte. By October he was in Paris, staying at the Hotel Louis XVI, as the acceptance of an invitation from Franklin shows; and he is indisputably in town *“on similar business to that Mr. Barber was some time ago upon.”*<sup>96</sup>

*“Hotel de Louis seize Wednesday 4th Octr 1780  
Mr & Mrs Hartley & Mr Batley present their respectfull compliments to Dr Franklin—they will do themselves the honour of accepting his kind invitation on Fryday next.”*<sup>110</sup>

At just this time an announcement appeared in the press showing what the shipping records do not, the nature of the involvement between John and Thomas Hodgson and Samuel Hartley.<sup>111</sup> It appears that James Penny, a young but highly experienced slave ship captain, and former factor on the African coast, had had his pocket picked.

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*“LOST, or Pick’d out of a Gentleman’s Pocket Book, in Liverpool, the 15<sup>th</sup> Ins., September, A BILL, drawn at Liverpool, August 5<sup>th</sup>, two months after Date, by John and Thomas Hodgson, on Samuel Hartley & Co, London, In favour of James Penny, value 103l. 12s. 6d.”*

Although the bill looks like payment for a Captain’s services and commission, there is no record of Penny working for the Hodgsons. Penny sailed many voyages for the various firms in which Miles Barber was involved and some for Samuel Hartley.<sup>1</sup> His last voyages as Captain seem to have been in 1781 and 1783 for Samuel Hartley in the *Carolina* and the *Comte du Nord* and his first as owner left Liverpool in April 1780. The latter was the *James*, Captain Ralph Fisher, and was owned jointly by Hartley and Penny. The question arises as to who put together the banker Samuel Hartley’s voyages in Liverpool; was it Miles Barber? However Barber seems to have been based in the City of London. Is it possible that the Hodgsons organised these voyages in Liverpool under contract to Barber and Hartley? The official records, as with the question of chartered vessels, are of little help and the attribution of voyages to Hartley and Co. seems to conceal more than it reveals.

Almost a year later David Hartley, now no longer a member of parliament, but with his brother Wynchcombe Henry Hartley still a member, wrote to Franklin proposing a visit, to discuss prospects of an accommodation between Britain and America. He had been spurred to the thought by his cousin Samuel proposing that he accompany him to Paris *“upon some mercantile business.”*<sup>114</sup>

*“...it has occurred both to him and to me that I shd like very well to accompany him. However I think it best to inform you of this, that I may know whether it wd be proper for me to come to Paris in the present situation of things. I wd not do any thing secretly or unbecoming my situation in life. .... I wd not wish to go to Paris without the knowledge of the ministers in France, but if with their consent it wd make me extremely happy to see you as an old friend whom I love and esteem, and with whom I shd be glad to converse, & if possible to think of some means of putting a Stop to the horrors of universal wars ...”*

It seems puzzling that David Hartley is concerned about the proper form for his unofficial visit and yet gives no hint that his cousin’s business is anything other than completely above board. In any event, Franklin, having communicated with the Comte de Vergennes, put him off, considering that unless his visit was an official one, authorised by ministers of the crown, it might be a cause of inconvenient speculation.<sup>113</sup>

David Hartley may already have given up on the prospects for this visit and so perhaps Samuel also changed his mind. However he may have been unwell as a subsequent letter perhaps hints.<sup>114</sup> In the event it was Miles Barber who travelled to Paris in July 1781 carrying a letter of introduction written by Samuel Hartley to Benjamin Franklin’s grandson William Temple Franklin, whom he had probably met on his visit the year before.<sup>115</sup>

*“It is with great deference I take the liberty of introducing to you my friend Mr Barber, who makes a journey to Paris upon some important business in which I am deeply interested—It is of a Nature that will require the Countenance & Justice of your Grandfather. ....*

*My solicitations in the business Mr Barber will with your permission explain, go only to arrest of Judgement till I can have the honor of laying before His*

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*Excellency, the authentic Documents upon which final Judgement must decide—It is therefore a principal object of Mr Barber to learn in what Stage the Business is, & to make formal applications to produce evidence of our having in all things conformed to the rules prescribed by the Ministers of France & America — In the injury done as their united Commands have been violated — The Policy & Justice of France I trust will join in restoring to the owners their property. Which at present is detained by the officers in power at St Domingo — Appealing to the Court of France & the Minister of the United States of America.”*

Miles Barber then was travelling to Paris to pursue the matter of some of their property detained in St Domingo in violation of the passports issued to them the previous year by Franklin and the French King. He returned to England with a reply to Hartley from William Temple Franklin.<sup>116</sup>

*“I received the Letter you did me the honor of writing to me on the 3d Inst. by Mr. Barber; It was with pleasure I received my acquaintance with that Gentleman, but could have wish'd the object of his coming here had been of a more agreeable Nature. The immediate return of Mr. Barber, makes it unnecessary for me to acquaint you with the Situation of the Affair in this Country, he will fully inform you thereof. —Permit me to assure you that you may rely on every Exertion of my Grandfathers, for your obtaining ample, & speedy Justice.”*

Hartley replied to Franklin's nephew in August.<sup>116</sup> *“By M Barber I have the honor of your Letter of the 17th Ult. He likewise communicates to me the very polite & friendly reception that was given him at Passy, & the situation He found the business in, that was the object of his journey.*

*I feel myself under the highest obligations for the part you have taken. May I request you to present my respectfull thanks to your Grandfather for the perticular trouble He has given himself to investigate our Complaint. Our Cause founded in Justice will I hope meet with no great obstacles. Every new Circumstance & information that arrises must be collateral evidence in our favor.*

*I beg leave to trouble you with the Copy of two Letters which were wrote to one of the Parties in this business from a House of great Credit at St Domingo. — We have sent the like to Mr. Perrein the Council. We are pretty certain the Money is not [divided.]*

*I should have had the honor of enclosing these Letters sooner to you but I have been a little indisposed since Mr Barbers return & am now at Margate for the benefit of Sea bathing—this place affords no News.”*

From the evidence of Franklin's correspondence, Barber and Hartley, following Miles Barbers first visit, obtained two passports for two vessels from both the Americans and the French in February of 1780. Hartley re-visited Amsterdam and Paris in company with his wife in August of that year. The invitation to dine with Franklin in October is probably part of that visit. This was about the same business as Miles Barber had been on in February. It is not clear whether further passports were issued, but probably they were. By the summer of 1781, when Miles Barber again returned to Paris, the nature of the business had changed. Something had gone awry. One or more of the vessels for which passports had been issued had been, as Hartley and Barber saw it, and with whom Franklin's nephew seems to agree, illegally detained by the French colonial government in St. Domingo. It seems that a commercial house in St Domingo had sold their property but the

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proceeds had not yet been distributed and they held some hopes that they could recover the value of their property by government intervention or through the French courts. All of these negotiations were conducted in great secrecy as befits a highly duplicitous affair.

Over this period Hartley operated several slaving voyages. The *Blossom*, Capt Wm. Doyle, left Liverpool in May 1779 and on the voyage to Africa captured the snow *Chamont* bound from Carolina to Nantz carrying tobacco, naval stores and indigo which was taken into Liverpool in August 1779.<sup>117</sup> The *Blossom* was later sold on the coast of Africa. The *Charlotte*, Captain Doughty, jointly owned with the John and Thomas Hodgson left Liverpool in January 1780 bound for Bassa and Tortola but was plundered by the *Franklin* privateer of 21 bags of cotton and all her stores. The vessel was released to return the crew.<sup>118</sup> On a subsequent voyage to Africa under Captain Forrester she was captured in October bound for Guinea by the *Harlequin* privateer but later retaken by His Majesty's cutter *Griffin* and brought back into Liverpool.<sup>119</sup> The *James*, jointly owned with James Penny, left Liverpool at the end of April 1780 to deliver slaves in St Kitts, and returned to Liverpool in April of 1781 bringing in a prize that had been bound for Corunna from Boston.<sup>120</sup>

*Two Brothers*, but not the vessel of the same name owned by the Hodgsons, left Liverpool in early June 1780 for the Isles de Loss but its subsequent fate is unknown. Perhaps this was the vessel that was tied up in St Domingue. However Hartley also operated the *Susannah* and the *Nelly* out of St Kitts in April and June 1781 in conjunction with William Barrow of St Kitts. In 1781 Hartley operated the *Pidgeon* out of London in September and the *Carolina* out of Liverpool in October. After the return of the *Two Brothers* in April 1779 the Hodgson's operated the *Charlotte* on two voyages with Hartley in 1780 and again in 1782.<sup>1</sup>

### *Of Privateers*

Whatever succor Harley and Barber were giving the Americans and their French allies, and profiting thereby, they did not neglect the possibility of profit from fitting out privateers against them as shown by their capture of the vessel taking Cunningham to America. In April 1777 the British Government announced the issue of Letters of Marque against American vessels. There was little enthusiasm among the Liverpool merchants for fitting out privateers against Americans; their recent customers and trading partners.<sup>6</sup> The press did not mince its words about their activities and went so far as to suggest that such prizes as the Americans were taking were being sailed to specified locations where they deliberately allowed themselves to be taken as a means of continuing their former trade with America.

There were also more than a few clandestine voyages, put together out of Lisbon and elsewhere, to facilitate the American trade. America was in dire need of even the most basic necessities, quite apart from war materiel, in order to field an effective continental army.<sup>121</sup> Once the Spanish and French joined the war the attitude of the Liverpool merchants changed and numerous privateers were quickly fitted out. The traditional enemies seem to have been considered fair game, rich game at that, and there was little danger of trampling on former trading relationships. Over 120 vessels were fitted out in Liverpool between the end of

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August 1778 and April 1779 tempted by the promise of riches.<sup>6</sup> The House of Lords estimated that by February of 1778 both sides had captured prizes to the tune of nearly £2million pounds.<sup>122</sup> The cost of imported goods advanced by leaps and bounds and along with it the value of the contents of the holds of captured vessels. Tobacco rose from 7½d to 2/6 per pound and pitch from 8s to 35s.<sup>123</sup> It was about this time that the Rev. John Yates, Unitarian minister in Liverpool's Kaye Street chapel, was supposed to have made a killing in tobacco.<sup>124</sup> Rumour had it that when no tobacco entered the port of Liverpool between May and December 1776 he was able to off load a considerable quantity himself, whether this meant that he was involved in privateering is not known. However, it is certain that many Liverpool men, and men with Lancaster connections, profited mightily from this conflict amongst whom the Hodgsons, the Gregsons and the Rawlinsons may almost certainly be included.

Once Letters of Marque began to be issued privateering activities grew rapidly. By the end of September 1778 Williamson's Advertiser published a list of 18 privateers fitted out in Liverpool to join numerous Letters of Marque by which prizes worth £100,000 had been brought in.<sup>6</sup>

Williams reported the involvement of one of Hartley's vessels, the **Young Henry**, Captain Alex Currie, the brother-in-law of James Currie. According to the registers it was owned by Miles Barber rather than Hartley & Co. but there seems little reason to doubt Williams version since a contemporary letter by Ralph Fisher, the Master, to the owners of the **Two Brothers**'s, given by him, makes the matter of ownership clear.<sup>6</sup> Ralph Fisher described how, in late September, in the company of the **Young Henry** they took a French East Indiaman, **La Gaston**, in Latitude 47.28N, Longitude 10.30W. Spotting two vessels to the SSW they gave chase. The **Two Brothers** overhauled the westernmost ship and after a couple of broadsides which cleared the decks she struck. Crewing her from the **Henry** and the **Brothers** they took her into Portsmouth. On board was a French General who told Fisher the vessel was worth 2 million livres, Fisher concluded; *"I think she is worth more. I beg you will write to me by return of post, to the care of the postmaster at Portsmouth; but I think one of you coming yourselves post would be requisite; I wish you would. We have sent off express to Mr Hartley."*

Callow, Fisher's Mate aboard the **Two Brothers**, would sail as a Captain for Ralph Fisher as he advanced to ownership of the **Nanny** slave vessel in 1783. Perhaps Fisher's three voyages with the Roberts brothers and the proceeds of this prize assisted his progress. However, John Roberts himself went bankrupt in 1783. Ownership of the **Two Brothers** had by then been transferred to Hartley to sail under Captain Sheppard in 1780.<sup>1</sup>

On July 10<sup>th</sup> 1779 the Morning Chronicle announced;<sup>125</sup> *"The Amazon privateer arrived at Liverpool, with a large prize brig from St Domingo, bound to France, laden with sugar, coffee, cotton, indigo &c."*

There was an inevitable delay before the Court of Admiralty could condemn the prizes and apportion the proceeds to the parties involved and it was not until March of the following year that the contents of the **Signora de Boa Viagen**, were auctioned at George's Coffee House in Liverpool along with the vessel.<sup>126</sup> The prize goods consisted of; 199 Bags Cotton, 100 Pipes Oil, 80 Bundles Sarsaparilla, 14 tons Rosewood, 4 tons Tulip, 16 tons Brazil Wood, 5 Casks Wine, 2 Chests Sugar, 1

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chest Ipecacuana, 1 Cask Ivory, 4 Cannisters Chocolate, 1 Bags Coffee and 1 Piano Forte.

Adjacent to this announcement was the sale of captured tobacco from the Snow *St Estevan* bound from Orinoco to Cadiz taken by the notorious slave-ship *Vulture*, Captain Allanson, belonging to William Boats – so named because he had been found, a waif in a boat. This was taken in August 1779. In April of the same year the *Vulture* took the *St Cyprian*, 400 tons, bound from Martinique to Bordeaux and in 1782 the *Vulture* captured two more vessels whilst inbound from Jamaica. The sale from the *St Estevan* consisted of 14,000 rolls of Fine Oronoque, Vircenar or Cannister Tobacco. Each roll was described as, being from 12 to 17 lb, in fine order and prime quality, in small lots, for home consumption, and exportation, admitted on the plantation duties. There were also about 150 Sarons Cocoa, 510 Hides, and sundry other goods. Immediately after the sale the Snow *St Estevan*, burthen 250 tons, was sold. The sale took place at William Rathbone's Warehouse, in Salt-House Dock.

On September 11 1779 a privateer of Bristol and a Letter of Marque from Liverpool were reported to have taken an unusually rich prize. It had previously been spotted by some returning East-Indiamen and allowed to pass unmolested, as they were unaware that a state of war existed between the Britain and Spain, having been at sea many months on their way from the Indies.<sup>127</sup> The *Ranger* privateer of Bristol, 14 six pounders, and 80 men, and the *Amazon* letter of marque of Liverpool, 14 four pounders, and 36 men, were cruising in company and fell in with a Spanish ship called the St. Agnes, Don Ferdinand Rononso master, bound from the Manillas to Cadiz. According to early reports she mounted 32 guns, carried 147 men and was 128ft in the keel, almost as long as a first rate and estimated to be worth £200,000. She was immediately recognised as a Manillaman from the height of her quarterdeck and was engaged on each side. The shot of the *Amazon* would not penetrate the hull but those of the privateer went through with ease. The crew of the Spaniard were driven from their guns by grape shot but shortly afterwards the quarter deck blew up from gunpowder taking fire and many were killed. The engagement was continued with full force until the Spaniards hauled down their colours.

37 were killed in the initial engagement, 42 when the quarter-deck blew up, and 27 more were wounded, so that only 41 crew were left out of 147 by the time she struck. She was taken into Corke by the privateers, the crews of which were said to be likely to receive £1000 each in prize money; more than had ever before been received for a single prize taken by an English vessel. The prize, whose value was a matter for considerable speculation reaching as high as £400,000, joined the valuable East India vessels in Cork that had first sighted the Manilla ship.<sup>128</sup> There they awaited an Admiralty escort into the Downs. Some reports suggested they were in the Shannon at Limerick but most settled on Cork.<sup>129</sup> The *Amazon* meanwhile returned to Hoylake in the mouth of the River Dee. One report suggested there was disagreement as to who was responsible for the capture, a matter that would be significant in determining the distribution of the spoils.<sup>130</sup> It would also lengthen the time taken for their distribution.

A few days later a letter in the press gave the Captain of the *Amazon*'s account of the capture which differed materially from the previous account.<sup>131</sup> The *Amazon* apparently of 14 nine pounders and 95 crew, under the command of Captain Charles

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Lowe Whytell, fell in with the Spaniard at noon on August 24<sup>th</sup>. According to Whytell the Bristol privateer “*kept aloof, and never fired one gun.*” However because the Amazon was considerably damaged, “*in our rigging and sails, and our yard tackles shot away, the Bristol privateer took the advantage and boarded her first, and received the Captain’s sword and papers, which they did not deserve.*” The vessel, commanded by Fernando de Reynosa, was bound from Manilla to Madrid and was larger than a 36 gun frigate and though pierced for 40 guns had only two 18 pounders and twelve 9 pounders mounted. Of the 150 crew 33 were killed and 14 wounded. Aboard the Amazon only the Master’s mate was killed when an 18 pounder took off his arm at the shoulder.

Charles Lowe Whytell was probably the son of the former Attorney of the Pipe Office who held the office of Surveyor of His Majesty’s Revenue arising by “*all and all Manner of Fines, Forfeitures, and Sums of Money, commonly called Green Wax Moneys*” and died around 1774.<sup>132</sup> There were complications to his estate which was settled in the Court of Chancery in early 1779. Captain Whytell became tide surveyor for a period at Hoylake<sup>6</sup> and died in June 1795 aboard **HMS Standard** in Hamoaze.<sup>133</sup> At the time **HMS Standard** would have been preparing for an attempted invasion of France and the Battle of Quiberon Bay.<sup>134</sup>

The papers continued to speculate about the value of the prize.<sup>131</sup> “*She is deemed the most valuable prize taken since the rich Acapulco ship by the late Lord Anson. In her after-hold the King of Spain’s cargo is stowed, which is supposed to be gold and silver, but not yet opened. The Captain or crew were not permitted to see it when shipped, as she was laden by Porters, which is the usual custom at the Manillas.*”

Further speculating on the value, one paper recounted the history of the Manilla ship taken by Admiral Anson.<sup>135</sup>

“*She is an exceeding large ship,... and belongs to the King of Spain; according to the Captain of the Rangers’s description about 1000 or 1200 tons burthen, and deemed by far the most valuable capture made this war, - her cargo consisting of the richest silks, specie, diamonds, etc.*

*The Manilla ship taken by Admiral Anson, in the South Seas, amounted in value to a million and a half dollars. She was a much better manned ship than that taken by the Ranger, her crew consisting of 350 men, and mounted 36 guns, besides 28 pedararoes. She had 64 men killed in the action, and 84 wounded, whilst the Centurion had only two killed and a Lieutenant and 16 wounded...*”

Anson had been sent out, during the War of Jenkins’ Ear to attack Spanish possessions in South America and in June 1743 he captured the **Nuestra Señora de Covadonga**, containing 1,313,843 pieces of eight, off Cape Espiritu Santo. The prize money made him rich for life and his heirs were able to completely rebuild the family seat of Shugborough in Staffordshire.<sup>136</sup>

When two of the owners of one of the privateers went to Cork to evaluate the prize it only added to the speculation.<sup>137</sup>

“*... when an examination was made of the contents of her hold, which contained the general cargo, and finding, on the arrival of some packages, that they answered the bills of lading, they did not examine the whole; that part, however, belonging to the King of Spain, and for which there were no bills of lading, was intirely looked into. It was filled with cases, several of which they opened, and we*

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*are told they contained gold in ingots, and that upon a calculation, the value of them would amount to above one hundred and forty thousand pounds sterling.”*

The sheer magnitude of this prize was brought to bear on the relative values of the prizes taken by the belligerents. Some papers purported to show that British privateers had taken twice the value in Spanish prizes as the Spanish had taken British, but one paper was at pains to show that these estimates were much too low.<sup>1389</sup>

*“These accounts state the value of the captures from the Spaniards at 370,00l. the value of the prizes taken by the Spaniards at 150,000l. The Manilla galleon taken by the **Ranger** and the **Amazon**, is, on a moderate calculation, not worth less than 500,000l. Besides which, several valuable prizes have been brought into the ports of these kingdoms by the Liverpool and Bristol privateers, exclusive of the Spanish frigate taken by the Pearl, and the fleet of cutters taken by Admiral Duff, and carried into Gibraltar; and these may, with propriety, be valued at 500,000l. ”*

In December the Manillaman was safely brought into Kingroad leading to the Port of Bristol.<sup>139</sup> But by January 1780 some<sup>140</sup> were pouring cold water on the claims of the immense value of the prize by reports from Cork.

*The Manilla ship ...is likely to turn out a much less valuable prize than she was at first deemed. Amongst other articles ... was a large cabinet stamped with the arms of the King of Spain, and addressed to his Majesty. The contents of this cabinet were thought so important, that the principal owners that could be collected, were formally summoned to attend, in order to be present at the breaking the seals, when, behold what should they find, instead of jewels and diamonds, but a parcel of parrots and Canary birds: a treasure, however it might be thought valuable of by Kings, was a great disappointment to the captors.*

By February there were reports that parrots and canaries were not the only livestock aboard the vessel. Although the parrots and canaries can hardly have been alive this animal most certainly was.<sup>141</sup>

*The Zebra that was taken on board the St. Innis, Manillaman, by the Ranger privateer of Bristol and Amazon of Liverpool, was sold by auction to Mr Astley, the celebrated horseman. The singular stripes of black, brown, and white, are more beautiful in this animal, than in any other that ever was brought over.*

Phillip Astley, a renowned horseman and trainer, was of course the founder of the original circus, and he promptly took the animal on a tour of the principal towns of the country. Quite what a zebra was doing aboard a Manilla ship is hard to say but by late April the zebra was on its way to Chester.<sup>142</sup>

*“We here from Wrexham, that there is just arrived in that Place, on its Way to this City, that most striking production of Nature, the ZEBRA. This beautiful Animal was ...originally as a present to the King of Spain; but the Fortune of War brought it to Bristol, where it was sold by public Auction, on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1780, at the Exchange Coffee House, and purchased by Mr. Astley, of London, for no less sum than 350l. This Zebra or Wild Ass, is an extremely beautiful animal, and greatly surpasses all others for Elegance, Symmetry, and the Beauty of its Colours... The sacred Writings have mentioned these Animals, particularly Job xxxix, 5, 6, 7, 8; and Psalm civ, ii. It is remarked by the Curious, that this Creature, singular and beautiful as it is, was brought from a Country whose Inhabitants are noted for Deformity and Ignorance, and it is the general Opinion of the Learned and Travellers, that no Country in the known World has produced its Equal. ”*

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That immense fortunes could be made on the roll of the dice of war is illustrated by the slave trading partnership of Peter Baker and John Dawson. The firm of Baker & Dawson, made its first slaving voyage about 1781 and thereafter invested in around 40 voyages over the next nine years.<sup>1</sup> In May 1786 they negotiated a contract with the Spanish to supply slaves to Spanish America estimated to be worth in excess of £350,000.<sup>143</sup> Their business prior to entering the slave trade is not clear, but to enter the trade in any significant way, sending several vessels per year to the African Coast, required considerable capital because of the length of the voyages and the length of credit that needed to be extended before any return was seen. Simply to finance one voyage per year might require the capital to fit out three vessels before returns on the first were complete. Thus many invested in relatively small shares, in the words of Gomer Williams, those that couldn't send a crate sent a bandbox.<sup>6</sup>

In September 1779 Baker and Dawson supplied Rum to the value of £95 to the *Enterprize* privateer belonging to a consortium including the Earles and Francis Ingram.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps they had previously been involved in the spirits or West Indian trade. Whatever the case may be, on the outbreak of War with France, Baker invested in a large privateer, the *Mentor* 400 tons, 28 guns commanded by John Dawson, veteran of two voyages to Bonny for slaves, and at the end of October 1778 by sailing south he fell in with a returning French East Indiaman the *Carnatic*.<sup>144</sup> When the vessel was brought into Liverpool a box of diamonds “*of an immense value*” was discovered “*to the no small satisfaction of the captors.*” The value of the prize, was estimated to be in excess of £400,000, roughly commensurate with the value of the Manillaman captured by the *Amazon*. Captain Dawson married Peter Baker's daughter and Baker and Dawson began investing in several slaving voyages every year until 1791. They won a contract to supply slaves to the Spanish Empire in 1786, and established a shipbuilding concern on the banks of the Mersey. Together they bought the Mosley Hill estate where they built themselves a mansion, possibly by Adams, that became known, facetiously, as Carnatic Hall.<sup>6</sup> Baker seems to have died about 1791 but John Dawson continued in the trade for several more years until he went spectacularly bankrupt to the tune of £500,000 in the credit crisis of 1793.<sup>145</sup> The *Mentor* took several more prizes in the American War until finally in 1782 it foundered in a gale on the Newfoundland banks.<sup>146</sup>

The *Amazon* privateer continued to clear from Liverpool on cruises for the duration of the war. The London Chronicle noted in June 1780<sup>147</sup> that, “*on the 10<sup>th</sup> instant arrived at Liverpool the Amazon privateer from a Cruize.*” And in October 1781<sup>148</sup> the capture of another prize was reported;

“*A letter from Madeira brings Advice, that a French Frigate, of 40 guns, called La Bellipotent, is taken, after an engagement of an Hour and a Half, by the Amazon Privateer, of 18 Guns, and the Jason Privateer, of 12 Guns, and carried in there in so shattered a Condition, that it was with Difficulty they kept her above Water.*”

The *Amazon* was a 130-ton, square-sterned, ship-rigged vessel mounting 16 guns and built in Liverpool in 1773. It was sold by the broker Thomas Ryan on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1779 following the capture of the Manillaman when it was described as mounting 14 nine pounders, 2 six pound howitzers and 2 six pound cohorns. It

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was copper sheathed and had “*everything necessary for a privateer including 4 months provisions for 90 men*” and might “*be sent to sea immediately at little expense.*”<sup>149</sup> It was bought and registered by John and Thomas Hodgson and John and Thomas Backhouse along with William Rutson, Samuel Haliday, Richard Bamber and Thomas Carter. Whether this was a complete or partial change in ownership following the capture cannot be known as the relevant Plantation Registers are missing and the previous investors are unknown.<sup>150</sup> It seems surprising that so rich a prize has left no trace in the record unlike the *Carnatic*. William Rutson seems thereby to have been able to enter the slave trade from 1781 until 1793 as a major investor with the Backhouses and others, including James Penny and Peter Rigby. Thomas Carter seems also to have been able to invest in the trade over a similar period in voyages put together by Thomas Staniforth.<sup>150</sup>

The Hodgson brothers also had a share in other privateers including the square sterned brig *Leopard* of 120 tons mounting 12 guns with a crew of 60. Other investors included Thomas Ryan, Thomas Staniforth and Joseph Brooks. They were also major shareholders in the *Stormont*, along with the Backhouses, and Carter and Rutson again, but also including James Penny and five other investors.<sup>150</sup> In 1781 the Hodgsons became minor investors in the *Countess of Maurepas*, a 100-ton, 16-gun sloop, a French prize taken in July by the *Tom* and *Greyhound* privateers of Liverpool. A large consortium invested in the vessel including the Backhouses who sold the vessel in February of 1782. The *Tom* was owned by the Backhouses and was a highly successful privateer during the American war taking prizes into New York and Antigua. In 1779 *Tom* captured *De Koningen Esther* laden with coffee, tobacco, indigo, sugar cocoa and hides as well as the *Jacobus* similarly laden.<sup>151</sup>

Preliminaries of peace with America were signed in January of 1783. The Williams Advertiser reported:-

*The Mercantile World is in a hurry and bustle unknown at any former time. The merchants are endeavouring to outstrip each other in the race of traffic. European goods, and particularly the produce of England, being greatly wanted in the ports of America, the destination of many of the vessels now in the river is altered from the West India islands to the American ports, where it is expected the cargoes will sell at an immense profit.*<sup>6</sup>

Of the Liverpool privateers Picton said, “*It has been sometimes asserted that the merchants of Liverpool greatly enriched themselves in the last century by the practice of privateering. At a subsequent period there were a few exceptional instances of this, but during the Seven Years’ War the results to the Liverpool merchants were most disastrous.*”<sup>155</sup>

Thomas Hodgson seems to have represented one of those exceptions. As a result of his privateering activities he had access to a greatly increased fund of capital. Up until this time John and Thomas Hodgson had been minor players in the slave trade, albeit with experience derived from, and valuable contacts with, the major players of the day, including Miles Barber, through whom they gained access to investment and to colonial bankers such as Samuel Hartley. With his capital vastly increased Thomas Hodgson’s activities could expand to the extent that justifies the description on his memorial in Caton Chapel as “*an eminent merchant of Liverpool.*” His newfound wealth brought on many changes.