British Apothecaries and the Atlantic Slave Trade 1650-1833

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Outline

• Supplying the slave ships with medicines;
• Supplying the forts and settlements on the African coast with medicines;
• Supplying the plantations in America and the Caribbean where they worked;
• Going out to work on the plantations;
• A few became plantation owners; and
• Bringing about the abolition of the slave trade.
Sir John Hawkins 1532 – 1595
Sugar plantation Barbados
King Charles II 1660 - 1685
The triangular trade

- Plantation crops from Americas to Europe
- Manufactured Goods from Europe to Africa
- Slaves from Africa to Americas

The Triangular Trade
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Ship’s travelling medicine chest
Bance Island. River Sierra Leone, Coast of Africa 1805 (RAC)
(National Maritime Museum)
West Indies Fleet 1702
William Cookworthy 1705-1780
Apothecaries’ Hall Yard
Shipping Sugar 1823
John Mudge (1721-1793) physician
Plough Court pharmacy, London

Wellcome Images
Thomas Clarkson
1760-1846
(National Maritime Museum, London)
William Wilberforce 1759-1833,
by James Heath
(National Maritime Museum, London)
Abolition of Slavery in Jamaica

(Repro ID: F0750 © National Maritime Museum)
Conclusions

- Apothecaries were heavily involved in the slave trade
- They supplied medicines to slave ships, forts and the navy
- Some apothecaries owned plantations
- Some went to work on plantations but later returned to practice in Britain
- Key apothecaries later played crucial roles in the abolition of slavery
Contact

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Slave trafficking 1711
S. Hutchinson (National Maritime Museum)
Shipping Slaves off the Pitons, St Lucia 1771
(National Maritime Museum, London)
The capture of slaves by an African slaver in Africa 1860 (Wellcome Library)
Views of Forts and Castles along the Gold Coast, West Africa
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