



The last slave ship built in Lancaster identified by Andrew White as the *Trafalgar* of 1806. Built by Brockbanks, it belonged to William and Samuel Hinde. The former lived at Ellel Hall, Galgate and the latter at Dolphinholme although their business activities were by then mainly based in Liverpool. Both appear to have been buried in Lancaster Priory churchyard.

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timber, sugar, cotton and coffee, then being taken upstream to St George's Quay by lighter or by road. Small ships, not exceeding two hundred tons, were often able to sail up the Lune to Lancaster itself, where they would presumably rest on the bed of the river at low tide.

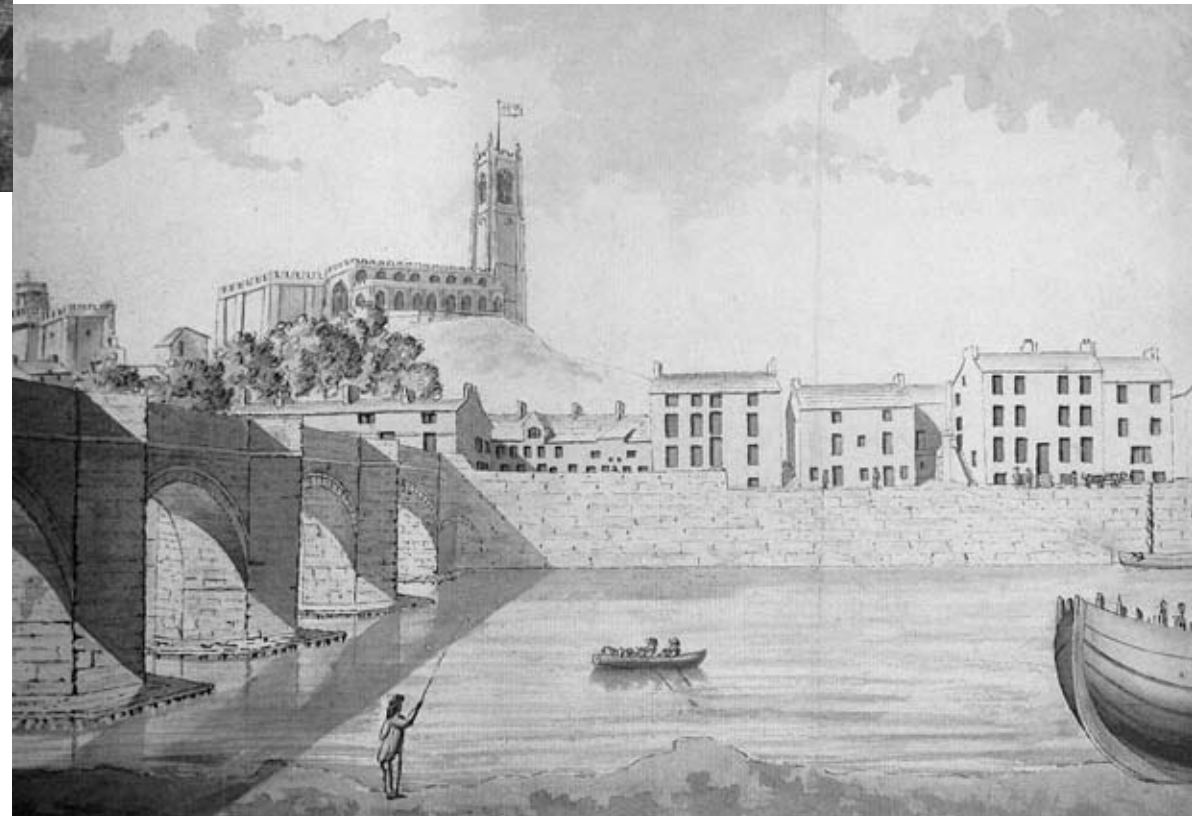
Apart from the natural hazards of wind and weather during the war period an ever-present danger were the activities of French and later American privateers. Although the main fleets of France were defeated in a number of well-known set-piece engagements or kept bottled up in port by the Royal Navy blockade, the most terrible losses, involving many thousands of ships,

were inflicted on the merchant vessels of this country. One calculation quoted by Schofield is that the French captured twelve times more merchant ships from the British than the other way round.² It has been possible to identify over thirty ships from Lancaster which were taken by the French (and occasionally by the Spanish) during the whole period of hostilities and after 1812 a further three or four captured by the Americans during the three-year war with that country. Details are set out in Appendix B.

The ships sailing to the West Indies were clearly most at risk. Those West Indies islands owned by the French and their enforced allies, the Dutch and Spanish, were a hot bed of privateers – ships licensed by their government to attack the commerce of the enemy. They were seldom a match for naval men-of-war, although they could often sail faster. They were, however, more

The Old Bridge at Lancaster still complete prior to the arch on the extreme left being demolished in 1802. Artist unknown but probably late eighteenth century.

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heavily armed with a very much bigger crew and speedier than the average merchant ship which could usually do little against them, though, as we shall see, there were a number of successful defences. The 1790s was the worst period for the Lancaster ships, when the West Indies trade was at its heaviest, and the French still held on to their bases in Guadalupe and neighbouring islands. The convoy system was not yet properly operational and as a consequence merchant ships had to depend on their own efforts to fight off attacks. As a result the privateers reaped a golden harvest. Apart from the ships' captains, whom we will be looking at later, not much is known of the seamen who manned these ships. Not all can have come from Lancaster but clearly many did and, as already mentioned, Clark writing in 1807 estimates that there were approaching a thousand seamen from the town at the beginning of that century and the *Lancaster Gazette* quoted an actual figure of 1,605. Occasional

West Indian imports were sold regularly by auction throughout the period.

WITH KIND PERMISSION OF
LANCASHIRE LIBRARIES

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION.
At BURROW and No. 74, 75 office, Market-street,
Lancaster, on THURSDAY the 13th October,
1810, at twelve o'clock;
400 Hogheads
TORTOLA AND ST. CROIX
SUGARS,
NOW LANDING.
* * * For particulars apply to
BURKOW and NOTTAGE.
LANCASTER, SEPT. 18, 1810.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION
On TUESDAY the 19th inst. at Mr. JAMES DUNN'S
warehouse, in the Friargate, the sale to begin at
ten o'clock in the forenoon;
ONE Hundred and Ninety Puncheons,
Pipes, and Hogheads, of Fine-flavoured and
Strong JAMAICA RUM; and Ten Tons of JA-
MAICA COFFEE (No home consumption) now
landing from the PUSEY-HALL, Thomas Green-
wood, master, from Jamaica.
The whole will sold in lots, for the accommodation
of dealers; and may be viewed previous to the sale,
by application to Messrs. JAMES MOORE and Co.
or to
JOHN WELCH, Broker.
WHO HAVE ON SALE,
Thirty Tons of JAMAICA FUSTIC, and
Fifteen Tons of SOLID and HEAVY NICARA-
GUA WOOD.
LANCASTER, SEPT. 7, 1809.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
John Sanderson and Co.'s office, But-street,
Lancaster, on TUESDAY the 19th inst. at twelve
o'clock;
100 Hhds } TRINIDAD and
50 Barrels }
220 Hhds } FINE JAMAICA
15 Barrels } SUGARS,
Now landing from the Halcyon, from Trinidad;
and Pusey Hall, from Jamaica.
* * * For particulars apply to
JOHN SANDERSON and CO.,
Brokers.
WHO HAVE ON SALE,
Eighty Puncheons good-flavoured LEEWARD
ISLAND RUMS.
LANCASTER, SEPT. 1, 1809.

glimpses do appear, such as James Ray, who was born in 1783. In 1830 he commenced legal proceedings relating to an application for poor law relief. He stated:

When I was about eighteen years old [i.e., about 1801] I was bound apprentice to Mss Suarts, merchants in Lancaster, for four years to the sea service ... I served my first voyage to Dominica in the *Penelope*, Captain Parker from Glasson Dock ... I returned to Liverpool, where we discharged a cargo and then brought the vessel round to Glasson Dock. She remained at the dock there three months or thereabouts, during which time I slept sometimes at the dock, sometimes at Skerton [his home]. I sailed in the same vessel for four successive voyages and on my last voyage I was sent from Dominica to St Lucia in the ship *Thomas*, Captain Winder, with other apprentices. I left the *Thomas* at St Lucia before my time was out and I remained on shore longer than I ought to have done, afraid to return.³

He appears to have returned to Liverpool at some stage and worked as a seaman before marrying, raising a family, being widowed and then finally returning to Lancaster.

One of the first Lancaster ships captured was the *Apollo*, taken in August 1794. Built in Lancaster in 1787, she was owned jointly by Edward Suart of Lancaster, George Suart of Dominica and Thomas Thompson and Richard Rowlandson of Barbados. The following months saw the capture of the *William*, belonging jointly to members of the related Worswick and Gillow families of Lancaster and Thomas Allman of St Kitts. The *William* was also a local vessel, having been built in 1785.

Some of the ships, such as the *Union*, had had a chequered history: originally a French ship, she was captured by a British privateer in July 1799 and taken into Martinique, then in British occupation, condemned as a prize and sent to Liverpool, where she was purchased by Thomas Walling Salisbury and William Sanderson, both merchants of Lancaster. Commanded by Captain Thomas, the *Union* was intercepted by the *La Mouche*, a French privateer from Bordeaux, and taken after a severe action of 3½ hours.

Obviously the taking of shipping could not avoid the loss of life. Another vessel also called the *Williams*, built at Glasgow in 1796, was registered at Lancaster in the April of the same year. She belonged to William Sanderson and Thomas Walling Salisbury, both merchants of Lancaster mentioned above. She sailed to the West Indies and was almost immediately taken by the French and carried into Guadalupe. Her captain, Thomas Strickland, was killed. The West Indies were clearly dangerous waters for merchant ships.

The *Alexander* was built in Lancaster in 1794; she was another vessel belonging to the Worswicks, who were both bankers and leading merchants of Lancaster; the Gillows also had a share in her, as did Thomas Allman of St Kitts. On route to the West Indies she was damaged in a gale before being intercepted by a French privateer of eighteen guns. In the bloody action which followed two crewmen and a passenger, Thomas Harrison, were killed and seven others wounded. As a consequence the *Alexander* was taken and carried into Guadalupe.⁴

Before 1801, when the first Lancaster newspaper began to be published, shipping information has to be obtained from other sources – mainly newspapers published in Liverpool or in Whitehaven. These give details of a number of successful defences mounted by Lancaster vessels. In March 1796, for example the *Atlantic*, commanded by Captain Nunns (a slave captain), encountered a French privateer brig carrying twelve or fourteen guns. The privateer had sought to disguise her identity by displaying British colours before hoisting ‘the republican flag’. A violent action then followed ‘on both sides with great guns when [they] came nearly alongside with a heavy fire of musketry, which continued without the least intermission for about an hour, when it thought proper to sheer off’. Both ships were badly damaged, particularly their sails, masts and rigging, and the *Atlantic* had two seamen badly wounded. The following year the *Atlantic*, this time commanded by Captain Thompson, was in action again. While in the Bay of Biscay on 30 May she was intercepted by a French privateer carrying eighteen to twenty guns.

At four in the afternoon she got almost in our wake ... and came up with us very fast ... we bore up and run down towards her, hauled our wind again, she then fired a gun, hoisted French colours and gave us a broadside which we immediately returned and kept up a smart fire for about an hour. She then sheered off, apparently much in confusion, and men over the side.

The crew of the *Atlantic* escaped injury, but the ship itself was damaged both in the rigging and by a shot below the waterline, which caused serious flooding until it was stopped the following morning. Captain Thompson added: ‘Our men behaved with great courage and steadiness, more so than could be expected as many had never been on board an armed ship before.’

In December 1798 the *Lancaster* was commanded by Captain Thomas Wilson, who was a part owner of the ship with a Joseph Sharpe, an anchor smith from Lancaster. On the 8th of that month Captain Wilson wrote to his co-owner describing how two days previously:

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,
To the OFFICERS and COMPANY of the SHIP
PARAGON,
WILLIAM HART, late Master,
Who were actually on board at the CAPTURE of the SHIP L'HARMONIE, and her CARGO, the 26th day of July, 1803, bound from New Orleans to Marseilles, that they will be paid their respective PROPORTIONS of the PROCEEDS thereof, at the counting-house of Messrs. RIDLEY and DODSON, in Lancaster, on THURSDAY the 18th day of October instant; and the shares not then demanded will be ready, at the same place, every day afterwards (except Sundays) from ten till two o'clock.
LANCASTER, OCT. 8, 1804.

FOR DEMERARA.
THE SHIP
PARAGON,
PAUL REDMAYNE, Master;
Burthen 295 tons, mounts 20 guns;
not lying at Liverpool, and intended to join first convey from Cork. For freight or passage apply to Messrs. RAWLINSON and BAGOTT, Liverpool; or here, to
RIDLEY and DODSON.
LANCASTER, OCT. 4, 1804.

FOR BERBICE.
To sail with the FIRST CONVOY from CORK.
THE SHIP
L'HARMONIE,
WM. FRYER, Master.
Burthen 211 tons, mounts 10 guns,
is copper sheathed, and sails remarkably fast.
* For freight or passage apply to the said Master; or
RIDLEY and DODSON.
LANCASTER, SEPT 7, 1804.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
At SANDERSON, SALISBURY, off Chancery office, in Lancaster, on THURSDAY the 10th November next, at twelve o'clock;
The beautiful, fast-sailing copper-bottomed
SHIP
L'HARMONIE,
(Now lying in Glasson Dock)
Taken by the ship PARAGON, letter of marque, WILLIAM HART, Master.
DIMENSIONS.
Length on Deck, 79 feet.
Breadth, 26 feet 1 inch.
Height between Decks, 5 feet.
Depth in the Hold, 2 feet 10½ inches.
Admeasures, 211 42-94th tons.
Has a Figure Head, and appears calculated for a merchant ship, or a private ship of war.
After which will be SOLD, PART of the VESSEL'S CARGO, in good condition, consisting of
109 Square Bales of New Orleans Cotton.
ABOUT
50 Tons fine Campeachy Logwood.
2 Hhds of French Claret.
24 Gallons of Rum.
1 Raccoon Skins.
9 Deer Skins.
Heavy Buffalo Hides.
Black Bear Skins.
Sheep Skin.
Hhds fine Biscuit Bread.
Barrels of Pork.
Elastic Steel Bandages.
&c. The remainder of the Cargo, viz. 172 Bales Orleans Cotton, and 74 Bales Deer Skins, may be put up to public sale at same time.
For inventories, catalogues, and other particulars, apply to
SANDERSON, SALISBURY, and CO.
Brokers.
LANCASTER, OCT. 28, 1803.

Sale details of the French prize *L'Harmonie* then safely at Glasson Dock.

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From the *Lancaster Gazette* 13 October 1804, indicating the share out of the prize money following the capture of *L'Harmonie* by the *Paragon* the previous year. Both ships continued in the West India Trade.

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