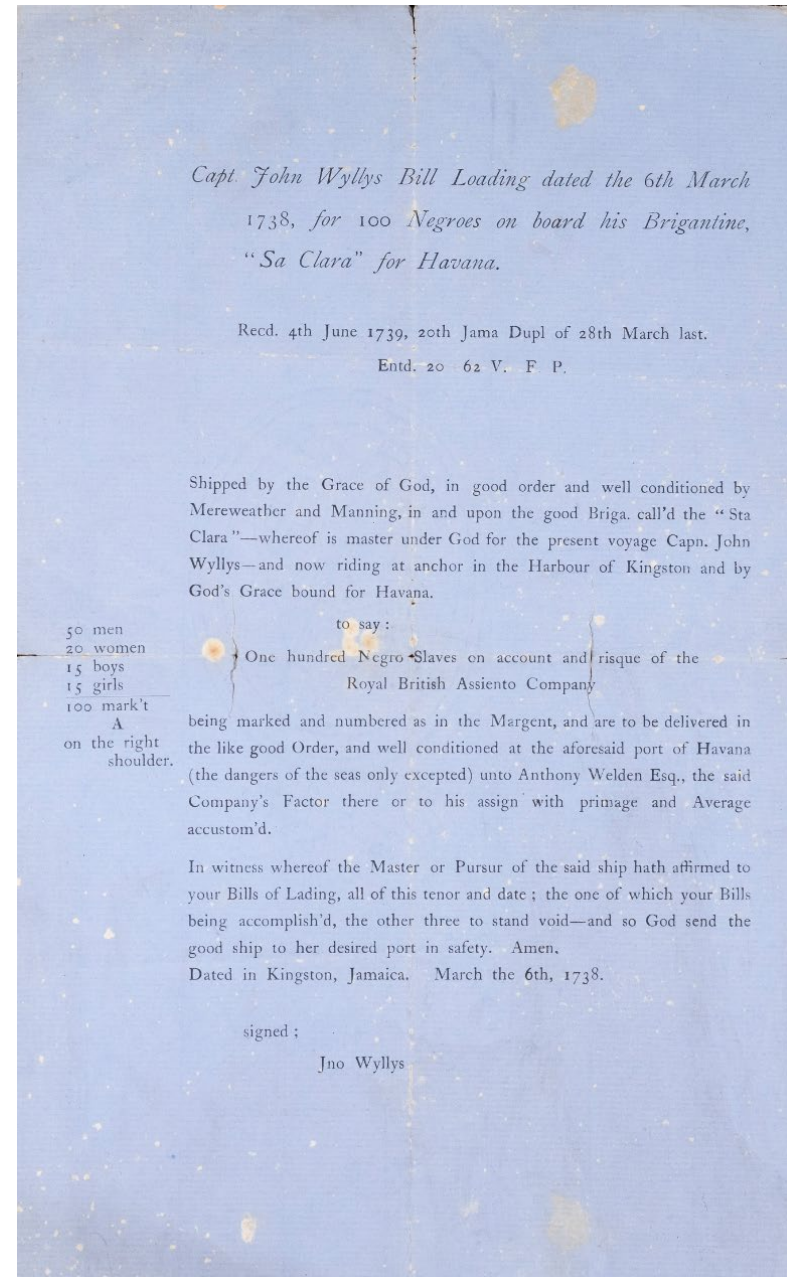
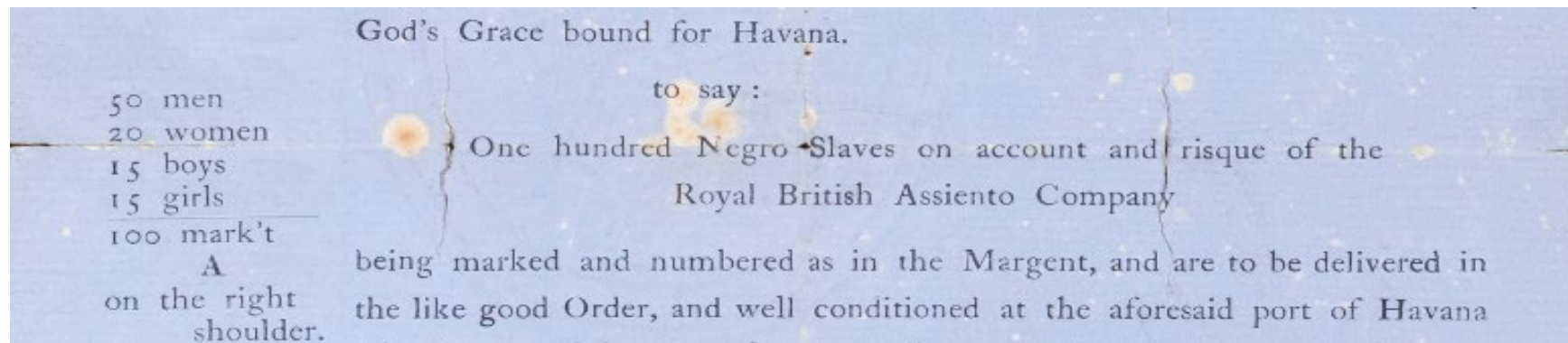


Bill of Lading for 100 enslaved people

From Lloyd's Collection

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MATERIAL CONTAINS
CONTENT ON HISTORICAL ENSLAVEMENT THAT IS
OFFENSIVE AND MAY CAUSE DISTRESS**





The document

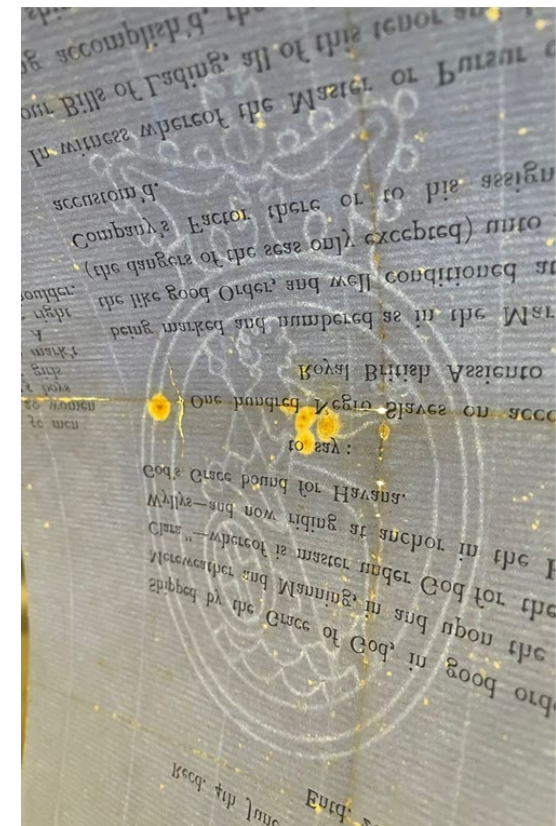
This is a Bill of Lading, referred to here as a 'Bill Loading', for a slaving ship known as the Sa[nta] Clara bound from Kingston, Jamaica to Havana, Cuba in 1738. It records the shipping of 100 enslaved people who are only described according to whether they were men, women, boys or girls and as being marked with an 'A' on their right shoulder. The enslaved were branded to signify that they were the property of the Royal British Asiento Company, and the bill of lading was made out to its 'account and risque'. The Royal British Asiento Company is believed to be the South Sea Company (this could also be a mis-translation from the Spanish) and the ship was captained by John Wyllys, or Willis. This represents an example of an intercolonial slave trade across the Americas, although there is no record of this voyage on the [Slave Voyages database](#).

A note on provenance and date

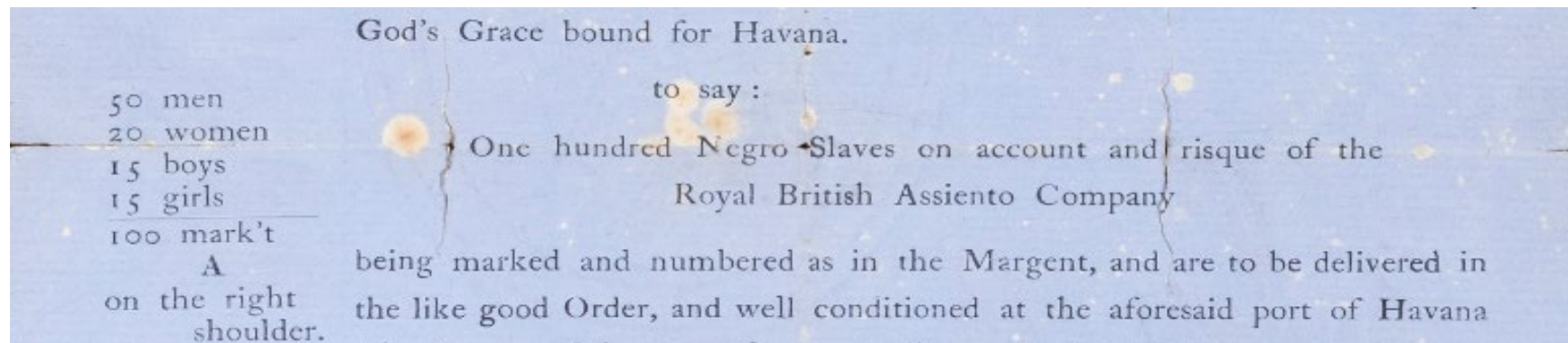
Lloyd's corporate records only survive from the formation of *New Lloyd's Coffee House* in 1771.

Therefore, although Lloyd's was operating in the 1730s, there is no possibility of establishing a link to Lloyd's with this item. This is an example of one of the many isolated documents that were gifted to Lloyd's Collection on the basis of their relevance to the wider history of insurance but have no direct connection to Lloyd's. This document was gifted by J W Oliver, an Associate of Lloyd's, in 1941. He found this document in the papers of his late father.

The date of this item is unknown. The Bill of Lading is dated 6 March 1738 which indicates the time of the voyage. This document is a duplicate of the one received in Jamaica on 28 March 1738 and is dated 4 June 1739. There is a watermark of Britannia, on the handmade blue laid paper. Britannia was commonly used as a watermark and it has not been determined whether this record was created in Jamaica or London.



Unidentified watermark on the bill of lading



A note on the form of document

The document is cited as a 'Bill Loading' which is now commonly known as a bill of lading. A bill of lading is a document that has developed in maritime trade over several hundred years. It now has three main functions: as evidence of the contract of carriage, as a receipt for the goods, and as a document of title to the goods. A bill of lading is issued by the carrier (or their agent) to acknowledge receipt of cargo for shipment, in this case from John Wyllys [or Willis] the master of the ship, Sa. Clara. 'Lading' specifically refers to the loading of cargo aboard a ship. Bills of lading are still used and one of three crucial documents used in international trade, the other two being an insurance policy and an invoice.

The South Sea Company

After the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, as part of the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht. 1713, the Asiento was granted to the South Sea

Company for a period of 30 years. The Spanish, thereby granted the lucrative monopoly contract to supply Spanish America with enslaved Africans.

Under the terms of the Asiento, the South Sea Company were contracted to import 4800 *piezas de Indias* annually. A *piezas de Indias* was an enslaved male with no defect who was at least 58 inches tall. Other enslaved people who did not meet this criteria would be considered less than one *pieza*. Women were generally seen as 0.8 of a *pieza*.¹ There was no expectation that this quota would be fulfilled and the company was allowed a limited trade in other goods. However, the Asiento was also used for trading in illicit goods, between the Spanish American colonies and England² and 'it was clearly understood by contemporaries that the company would try to smuggle contraband goods into Spanish American ports as well'.³ Although historians are divided on whether the South Sea Company's trade in enslaved Africans met with a degree of success or if it was just a cover for a more profitable contraband trade in other goods, the practice continued until 1739. This bill of lading provides rare evidence that the South Sea

Company were still slave trading towards the very end of the Asiento.

Jamaican slave traders carried tens of thousands of captive Africans to Spanish America. The South Sea Company, during the Asiento, transported over sixty-four thousand enslaved people to Spanish America, (including over eight thousand to Cuba) forty-one thousand of those being transported from Jamaica.⁴

Upon a slave ship's arrival in Jamaica, many of the least-healthy survivors would be purchased by speculators who attempted to restore them to health before selling them, either to Jamaica's planters or to Spanish America. As Dr Alexandre White has written:

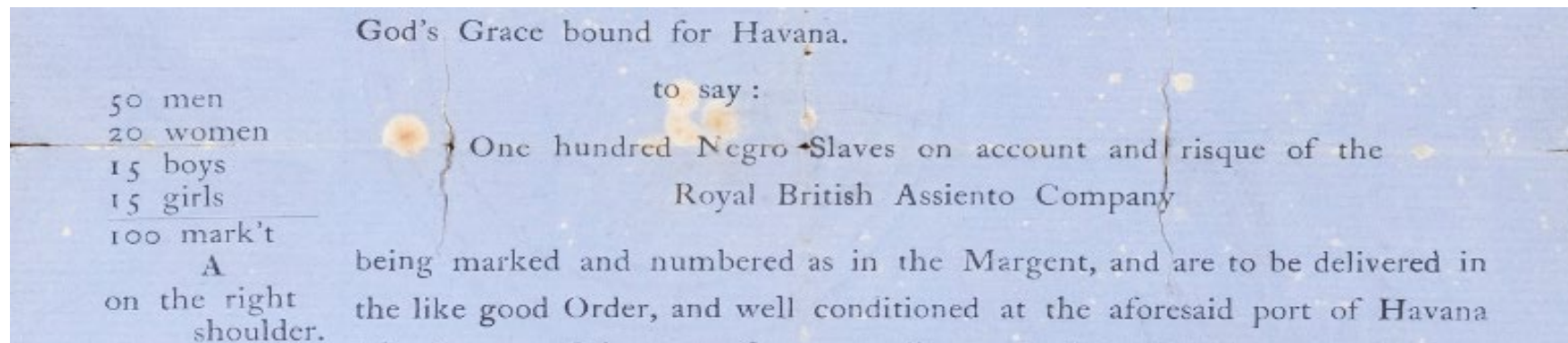
Many South Sea Company ships would arrive from Africa in Jamaica before sailing on to the Spanish ports where the enslaved would ultimately be sold to Spanish actors. The enslaved people aboard these ships may have spent weeks or even months captive and awaiting the violent and dangerous middle

¹ Helen Julia Paul, The South Sea Company's Slaving Activities, Discussion Papers in Economics and Econometrics, Southampton University, <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/socsci/economics/research/papers>

² Andrew James Rutledge, *Enemies Bound by Trade: Jamaica, Cuba, and the Shared World of Contraband in Atlantic Empires, 1710-1760*, Unpublished PhD, 2018

³ Helen Julia Paul, *ibid.*

⁴ Andrew James Rutledge, *ibid.* 150



*passage across the Atlantic that was riddled with sexual violence, physical attacks from the ship's crew, constant surveillance under armed guard and close, chained confinement which often led to high rates of sickness and death.*⁵



The Bill of Lading records 'Merewether and Manning' as the slave traders who had delivered the enslaved to the ship in Jamaica. [Edward Manning](#) (d.1756) and James (or possibly his father John d.1739) Merewether were the South Sea Company agents for Jamaica. The 100 enslaved people were to be delivered to Anthony Welden, who was the South Sea Company's agent in Havana.

South Sea Company employees, such as Edward Manning, played a key role in developing extensive transnational slave-trading networks. Manning's work, under the Asiento, saw him acquire a small fortune by the end of the 1730s, as well as the ownership of three Jamaican sugar estates. In his probate inventory 609 enslaved people were listed under his ownership. The merchant-cum-planter integrated into planter society through his marriage to Elizabeth Moore, the daughter of a prominent planter family.

Unusually, according to Anne M Powers, 'In 1739 Edward Manning divorced his wife Elizabeth Moore citing her adultery with Ballard Beckford. Manning then followed the traditional Jamaican planter pattern of setting up house with a free mulatto woman,

Elizabeth Pinnock, [who he had children with and] who outlived him and to whom he left property and slaves.'



⁵ Alexandre White, unpublished essay on Lloyd's Collection's Bill of Lading, 1739.

⁶ Anne M Powers, A Parcel of Ribbons website:
<http://aparcelofribbons.co.uk/?s=was+your+ancestor+really+married>

God's Grace bound for Havana.

50 men
20 women
15 boys
15 girls
100 mark't
A
on the right
shoulder.

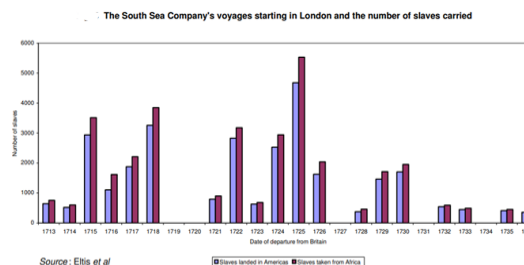
to say :
One hundred Negro Slaves on account and risque of the
Royal British Assiento Company
being marked and numbered as in the Margent, and are to be delivered in
the like good Order, and well conditioned at the aforesaid port of Havana

The South Sea Bubble myth

The South Sea Bubble refers to the ruinous financial crash of 1720, in which South Sea Company shares had been traded at wildly inflated, unsustainable levels. One of the popular myths surrounding the South Sea Company is that it foundered with the speculative mania, fraud and the folly of the South Sea Bubble, to which it lends its name. As in Hogarth's famous print, it symbolised reckless investment and greed.



However, what is overlooked is that the South Sea Company was set up as a joint-stock company to assist the restructuring of National Debt, based on slave trading. Revisionist histories have shown that far from folding in 1720, the South Sea Company continued to successfully trade in enslaved people, especially after the Bubble burst, demonstrating the Bubble was not as destructive to the economy as sometimes thought and that the company were sufficiently organised to maintain its trade. Helen Julia Paul has shown that the company's slave-trading increased after 1720, peaking in 1725 and thereafter decreasing.⁷



Dr Alexandre White on gender and the branding of people

In his research on Lloyd's Collection, Dr Alexandre White of Black Beyond Data, has provided a contextual interpretation of this item:⁸

'This document, a Bill of Lading, describes the humans as cargo aboard the Sa Clara prior to its departure from Jamaica. This bill would have been required prior to disembarkation to Havana. The South Sea Company relied on a network of British and African factors and agents in Africa as well as primarily in Jamaica to outfit ships, procure people for trafficking and organize the trade...

This Bill of Lading is historically important for several reasons. This document is an important source as it details the steps in the journey taken by South Sea Company vessels as well as the practices and actors involved in this deeply violent trade that would continue beyond the asiento until 1807. We have very few records of voyages, especially during this time-period prior to the British slave trade expanding to private ship owners and slavers, that keep clear

⁷ Helen Julia Paul, *ibid*.

⁸ Alexandre White, unpublished essay on Lloyd's Collection's Bill of Lading, 1739.

God's Grace bound for Havana.

50 men	to say :
20 women	
15 boys	
15 girls	
100 mark't	
A	
on the right	
shoulder.	

One hundred Negro Slaves on account and risque of the
Royal British Assiento Company

being marked and numbered as in the Margent, and are to be delivered in
the like good Order, and well conditioned at the aforesaid port of Havana

tallies of the gender of the captured Africans aboard slaving vessels. As historian Jennifer Morgan notes, this is tremendously important as far too often the experiences and histories of women and girls are written out of the history of the transatlantic slave trade, falsely assuming that the slave trade relied primarily upon male labor.⁹ In doing so we erase the memories, roles and histories of women in the slave trade at this time. Below the troubling account of humans described as cargo aboard the vessel you will note the line “mark't A on the right shoulder”. This is reference to the branding of enslaved people by the South Sea Company with an “A” to denote the human property of the company. The South Sea Company began this violent practice in 1724 as a means to “to discourage theft of the company’s captives awaiting transshipment and to differentiate those Africans the company delivered to Spanish America from the people introduced illegally.”¹⁰ This practice of branding was explicitly carried out at Jamaican ports before the onward journey to Spanish ports.

50 men
20 women
15 boys
15 girls

100 mark't
A
on the right
shoulder.

Enslaved people upon arriving in Spanish ports would receive a further brand of an “I” which stood for Indulto to record their entry to port.¹¹ Historian

Gregory O'Malley writes of this practice of branding that:

“This practice highlights several aspects of Britain’s intercolonial slave trade to foreign colonies in the era of the South Sea Company’s asiento. Most obviously, branding was part of dehumanizing people as commodities for trade. Searing a mark of ownership into flesh not only calls to mind the treatment of livestock but, in the context of eighteenth-century shipping, a more direct parallel might be the standard practice of marking barrels and other shipping containers with the initials of an owner or a company’s mark before goods jumbled in the holds of crowded ships. The A tagged African people not only as the property of the South Sea Company but also as property in the eyes of the company and all others engaged in such commerce. For captives, this introduced another painful indignity to a long line of them.”¹²

⁹ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

¹⁰ Gregory E. O'Malley, *Final Passages : The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill, UNITED STATES: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 219,

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/jhu/detail.action?docID=4322206>.

¹¹ O'Malley, 219.

¹² O'Malley, 220.