

PEWTER AND THE SLAVE TRADE

Carl Ricketts

In 1700, 13 or 14 4lb basins would buy a man, while a woman cost two or three basins less².



1. Pewter bottle by John Emes 1673Y.

The ship *Henrietta Marie* made two recorded slave-trading voyages from London, and sank during the second in late June 1700 off Key West, Florida where divers found the wreck in 1972. Other articles about the ship's pewter have appeared in the *Journal*, though the identity of the ship was then unknown¹. Long-term excavations at the wreck site, and continuing research sponsored by the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society allows this update, the drawings, and two of the photographs to appear².

In 1698, the crown relented to popular demand, broke the stranglehold of monopolistic trading companies and opened up the African trade so anyone willing to pay a 10% customs duty on goods could export to Africa³. Customs ledgers list the goods consigned to the *Henrietta Marie* in July and August 1699, and reveal how consortia of merchants took advantage of this change⁴. Robert Willson paid duty on £132 5s 2d worth of goods including 6 cwt of pewter, and Thomas Winchcombe 1691Y had 7½ cwt of pewter valued at £34 4s 6d. His touchmark is on most of the 109 3lb and 4lb 'Guinea basins' found, so it seems he and Willson may have 'caught a cold' due to changing tastes in trade goods on the West African coast. The marks of several London pewterers are on the other pewter that was probably part of Willson's consignment.

There are 66 pint and quart flat-lid tankards, two 'Guinea jugs' one of which held 72 lace-back portrait spoons^{1b}, and 20 bottles⁵. Although other probably continental ones have been described⁶, the bottles by John Emes 1673Y are a form new to us made with three seams shown as dotted lines in Figure 1 right. They hold a 'Tower' quart i.e. c35½ fl oz, have a base diameter of 5⅛" and height of 7½".

At last, the wreck is fully researched and we can identify the so-called Guinea wares named for their west African destinations. Until recently, we only knew about them from contemporary records. London-made Guinea basins came in seven sizes ranging upwards from a one-pound of 8" diameter to a six-pound of 18" ⁷. Very deep bowled, and narrow-rimmed, with a foot ring they appear identical to an unmarked one (Fig. 2) whose dimensions match the 1691 sizing. Last, the unmarked globular spouted 'Guinea jug' of two wine gallon capacity, with twin handles, and a screw-off lid (Fig. 3).



2. 2lb or 10½" 'Guinea basin' (author's collection).



3. Pewter 'Guinea jug'.

REFERENCES

1. I. Robinson, *JPS* (a) Aut 1980, (b) Spring 1990 (photos of spoons).
2. Malcom Corey 'Trade Goods on the *Henrietta Marie* and the Price of Men in 1699-1700'. *Soc Hist Arch Conf on Underwater Archaeology* Jan 1998 updated Oct 2003.
3. Act William III cap XXVI p5.
4. Royal African Company customs records T70/349.
5. David Moore 'Henrietta Marie - An introduction to the first slaver studied in the New World' 1987 *Seafarers* Vol.1 pp199-209.
6. *JPS* Aut 1982 and Aut 1983.
7. S. Shemmell 'The Sizing of 1691' *JPS* Spring 1980.