

## Trade Goods on the *Henrietta Marie* and the Price of Men in 1699 - 1700

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Recovering Pewter Basins from the site of the *Henrietta Marie*.

Photo Dylan Kibler/MFMHS.

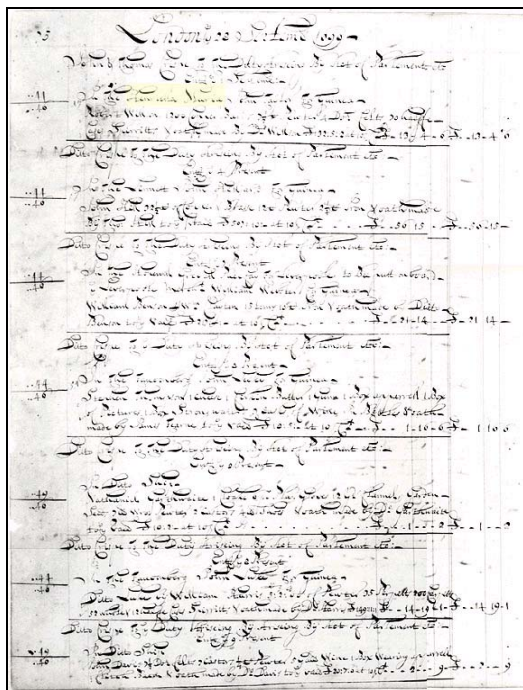
From 1500 to 1870 approximately 12 million Africans were forcibly shipped from their homelands to various ports across the New World (Curtin, 1969, Manning, 1992). The many atrocities and casualties of the infamous “Middle Passage” are well documented, and are often the focus of many discussions of the Atlantic slave trade. Despite this, the true purpose of the trade in human beings was not to induce pain and suffering as a result of a genocidal philosophy, but, rather simply, to make money. This is where the horror lies; in the arrogance and greed of

those who found it perfectly acceptable to use people as a commodity, simply for the furthering of their own monetary interests. At the most basic level, the *Henrietta Marie* commands attention because it represents the exchange of a people’s humanity. It forces us to wonder under what circumstances one group can do this to another and, ultimately, what residual effects from those earlier actions are affecting us today. In looking at this trade, it becomes clear that it was simply a game of numbers, in which those involved tried to garner the most income from



(Rawley, 1981 pp.152-153, Davies, 1970). The pressures of capitalism, though, quickly began to struggle against the monopoly with its inefficiency and inherent ability to fix prices. In 1698 the crown relented to popular demand, and the trade to Africa was opened to anyone willing to pay a ten percent customs duty on goods exported to the continent. These traders became known as “ten-percenters” or “separate traders” (Tattersfield, 1991 pp.9-15). It was under these terms that the *Henrietta Marie* operated during her second voyage.

Surviving customs ledgers show that from July 15 to September 1, 1699, the *Henrietta Marie* was loaded with a variety of manufactured goods. They were supplied by a consortium of London merchants hoping to see their investments in the venture turn into tidy



1699 London customs ledger showing an entry for the *Henrietta Marie*.

profits. These ladings are recorded in Royal African Company customs records (T 70/349, folios 52, 71, 72, 75) as follows:

**Thomas Starke - 282 lbs. Great Bugles (beads) valued at £18:15:6.**

**Anthony Tourney - 33 tons of iron valued at £449:12:6.**

**William Deacon - 1792 lbs. Great Bugles 60 Short Gurrachs (cloth), 3 1/2 cwt**

**Shot Linen, 2 1/2 cwt**

**Broad Germany (cloth) valued at £192**

**Thomas Winchcombe - 6cwt of Pewter valued at £34:4:6**

**Robert Willson - 1200 copper bars, 7 1/2 cwt Pewter, 4 dozen felts (hats), 70 half-cases Spirits valued at £132:5:2.**

This broad spectrum of goods reflects an assemblage pattern that is reflected time and again on the manifests of other outbound trading ships sailing for Africa. The knowledge borne of the *Henrietta Marie*'s first voyage, as well as the cumulative experience of other traders, would have showed these items to be consistently desirable along the Guinea coast. It also reflects what might best be termed a “shotgun” approach to trading. It was always possible that previous slavers had flooded the market with one particular item, lowering its value and making it an undesirable, or unprofitable commodity. The Africans could also be fickle, and, with changing tastes and shifting needs, a cargo of slaves was more likely to be procured by the Europeans if they provided their trading partners with choices. It was also wise for the Englanders to carry goods geared for the tastes of a secondary market in the American colonies, where there was generally a demand for wares from the homeland (Tattersfield, 1991). Some items, notably weaponry and lead frames, do not appear on the customs ledger, but were found on the wreck. This could reflect an effort to get around the 10% tax, or simply be residual cargo from the previous venture that simply never left the ship.

The *Henrietta Marie* received her certificate of clearance on September 5, 1699 (Jamaican shipping returns, CO142/13). There is no record of her voyage after she arrived at the Isle of Wight on September 23, and from where she would have departed for the Guinea coast.

To better understand her last voyage, and the processes of trade she would have engaged in during that time, contemporary journals and logs of other English merchant-slavers can be used. The most important of these is the journal of James Barbot, with supplements by James Grazilhier (Churchill, 1732; Hair, 1992, pp.681-700), both of whom sailed to the Calabar region of Guinea on the separate trader *Albion Frigate*, just months before the *Henrietta Marie* in 1699. The *Albion* carried a comparable cargo, and Barbot's many specific details regarding the mechanics and terms of the exchanges between the English slavers and the African kings and caboceers offer the closest known parallels to the

experiences of the *Henrietta Marie*. Interestingly, and as further evidence of the relationship between these writings and the wreck, Barbot's son, also James, signed in William Deacon's stead, when his cargo was put on the *Henrietta Marie* (T 70/349, fol 72). The log of another separate trader, the *Daniel and Henry*, which worked primarily along the Gold Coast in 1700, has been extensively analyzed by Nigel Tattersfield (1991) and offers many similar insights. The symbiotic relationship, between historical and archaeological information, allows us to see each in clearer, and more definite, terms.

Upon arrival at the western coast, the first point of order for the Englishmen would have been to find fresh provisions. This would have been their first trading venture, requiring that some of their cargo be exchanged for water, wood, foodstuffs, and whatever else might be needed to continue the voyage. Cargo might also have been readied, making it accessible for prompt exchange. Inquiries would have been made to the trade situation as well as into the presence of any hostile forces in the area. From here their work could begin in earnest, and they made their way south and east, searching out the markets where they could ply their goods.

The cargo remnants recovered from the wrecksite of the *Henrietta Marie* represent items that found no market in Africa. Whether this was because they were undesirable in the areas where she sailed, or were simply carried in excess, they offer our best insight to the structure of the process of trading for slaves. A brief inventory of these items is as follows:

**Pewter Basins - 109**  
**Pewter Spoons - 131**  
**Pewter Tankards - 66**  
**Pewter Bottles - 20**  
**Pewter Jugs - 2**  
**Muskets - 10**  
**Blunderbusses - 3**  
**Swords - 2**  
**Iron Bars - 28**  
**Lead Frames - 10**  
**Glass Beads - 13,000+**

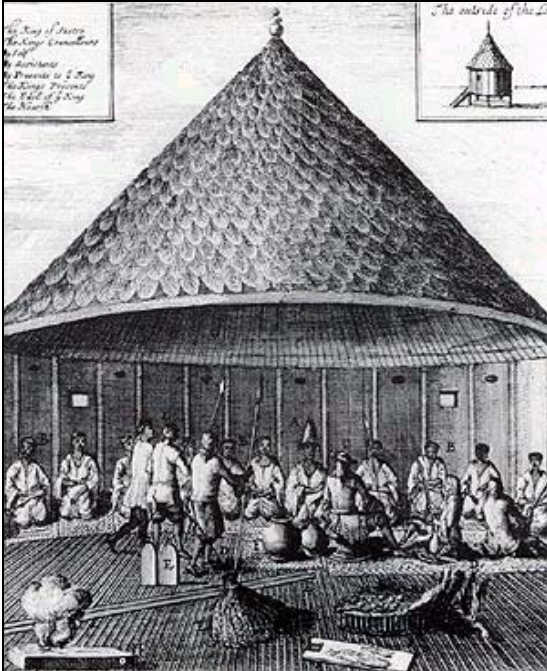
Perhaps the most telling of the nature of the *Henrietta Marie*'s intentions is the cargo of 33 tons of iron. Stock iron, in bar form, was shipped in large volume in the African trade and often served as the currency standard around which trade negotiations with the Africans were based.

The twenty-eight iron bars recovered from the site range from 10 1/2 to 22 3/4 inches (26.5 - 58.0cm) long, with an average of 13 3/8 inches (33.7 cm). Their average weight is just under 3 1/2 pounds (1.58 kg). Assuming that the 33 tons of iron loaded on board refers to this type of bar, the *Henrietta Marie* would have been carrying more than 18,000 of them. By dividing this figure into the aggregate value of the iron, an average of approximately 6d. per bar is derived.

Writing in 1682, an English slaver provides a similar description of such bars:

*"... the [Royal African] company imports ten thousand or more, of those which are made in the province of Brittany, all short and thin, which is called in London narrow flat iron, or half flat iron of sweden; but each bar shortened, or cut off at one end to about 16 or 18 inches, so that about eighty of these bars weigh a ton..."* (Hair, 1992 p.119).

Converting these goods into slaves, at a rate acceptable to both parties, was a formal affair which could be quite protracted, often being held up by what would seem to be minor demands. Barbot describes a period of six days in late June of 1699 during which principals from the *Albion* haggled over terms with the King of Great Bandy and his associates but, as he states, *"He (the King) was sorry we would not accept of his proposals; that it was not his fault, he having a great esteem and regard for the Whites, who had much enriched him by trade; That what he so earnestly insisted on, thirteen bars for male and ten bars for female slaves, came from the country people holding up the price of slaves at their inland markets..."* (in Churchill, 1732, p.459).



European and African Traders Negotiating for Slaves along the Guinea Coast. From Jean Barbot, 1682.

It is clear the Africans held the upper hand in these negotiations, and Barbot makes no secret of his resentment of this. He says,

*"...with much patience, all our matters were adjusted indifferently, after their way, who are not very scrupulous to find excuses or objections, for not keeping literally to any verbal contract; for they have not the art of reading and writing, and therefore we are forced to stand to their agreement, which is often no longer than they think fit to hold it themselves"* (ibid.).

Finally, they agreed to trade at a rate of "...thirteen bars for men and nine for women, and proportionally for boys and girls, according to their ages..." (ibid.) Additionally, a duty of two copper rings per head was to be paid to the king. In later notations, he does state that the price could fluctuate considerably, depending on supply, and that,

*"In October 1700... slaves (were) at twenty-four and twenty-six bars a man and proportionally for a woman, because of the great numbers of ships, sometimes ten, or more together that were then trading, which quite drain'd the upper markets..."* (ibid., p.464).



Iron Bars from the *Henrietta Marie*.

In "1703, or 1704, the price of slaves at *Caliber* (Calabar) was twelve bars a man, and nine a woman" (ibid.). To ensure a common understanding of the relative worth of all the other goods, they too were given an agreed upon value in iron. Barbot writes that in further discussion with the King of Bandy, "We adjusted with them the reduction of our merchandize into bars of iron, as the standard coin, viz. One bunch of beads, one bar. Four strings of rings, ten rings in each, one *ditto*. Four copper bars, one *ditto*... and so pro rata, for every other sort of goods" (ibid., p.460). After the terms were struck, the King proclaimed the markets open and "dashees", or presents, were given to the African elite. The slavers then searched the markets under the influence of the particular king with whom they had an agreement. Through a series of exchanges, they began to slowly fill the hold of their ship with the men, women, and children of West Africa.

Walter Prideaux, the supercargo of the *Daniel and Henry*, carefully recorded his ship's expenditures in this process. His notes show that from April 11 to August 3, 1700, 243 separate exchanges of various combinations of goods were made to acquire 387 slaves. No more than five people were garnered in any one transaction (Tattersfield, 1991 pp.126-137).

To understand the trading potential of the other goods found on the *Henrietta Marie*, it is best to look at them using the relative values as described by both Barbot and Prideaux. Though they each use different measures - Barbot's is in iron or copper bars, and Prideaux employs a gold standard - they are easily converted to a common denominator, and show that both men encountered markets with only slight differences.

The large quantity of pewterware recovered from the wreck (Moore, 1994) is a reflection of

its unpopularity at the time, but, it seems unlikely, considering the amount put aboard in London, that none was exchanged in Africa. The majority of the *Henrietta Marie* collection is in the form of basins, which had become a very common item in the trade. Two varieties of this form have been found on the site, one of three pounds and another of four pounds. Many of these basins bear the touchmark of Thomas Winchcombe and probably reflect the remains of his consignment of goods put onboard; 7 1/2 cwt (840 lbs, 381 kg) of pewter. Interestingly, the weight calculated for the recovered basins is just under 400 pounds (181.4 kg), or roughly 3 1/2 cwt; nearly half of his shipment. Barbot gives a figure for the exchange rate of "No.1 Basins," as encountered by the ship *Dragon* in 1698, as being equal to one iron bar (1732, p.465). Prideaux found a four-pound basin to be worth 9/10ths a bar, and a three-pound basin, 2/3 a bar. At the rate the *Albion* traded for slaves, 13 or 14 four-pound basins would buy a man, and 10 or 11 a woman. Of the three-pounders, it would take 19 or 20 to buy a man, and 13 or 14 for a woman.



A Pewter Bottle and Tankard from the *Henrietta Marie*.  
Dylan Kibler/MFMHS.

Tankards are the second most common class of pewterware found on the wreck. These are also found in two sizes, of one and two quarts. In the *Dragon's* experience, undifferentiated tankards were equal to 3/4 of an iron bar. The *Daniel and Henry* found them to trade at 2/3 a bar. This equals to 17 to 20 tankards a man, and 12 to 14 a woman.

The other forms of pewter from *Henrietta Marie*, jugs, bottles, and spoons most surely were a part of the trade cargo. The high number of bottles - along with the fact that that the jug was packed with 72 spoons, rendering it unusable for shipboard service - make this a fairly certain fact. No values are found for the jugs or bottles, but in 1714 spoons were taxed at

a value of 1 2/3d. each, and in 1725 2 1/4d. (Moore, 1988). Despite this, there is no record found for the African exchange potential for any of these items, which could be considerably different from their value in England.

There were 2074 lbs (940.8 kg) of "Great Bugle" beads put aboard the ship in London. The recovered beads are primarily green, yellow, and blue seed beads, and another, larger, round "gooseberry" variety. Barbot specifies that a "bunch," or four pounds, of beads was equivalent to one iron bar. Prideaux found the same amount to be worth 1 1/2 bars. In terms of humans, this leads to a range of 34 2/3 lbs to 52 lbs (15.74 kg to 23.6 kg) of beads for a man, and 26 2/3 to 40 lbs (12.1 to 18.14 kg) for a woman.



Glass Trade Beads from *Henrietta Marie*.

An interesting sidelight to the pewterware and beads recovered from the *Henrietta Marie* can be found in, again, Barbot's journal. He remarks of his dealings with the King of Great Bandy, "... (he) also objected much against our basons, tankards, yellow beads, and some other merchandize, as of little or no demand there at the time." (1732, p.459) Later he states similarly, "... they objected against our wrought pewter and tankards, green beads, and other goods which they would not accept of" (ibid. p.460). To find a collection of remnant trade goods of primarily the same description on the *Henrietta Marie*, who sailed just months after the *Albion*, strongly suggests that she too traded in the Calabar region, and, perhaps, had dealt with this same King.

Prideaux makes note of "looking glasses," or mirrors, of three different sizes being exchanged. They traded at a rate equivalent to nine per bar for small ones, to three per bar for the largest. This translates to an exchange of 39 large to 117

small for a man, and 30 to 90 for a woman. The ten lead mirror frames from the wreck, are all the same size, and it is unclear into which category they would have fallen.

Weapons were also traded by the *Daniel and Henry*, where it was noted "Fuzees" traded at 6 2/3 bars for each, and Muskets at 5 1/3 bars each. According to this figure, the remains of the ten muskets from the *Henrietta Marie* once had the potential to be exchanged at slightly under 2 1/2 per man and 1 2/3 per woman. It is assumed the three blunderbusses had a similar, if not greater, value.

"Hangars," or cutlass swords, were found to be worth 1 1/3 iron bars and, thus, would trade at roughly 10 per man and seven per woman.

Figures for other goods known to be put onto the *Henrietta Marie*, but not discovered on the wreck, can be calculated as well. Copper bars were valued at four per iron bar according to Barbot (p.460). Fifty-two would buy a man and thirty-six a woman. Prideaux exchanged 1/2 casks of spirits at 1 1/3 iron bars which comes out to ten a man, and seven a woman.

It should be noted that the exchanges for slaves were rarely a straight trade of only one type of these goods. Usually, combinations of items, totaling the agreed upon rate, are found in the expenditure records. For instance, it would be unlikely to see 13 iron bars traded for a man, but, rather, something to the effect of 4 bars, 2 bunches of beads, 1 musket and 2 pewter basins, all with a value equal to 13 bars, being exchanged.

It is not entirely certain how many Africans were loaded onto the *Henrietta Marie* before she left Guinea to make her way for Jamaica, but it is known that 190 survived to be sold at Port Royal in May of 1700. Assuming a mortality rate of 10 - 20%, the initial figure was probably in the area of 210 to 230. By carrying £827 of goods the crew was able to fill their hold with over 200 men, women, and children, as well as ivory and provisions, and still have a substantial amount of cargo remaining. Considering all this, it would appear the *Henrietta Marie* had to pay an average of just over £3 per person. Assuming a likely average sale price of £16:10:0 per head in Port Royal, they were able to get nearly £3144 for the 190 Africans alone (Tattersfield, 1994). It is not known if any of the manufactured goods were sold at this point for an additional profit, but this seems a likely prospect. With another profit to be made by investing in a load of Jamaican muscovado sugar, cotton, indigo, and

logwood, and then selling it, plus the ivory, in London, the incentive for the Englishmen is clear - there was a tremendous amount of money to be made!

It is easy to see the motive for the Europeans to participate in the commerce of human beings, but what was the motive for the African kings and merchants to do so? What was it about these "trinkets," as we today would call them, that made it worthwhile to capture and sell their neighbors? The answer lies in the fact that these were not simply baubles, plied in a one-sided exchange to simple and naive Africans. These goods were precisely the ones that, along the Guinea coast, could provide the wealth and enhanced status that is the objective of any good businessman. These items would have served to satisfy the major African demands of the time, which were primarily for currency, military supplies and luxury goods (Lovejoy, 1983 pp.104-106).

After skimming the objects they desired for personal use, the major part of the *Henrietta Marie*'s trade cargo would have been considered to be currency by the coastal trading elite. These items had an established value, and would be readily accepted in a variety of markets further afield. Aside from simply enriching the coffers of probably already wealthy nobles, these goods did have an ultimate purpose, which could improve the quality of life for some. Imported metals could be fashioned into a variety of functional objects, such as spears, knives and hoes. This improved efficiency in agriculture, hunting, fishing and military force. Pewter objects were used in the production and storage of foods. Cloth was turned into clothing and bedding. Glass beads were woven into items of both functional and ceremonial adornment, some of tremendous spiritual and artistic value. Firearms improved the capabilities of an army, whose strength was necessary to maintain power and capture more slaves. Considering the availability of local spirits, imported liquor probably served solely as a status symbol (Hair, 1978). Providing one was in the system and had access to these items, as well as the ability, or luck, to avoid capture by slave traders, "cheap" European goods could be put to good use in Africa.

Ultimately it was the European taste for sugar and cotton, and an African demand for metals and manufactured goods, that provided the framework for a commerce in human beings that lasted for more than four centuries. The

facilitators of this trade, the crews and owners of European merchant ships, and the elite of western Africa, found it acceptable to shun basic moral principles for economic gain. This is no novel concept, but the actions of those engaged in the slave trade reverberate especially strongly because their effects are still very much with us

today. By focusing on a group of artifacts from the *Henrietta Marie*, we are able to clearly define the profit threshold at which a person would be considered a salable object by these traders in 1699-1700, a mere £13, or a few iron bars; the yield from an exchange that has cost so many so dearly.

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