THE CANARIES IN THE BRITISH TRADING WORLD OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Running south along the rim of Africa is a string of islands —the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries, the Cape Verdes, St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha— most of them of volcanic origin. Their peaks provided welcome landmarks for ocean-bound mariners but, by their nature, they lacked good anchorages and did not provide very adequate harbours of refuge. Yet any landfall was better than nothing. As ports of call, they provided fresh water and food and, if weather conditions were good, shelter where crippled ships might be repaired or sick sailors put ashore. Once oceanic exploration and trading from Europe began at the end of the fifteenth century, these Atlantic islands were drawn into world commerce and affected by diplomacy. Settled by Europeans, they found a new role. The value of these islands varied dependieng on their location and what they had to offer in terms of supplies and a market.

Among them were the Canaries. Though most of the archipelago was on the edge of things, the peak of Tenerife became a well-known landmark and Gran Canaria, from Christopher Columbus onwards, was also visited by Europeans on their westward voyages. The Canaries occupied an awkward position. With favourable winds, they provided a convenient landfall for vessels sailing from Europe to the Americas and the West Indies but they were seldom visited on the return voyages, the winds carrying vessels to the Azores instead. Vessels intending to return directly from the Canaries to Europe had to battle against unfavourable northeasterlies on their return voyages.

When English trade with the Canaries began in the sixteenth century, sugar was the main commodity which visiting vessels took

on board. But as this commodity could be obtained more cheaply from Brazil and the West Indies, it was replaced by wine which from the late sixteenth century found a growing market in England. Produced from the malvasia grape brought via southern Spain from Cyprus, the Canaries and chiefly Tenerife produced several types of wine. There was a greenish dry wine, a purplish sweet liquor made from over-ripe grapes, a sweet white malvasia —which became the most important commercial type in the seventeenth century— and a parcel of vidueño (Verona or Vidonia) wines, common table wines, which because of competition and taste found little sale in Europe but were marketed in Spanish America and the English colonies in the West Indies, notably Barbados, and in New England.[1] The malvasia marketed in Europe was a luxury wine which fetched a good price but was intended for consumption within a year of harvest.

Just as from the mid-eighteenth century, in order to expand the market for madeira wine, it was fortified with brandy as the result of the initiative of an English merchant, so in emulation a «false madeira» was produced in the Canaries to increase sales of wine. A Hamburg merchant reported in 1762 that the wines «you call Canary, where of there is no such made here these last seven or eight years, because the Vidonia sort came so much in vogue, as passed for Madeira abroad, that these inhabitants has inclined entirely to make this sort».[2] This «false madeira» found a market not only in England but also in America and the Far East.

The late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the apogee of the Canaries as a supplier of quality wines for England, of which there is abundant literary evidence. In *The merry wives of Windsor,* Shakespeare had the Host of the Garter Inn say, «I will to my honest knight Falstaff, and drink canary with him» while in *Twelfth night,* Sir Toby Belch comments of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, «O knight, thou lack st a cup of canary! When did I see thee so put down?». Ben Jonson, who was known as a «Canary-bird», wrote of «canary, the very elixir and spirit of wine» and «a pure cup of rich Canary wine» while in *1619 Pasquil spoke of «delicate canary».* Such references continued through the seventeenth century. In *Love for love,* William Congreve wrote in 1695, «Body o» me, I don't know any universal grievance but a new tax, or the loss of the Canary fleet»[3],

I. *The Canaries as a supplier*

The main English trade was eith the largest f the islands, Tenerife, on which was concentrated abot half the population of the archipelago, about 100.000 in 1700. With Gran Canaria and Palma, the only other exporting islands, there was only a trifling trade. Even with Tenerife there were two practical difficulties. The island had no good anchorages so that when there was bad weather, vessels had to stand off shore to ride out the storms. Then the wine, pressed in September, became available in November and December so that vessels had to beat their way back to England against the prevailing north-easterlies in the dark and dirty weather of the wintry seas.

Several factors combined to reduce the market for canary sine in England in the eighteenth century. First, in general the consumption of wine there fell in the eighteenth century. Then political events hampered the sale of canary wine. When the Methuen Treaty with Portugal was concluded in 1704 it struck a blow at the market for French and Spanish wines in England. The treaty provided that the duty on Portuguese wine should be lower than that on other imported wines - no more than two-thirds of the duty on other imported wines. And the duty on Spanish wine was raised by the peace treaty in 1714.[4] Accordingly, the market for port in England, which had already been growing in the 1690s, expanded and came to dominate drinking habits in England. It is true that canary continued to be drunk in some quarters. In London the city companies, like the Barbers' Company, the Haberdashers and the Ironmongers' Company, who were conservative bodies, were faithful to canary and still gave it pride of place at their dinners in the first half of the eighteenth century and there were noblemen, like John Hervey, the first Earl of Bristol, who continued to buy canary for their cellars.[5] But many switched to Portuguese wines and so the consumption of canary fell, as Table 1 shows.

The most serious check to the trade in canary wine came in the 1700s when England lost access to the Canaries as well as to metropolitan Spain and Spanish possessions in the Mediterranean. English merchants were thrown out of the Canaries, leaving behind wine in their cellars worth £8.000. Such heavy losses they were never able to recover.[6] And without hope of recompence and the expectation that the future of trade with the Canaries was poor,

TABLE 1

English imports of Canary wine and total wine imports 1702-1804 ('000 gallons: annual averages)

Year	Canary wine	Percentage canary wine	Total wine
1702- 4	65	2,30	2.812
1712-14	456	10,04	4.544
1722- 4	160	2,73	5.856
1732- 4	64	1,52	4.214
1742- 4	12	0,43	2.766
1752- 4	12	0,47	2.525
1762- 4	5	0,20	2.730
1772- 4	25	1,00	2.437
1782- 4	11	0,30	3.870
1792- 4	40	0,47	8.428
1802- 4	45	0,52	8.616

NB: The imperial gallon introduced in 1826 had a content one-sixth greater than the old gallon
Source: Ralph Davis, «The English wine trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries», *Annales Cisalpines d'Histoire Sociale,* III (1972) 105.

these merchants never returned. As only a few remained, the withdrawal brought a virtual end to the English mercantile community in the Canaries. Of those who did stay, John Crosse junior became the leader. During the war he served as Danish consul but he resumed his post as British consul when peace returned. His position was not easy and he operated under difficulties. When hostilities between Spain and England were resumed in 1718, Canarian officials seized

Crosse's goods, claimed all debts owed him and sold his library, furniture and horse. They would have seized his bedding and clothes, Crosse said, except for the intervention of the bishop of the Canaries.[7] Despite this treatment, Crosse continued to work for a revival of the trade between the Canaries and England. In this he had the support of the Marques de Montelon, the Spanish ambassador in London. But their arguments had little effect on the British authorities.

Crosse complained that only three Protestants had returned to Tenerife after the war and that the British factory there had become dominated by Irish Catholics, some of whom had arrived in the previous century. With the connivance of the Spanish authorities, he reported, they enjoyed special privileges in the islands. The Irishmen, Crosse said, ignored his consular edicts, refused to pay consular fees and insinuated Spanish officials into disputes within the British factory.[8]Among the Irish merchants who established themselves in Tenerife, some of whom married Spanish women, were Brook & Walsh (later Valois), Cologan Murphy, Fitzgerald (Geraldín), Forstall, Mahan, Mead, Commyns, Power, Creagh, White (Blanco), Lynch, Roch, O'Ryan and O'Shea while in Gran Canaria there were the O'Shanahans and Russells and in La Palma the Machgees and O'Dalys.[9] In the 1760s Glas reported that the greatest part of the trade of the Canaries was «in the hands of the Irish Roman Catholic merchants sttled in Tenerife, Canaria and Palma' and no Protetant merchants remained «excepting the English and Dutch consuls and two merchants, who all reside at Tenerife».[10]

Canary wine was overhelmingly the most important product of the Canaries marketed in England but there were others of lesser significance. «The triumphs of British textiles during the Industrial Revolution would have been unthinkable without improvements in finishing», it has been said,[11] and so dyestuffs played a key role. One of these was cochineal, the scarlet dyestuff which consisted of the dried bodies of the cocchus insect. Portugal was the main supplier but one of the sources of this dye was Tenerife.[12] Details of the volume of imports for seven years in the early eighteenth century are set out in Table 2. This trade was to be of greater importance in the nineteenth century.

Another dyestuff in demand was orchilla, a purple dye obtained from lichens found in the Canaries, particulary in Lanzarote and

TABLE 2

English imports of cochineal 1709-1715
(lbs)

Year	1709	1710	1711	1712	1713	1714	1715
From the Canaries	1,117	1,529	1,234	614	7,941	24	—
Total imports	62,712	50,357	64,716	80,599	121,348	18,864	3,257

Source: *Journal of the House of Commons*, XVIII (1714-18) 158.

Fuerteventura. It came to be known as «Canary weed». Gathered wild, it was said that the labour required for its collection competed with the cultivation of corn in the Canaries, as for example in 1764.[13] Such was the demand for it in England during the Seven Years' War that Miles Nightingale, an English drysalter, sent his own captain to the Canaries to barter for orchilla under the noses of the Spanish authorities.[14] An indication of its scarcity was that supplies of orchilla wer sometimes adulterated with sand.[15]

Other imports from the Canaries included sugar, gum, pomegranates and citrus fruits (oranges and lemons).

Throughout the century trade was affected by war and the threat of war. Imports of canary wine recovered when the war ended in 1713 but were reduced again by the War of the Quadruple Alliance and were harmed again by the Spanish depredations of the 1730s. The outbreak of war in 1741 when Spain joined the War of Austrian Succession rendered trade more difficult, while the Seven Years' War between 1755 and 1763 provided a more severe check. Exports to England recovered in the late 1760s but were again reduced when Spain entered the American Revolutionary War in 1779. When peace returned, the market for Spanish wine in England increased in the late 1780s and 1790s. But these fluctuations in the eighteenth century in English imports of canary wine were about a low trend. It must be emphasised that the volume of canary wine marketed in England was dwarfed throughout the eighteenth century by Portuguese imports. During the whole century at least half of the

foreing wines consumed in England (with the sole exception of 1712-14) came from Portugal.

But war did not always bring trade completely to an end. On occasion merchants, both in England and the Canaries, endeavoured to secure the continuance of the trade. After the neutrality edicts of 1705 the English import of wine was resumed. In 1741 and 1743 Spain allowed the import of English provisions and other necessaries provided they were carried in neutral shipping on the account of neutral merchants and in 1747 the repeal of the law prohibiting trade with Spain passed in 1739 was attempted.[16] Later in the century George Glas noted that «the inhabitants of the Canary islands are extremely averse to war... In the case of the last war with England [the Seven Years' War] they endeavoured to procure a neutrality for their islands». And he continued, «A master of a ship of any nation which may happen to be at war with Spain may, if he manages prudently, trade at Porto Orotava without the least danger of the natives being able to seize his vessel: but she must have guns, and be well manned.»[17]

II. *The Canaries as a market for British goods*

> The imports here Great Britain consist chiefly of woollen goods of various kinds, hats, hard-ware, pilchards, red-herrings, wheat when it is scarce in the islands with a number of other articles which would be too tedious to specify.
>
> George Glas, *History of the Canaries* (1764) p. 327

It is not easy to quantify either the volume or the value of individual exports because of the patchy nature of the statistics available. For a twenty-year period in the later eighteenth century details of the amount of woollen and worsted goods by value are available (see Table 3) which reveal most notably the effect of the American Revolution on this trade, with exports reduced to nothing in the three years 1780-2. Of textiles, the most important of British exports to the Canaries, Glas commented that while for everyday use the inhabitants of the Canaries usually wore local cloth, «on festivals, weddings &c the labouring people usually wear English coarse cloth».[18] Some linen was also exported and flax. In 1725 flax worth £144, in

TABLE 3

Value of woollen and worsted goods exported from England to the Canaries 1767-1786

	£	s	d		£	s	d
1767	27,176	5	0	1777	13,587	0	0
1768	28,849	5	0	1778	72,593	10	0
1769	25,987	10	0	1779	13,276	15	0
1770	20,304	5	0	1780	—	—	—
1771	14,701	15	0	1781	—	—	—
1772	18,395	7	8	1782	—	—	—
1773	24,869	5	0	1783	9,728	13	9
1774	29,151	6	3	1784	3,354	15	0
1775	23,144	7	6	1785	11,826	15	0
1776	25,692	0	0	1786	1,563	5	0

Source: British Library Additional Manuscript 38.376 f. 11.

1750 flax to a value of £526 and in 1775 flax worth £1.942 was sent from London to the Canaries.[19]

Hats were another textile product of some importance which found a market in the Canaries. In 1725 484 dozen beaver and castor hats and 159 dozen felt hats were sent from London to the Canaries; in 1736 the figures were 645 dozen beaver and castor hats and 236 dozen felt hats; and in 1752 they were 792 dozen beaver and castor hats and 130 dozen felt hats. Because of the war there were no hats exported in 1762 but in 1775 928 dozen felt hats and 226 dozen beaver and castor hats were exported thence.[20] Thus in normal times, the Canaries offered a limited but steady market for English-made hats.

Amongst other manufactures exported from London, metal goods of various sorts were of some consequence. Thus in 1725 over 318 cwt of wrought iron worth £874 and 104 cwt of pewter worth £367 was exported to the Canaries. In 1750 596 cwt of wrought iron valued at £1.640, 107 cwt of pewter worth £375, 81 cwt of brass valued at £367 and 50 cwt of copper worth £265 was sent to the islands. And in 1775 1.267 cwt of wrought iron valued at £3.485, 239 cwt of pewter worth £836, 110 cwt of wrought brass valued at £495 and 55 cwt of wrought copper worth £291 was exported thence.[21]

Among foodstuffs, fish was of some importance. A larger supply came from the New England colonies but some came from British waters, notably pilchards from the south-west of England and herrings from Ireland. A return specifying the fish by type reveals the position for the years 1709-14 (Table 4). The fish from British waters and from the New England colonies supplemented the fish which the Canarians were able to obtain from their own fisheries along the Barbary coast.[22] Of the fish from New England, the Governor of New York, the Earl of Bellomont, reported that «the median or midling fish they send to the Canaries, the Madeiras and Fial and also to Jamaica».[23] In addition to fish, other foodstuffs exported to the Canaries from Ireland were beef, pork and butter.

TABLE 4

Exports of fish from England to the Canaries 1710-1714

Year	Cod	Red herrings	White herrings	Pilchards
1709	—	—	307 barrels	346 hogsheads
1710	—	123 barrels*	9 barrels	353 hogsheads
1711	120 cwt	70 barrels	24 barrels	445 hogsheads
1712	—	—	121 barrels	—
1713	—	60 barrels	61 barrels	947 hogsheads
1714	—	—	10 barrels	495 hogsheads

* 80 barrels in foreign vessels.
Source: Public Record Office, London (PRO) CO 390/5f. 14.

Grain exports to the Canaries varied markedly from year to year with the state of the harvest. Thus in 1725 460 quarters of wheat and 100 quarters of rye were exported to the Canaries and in 1750, 919 quarters of wheat and 419 quarters of rye were exported thence.[24] In 1775, according to the Customs records, no grain was carried from England to the Canaries.[25] Cereals were also brought by English vessels to the Canaries from the Mediterranean. Even so, because of the small demand in the Canaries for English products, some vessels went out from England in ballast.

III. *The Canaries, British North America and the West Indies*

> To the British colonies in America a great quantity of wine and nothing else.
>
> George Glas, *History of the Canaries*, p. 329

After England, the second market for canary wine within the British trading empire in the eighteenth century was British possessions in North America and the West Indies. This trade developed despite a considerable debate about the legality of the direct export of canary wine to the American colonies. Under English law, while Portuguese wine might be sent directly to English colonies, the direct export of the wines of other European producers was forbidden. Merchants argued that direct export from the Canaries should be allowed because the Canaries formed part of Africa and not of Europe and provided a market for English goods.[26] Customs officials and colonial governors found it difficult to accept these arguments though the merchants were supported by the legal authorities. Sir Robert Sawyer, Attorney General in 1686, and Sir Edward Northey in 1706 as well as the standing counsel of the Board of Trade, Francis Fane, in 1737 argued that the Canaries should be regarded as part of Africa and not of Europe. This problem lingered on. In 1782 the contractors who had tendered to supply wine from Tenerife to St. Lucia agreed to do so provided they were given exemption from seizure under the navigation acts.[27]

Despite the legal arguments, canary wines were imported openly into colonies such as New York, Massachusetts and South Carolina and probably elsewhere. Though there were a number of hearings on the matter by vice-admiralty courts —for example in

Rhode Island and South Carolina— there is only one case recorded of a seizure of wines for a breach of the navigation acts. Charles Andrews suggests that «it may be that the conflicting opinions of the authorities and the "conceived notion that Canaries are confiscable" deterred many British merchants from undertaking the trade».[28] But whether this was in fact the case is open to question.

While there is a shortage of statistics relating to the Canaries trade with the British North American colonies, we have a number of collections of merchants» papers which illuminate that trade. In 1752 Gerard Beekman, a New York merchant, attempted to enter the Canary trade, sending a cargo of provisions, but because he failed to develop a trade in spermacetti candles, he did not persist with this venture. However he continued to import small quantities of Vidonia wines in the 1750s and earley 1760s, noting in 1761 that Tenerife wine was «a dull article at this market in New York».[29]

From the 1750s also Henry Laurens, a merchant of Charleston, South Carolina, engaged in the wine trade with the Canaries. He imported Vidonia wine through his agent George Commyns in Tenerife from at least 1757. Between 1759 and 1763 he advertised that he had imported excellent Vidonia wine but complained in July 1763 that because of the amount of wine available in Charleston, the price of canary wine had fallen sharply. Wine «has lately been sold», he reported, «for the bare cost at Tenerife exclusive of freight, insurance, &c».[30] «You could scarcely have fallen upon a more unlucky article for the Carolina Market than Wine», he wrote in October 1763 to a London correspondent.[31] In 1768 he recommended his Bristol correspondent, William Cowles, to get a «proper Cargo» for his ship at Hamburg and sail directly for the Canaries and «take in about 200 Pipes of what is called Vidonia Madeira Wine not high Coloured nor sweetned so much as usual».[32] In early 1770 the proposed sale of 600 pipes of wine brought from Tenerife was deemed a breach of the non-importation agreement and the merchant Alexander Gillon was ordered to store or reship the wine.[33] In June that year Henry Laurens reported that he was forbidden to sell canary wine in his hands until the non-importation agreement was cancelled.[34] The import of canary wine was resumed shortly after-wards but was brought to a standstill again early in 1775 with the new non-importation agreement.

The papers of Aaron Lopez, a merchant of Newport, Rhode Island, provide an illustration of the place of the Canaries in a round-about pattern of trade. In the late 1760s and early 1770s, Lopez' vessels carried fish, grain and lumber to Spain, Portugal and what was then known as the Streights (Gibraltar and the western end of the Mediterranean) where the goods that they carried were sold. With the proceeds, lemons, salt, wine and luxuries such as Barcelona handerkerchiefs were bought. The vessels would then sail to the Isle of May for more salt or to Madeira and the Canaries for wine or to all three destinations. The wine would be carried to the West Indies, where it was sold. On the voyage home to Newport, Rhode Island the vessels would carry molasses.[35] But there were also other patterns of trade. In July 1769 Captain Zebediah Story, master of the sloop *Charlotte,* one of Lopez'vessels, sailed from Newport to Tenerife where he landed his cargo which was disposed of by Lopez' Tenerife factor, Townshend. He then went on a trading voyage in the eastern Atlantic and returned to the Canaries three and a half months later with a cargo of cocoa. About 8 April 1770 he left Tenerife and arrived at St Eustatia in the West Indies on 4 May. He reported that while other vessels had been unable to sell any wine in St Eustatia because of its bad quality, he had sold fourteen pipes of wine and expected to purchase sugar, duck, ozenbrigs and cordage with a further 20 to 30 pipes. He arrived back in Newport about 11 June.[36] In 1772 Captain Story was part-owner with Aaron Lopez of the snow *Venus*. He left Newport on 4 January for Madeira where the price of wine was too high for his liking. After several trading voyages in southern Europe, he reported to Lopez on 5 December that he intended to carry out another charter and then sail to Tenerife for wine. In the event he did not do so, returning directly from Gibraltar to the West Indies and thence back to Newport.[37]

While no merchants'papers are readily available to document the export of wine from the Canaries to the West Indies, the naval office shipping lists provide evidence for a small trade in canary wine carried to the West Indies both in British vessels and in vessels owned in New England.[38] In the middle of the eighteenth century a subsidiary export developed from the Canaries to the West Indies. «We are establishing», J Magree, the English consul, reported, «a trade of supplying camels and mules to the West India Islands».[39]

Particularly in time of war, British warships bound for the West Indies or stations in the North American colonies called in at the Canaries. So in 1758 the British fleet which sailed from Plymouth to Halifax, Nova Scotia called at the Canaries on its westward voyage.[40]

In return, from the British colonies in America, Glas reported, «deal boards, pipe staves, baccalao or dried cod and beef, pork, ham, beeswax, rice &c and in times of scarcity corn, when the crops fail in the islands, maize, wheat and flour» were exported to the Canaries.[41] This general statement can be translated into the needs of a particular merchant. On 4 April 1790 Francisco Sarmento of Tenerife, writing to Christopher Champlin of Newport, Rhode Island, set out a list of «the most proper Articles for the Teneriffe Market: India Corn, Rye, Flour, pork, beef, rise, candles, bar iron, cordage, hawsers, duck, and all kind of brown and coarse linens. These last articles», Sarmento commented, «are very saleable at all times».[42]

IV. *The Canaries and the wider British trading world*

The third market for Canary products in the British trading world of the eighteenth century was in the East Indies. The Canaries were in the track of the vessels of the East India Company sailing east and canary wine found a ready market there and was also valued as a present.[43] Canary wine was also liked by the factors. In the later eighteenth century «false madeira» found a market there too. In 1761 there is a report of an English East Indiaman calling at the Canaries en route for Madras which took on board a consignment of wine. The captain and gentlemen on board assured the consignees that «it pleased them as much and even better than any Madeira they have ever drunk... they planned to write the directors Canaries. Thus, Woodes Rogers put in to Tenerife in 1708 on his voyage round the world[45] and Captain James Cook called at Tenerife in 1776 on his voyage to the Pacific. During a stay of three days, he obtained hay and corn for the stock and found no fault with the water or fresh provisions but lamented the quality of the wine, cheap as it was.[46]

V. *The Canaries and British shipping*

> Trade with Tenerife is almost wholly carried on in foreign bottoms, especially in English.
>
> George Glas, *History of the Canaries*, p. 327

Then there was the involvement of shipping in trade with the Canaries. For ten years in the early eighteenth century it is possible to get a picture of the shipping involved in the direct English trade with the Canaries. From Table 5, several points emerge. First, it is clear that this trade was dominated by London and that the outports —including Bristol, Falmouth, Liverpool and Plymouth— played a lesser part in the trade at this time. London vessels were larger than those of the other English ports. Understandably, because of the need to carry guns for defence, vessels were usually larger —and fewer— in wartime than in peace. No comparable information exists for the rest of the eighteenth century though from *Lloyd's List* it appears that with the decline in the wine trade, the number of vessels participating in the Canaries trade was reduced.

TABLE 5

English vessels sailing to the Canaries 1710-1717

	London			Outports		
	Number	Tons	Average tonnage	Number	Tons	Average tonnage
1710	3	520	173	10	780	78
1711	7	1.124	160	16	1.020	64
1712	14	1.597	114	8	520	65
1713	12	1.325	110	15	853	57
1714	20	1.890	94	16	745	47
1715	22	1.945	88	17	823	48

	London			Outports		
	Number	Tons	Average tonnage	Number	Tons	Average tonnage
1716	14	1.108	79	10	355	35
1717	16	1.345	84	23	994	43
1718	5	410	82	10	712	71
1719	2	270	135	6	151	25

Source: PRO CO 388/18 (1710-14), CO 390/8 (1715-17), CO 390/5 (1718-19).

But, of course, Table 5 understates English involvement in the trade with the Canaries, though it is not easy to put a figure to it. A number of vessels cleared first for European ports, such as Hamburg, Amsterdam, Dunkirk or Cadiz, and then sailed ofr the Canaries with products of those countries as well as English goods for the Canaries. In 1764, to give two examples, Miles Nightingale's vessel, the *Prince William,* sailed from London to Cadiz and then to Lanzarote and in the following year his ship, the *Adventure,* called at Dunkirk before sailing to the Canaries.[47] This pattern of ship employment explains why in some years fewer vessels cleared for the Canaries than returned from thence (see Tables 5 and 6). Even so, in the eighteenth century only a small proportion of the British trading fleet was engaged directly or in a roundabout way in trade between England and the Canaries. But British vessels did not enjoy a complete monopoly: a few foreign vessels, notably from Hamburg, Amsterdam and Cadiz, also took part in these branches of commerce, as Table 6 shows.[48]

Some of the ships which sailed to the Canaries were regular trading vessels, usually consigned to particular merchant houses there; some of them were chartered for the trade. Of these, some were sent out speculatively to get what cargoes they could. In the later seventeenth century, because of the great importance of the wine trade, most of the ships returned from the Canaries in December or January[49] but by the middle of the eighteenth century, ships arriving from the Canaries at British ports were less concentrated in the two winter months.[50] Little information is available about freight rates but there were shipments in 1729 and 1736 at £3 per ton from Tene-

TABLE 6

Vessels entering London from the Canaries 1717-1719

	English			Foreign		
	Number	Tons	Average tonnage	Number	Tons	Average tonnage
1717	18	1.355	75	—	—	—
1718	19	1.460	77	9	332	37
1719	21	1.425	68	6	382	64

Source: PRO CO 390/5.

rife.[51] This rate reflects both the hazardous nature of the roadsteads in the Canaries and the delay which might result when a ship was driven to sea by bad weather. Though a pruden shipowner might obtain a Mediterranean pass, vessels could still be at risk from the depredations of the Sallee pirates Thus in 1740/1 the *Elizabeth* for Dunkirk was taken by a Salleeman near Orotava.[52]

Some British vessels carried goods from the Canaries to ports in the West Indies and also to the British North American colonies. But the greater number of vessels in this trade belonged to shipowners in the colonies who either dispatched cargoes directly to the Canaries and brought back wine or engaged in more roundabout patterns of commerce, as already described. There appear to have been no foreign vessels in this branch of trade.

The dispatch of wine to the Far East was a subsidiary trade virtually monopolised by the vessels of te East India Company and there were no foreign vessels involved.

VI. *The balance of trade*

In the late seventeenth century when the import of canary wines into England was at its height, English writers were critical of the trade. «The trade in Canary wine», Josiah Child wrote, «I take to be the most pernicious trade to England, because those Islands consume

very little of our manufactures, fish or other English commodities: neither do they furnish us with any commodities to be further manufactured here or exported, the wines we bring from thence being for the most part purchased with ready money so that to my apprehension, somethings is necessary to be done to compel those Islanders to sell their wines cheaper (which every year they advance in price) or else to lessen the consumption of them in England».[53] Between 1697 and 1701 English imports from the Canaries (almost entirely of wine) averaged £86,000 while exports to the Canaries averaged £47,000. Such a situation caused problems in the settlement of accounts, to which John Crosse, a merchant until then resident in Tenerife, called attention in 1704. Because of the poverty of the place, the small circulation of money, the lack of a settled course of exchange and the absence of any export commodity except wine, English merchants, he stated, had to make advances to Canary vintners in order to secure supplies of good wines and were forced to make complicated arrangements to obtain cash to settle the accounts.[54] The adverse balance continued, if Sir Charles Whitworth's figures are to be accepted,[55] with the exception of an odd year or two, until 1726. Then it was not a reduction in price but a sharp fall in consumption which changed the position. Only exceptionally after 1726 was there an excess of imports over exports on the English trading account until almost the end of the century. In his volume published in 1776, Whitworth noted that «the imports of these last twenty years but in fact, as his figures show, for rather longer have very considerably decreased as well as exports. The excess of imports and exports have frequently varied but from the year 1763 the exports have greatly exceeded the imports, the amount of the former being about £40,000 per annum, the latter about £10,000.[56] Never again was the balance of trade with the Canaries to be a cause of concern.

Conclusions

The apogee of the English import of wine from the Canaries was reached in the late seventeenth century. After that the trade fell into decline. With the War of Spanish Succession —which involved the eviction of English merchants from Tenerife— the English accord with Portugal, the declining consumption of wine and a

change in English taste for wine, the English consumption of canary wine was reduced to a trickle, even drying up in some years of war in the eighteenth century. And only a small market was provided in the British colonies in North America and the West Indies and an even smaller one by the calling trade of East India ships and men-of-war. Dyestuffs —cochineal and orchilla— provided a small but significant Canarian export for the growing English textile industry. In England the specialist Canary merchant disappeared and so did the once substantial English merchant community in Tenerife. The Canary trade at its peak only involved a small part of the English merchant fleet and in the eighteenth century a smaller number of vessels was involved. Finally, the decline of the wine trade brought the English trading account with the Canaries from debit to credit. As the previous pages have demonstrated, in the eighteenth century the Canaries played only a minor role in the British trading world.

NOTAS

1. Malachy Postlethwayt wrote of Verdona or green wine that it «is stron- bodied, harsher, and sharper than the Canary. It is not so much esteemed in Europe, but is exported to the West-Indies, and will keep best in hot countries. This sort of wine is made chiefly on the east side of the island, and shipped off at Vera Cruz» *(The universal dictionary of trade and commerce* [2nd ed. 2 vols. 1757] I, 444). See also George F Steckley, «The wine economy of Tenerife in the seventeenth century: Anglo-Spanish partnership in a luxury trade», *Economic History Review,* 2nd series, XXXIII (1980) 335-50.

2. Cited in Agustín Guimerá Ravina, *Burguesía extranjera y comercio Atlántico: la empresa comercial irlandesa en Canarias (1703-1771)* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Consejería de Cultura y Deportes del Gobierno de Canarias, 1985) p. 325.

3. See André L. Simon, *The history of the wine trade in England, vol. III. The wine trade in England during the seventeenth century* (London: Wyman, 1909) pp. 323-37.

4. Jean O. McLachlan, *Trade and peace with old Spain 1667-1750: a study of the influence of commerce on Anglo-Spanish diplomacy in the first half of the eighteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1940) pp. 55-6, 183 note 34.

5. André L. Simon, *Bottlescrew days: wine drinking in England during the eighteenth century* (London: Duckworth, 1926) pp. 71-4. As late as 1820 John Keats wrote «Have ye tippled drink more fine / Than mine host's Canary wine?» («Lines on the Mermaid Tavern»).

6. Steckley, «Wine economy», p. 348. See also British Library (BL) Additional Manuscript (Add Ms) 70162 [previously Loan 29/287] (unfoliated): «The humble petition of Walter Stewart and James Campbell, merchants», «The humble petition of Peter Minshull and Alice Minshull» and «The case of the Canary merchants»; also Public Record Office, London (PRO) CO 388/10/F40-3, F46-7, F50-2, F56, G2, G97 and T 1/91/100, cited in Dwyryd W Jones, *War and economy in the age of William III and Marlborough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 144 note 28. On 14 April 1704 the British government agreed that the *Greenwich,* a British warship, should be sent to the Canaries together with two transports for the English merchants» effects *(Manuscripts of the House of Lords, new series, VI, 1704-1706* [Historical Manuscripts Commission, 17, 1912] pp. 122, 130).

7. PRO CO 388/22/Q91.

8. PRO CO 388/22/Q42, CO 388/21, 28 December 1718 and 29 June 1719; Steckley, «Wine economy», p. 349.

9. Guimerá Ravina, *Burguesia entranjero y comercio Atlantico*, pp. 46-53. For the Fitzgeralds, see Jacob M Price, *France and the Chesaopeake: a history of the French tobacco monopoly, 1674-1791, and of its relationship to the British and American tobacco trades* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2 vols. 1973) I, 559.

10. George Glas, *The history of the discovery and conquest of the Canaries* (London, 1764) p. 327. This book is a translation of a work written by Juan de Abreu de Galindo, a Franciscan friar who lived in Palma.

11. Sisam Faorñoe. «Duestiffs om tje eogjteemtj cemtiry», *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XVII (1975) 488-9.

12. Archibald Clow and Nan Clow, *The chemical revolution: a contribution to social technology* (London: Batchworth Press, 1952) pp. 199, 201, 222.

13. Fairlie, «Dyestuffs», pp. 500-1.

14. Letters from Wardoper, 1763-5, PRO C 109/9 and C 109/14 cited in Fairlie, «Dyestuffs», p. 504.

15. Fairlie, «Dyestuffs», p. 504.

16. Richard Pares, *Ware and trade in the West Indies 1739-1763* (Oxford University Press, 1936; London: Cass, 1963) p. 125 and note 4.

17. Glas, *Canaries*, p. 352.

18. Glas, *Canaries*, p. 342.

19. PRO Customs 3/27 (1725), 3/50 (1750), 3/75 (1775).

20. PRO Customs 3/27, 75; *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial, IV, 1745-1766*, p. 651.

21. PRO Customs 3/27, 50, 75.

22. Glas, *Canaries*, p. 326.

23. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America and West Indies, 1700*, p. 676.

24. PRO Customs 3/50.

25. PRO Customs 3/75.

26. Charles M Andrews, *The colonial period of American history, IV. England's commercial and colonial policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938) pp. 110-13.

27. Kenneth G Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution, vol. XIX, 1781-1783* (Dublin: Irish Universities Press, 1978) p. 273, 22 March 1782.

28. Andrews, *England's commercial and colonial policy*, pp. 112-13 citing letter from John Crosse to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 8 January 1719, in *Report on the manuscripts of Lord Polwarth at Mertoun House, Berwickshire, vol. II* (Historical Manuscripts Commission, 67, 1916) p. 14.

29. Philip L. White, *The Beekman mercantile papers 1746-1799* (3 vols. New York Historical Society, 1956) I, 375.

30. Philip M. Hamer and George C. Rogers, ed. *The papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968) III, 506, 21 July 1763.

31. Hamer and Rogers, ed. *Papers of Henry Laurens*, IV, 24.

32. Hamer and Rogers, ed. *Papers of Henry Laurens*, V, 597.

33. Hamer and Rogers, ed. *Papers of Henry Laurens*, VII, 226 note 5.
34. Hamer and Rogers, ed. *Papers of Henry Laurens*, VII, 307.
35. Virginia Bever Platt, «Triangles and tramping: Captain Zebediah Story of Newport, 1769-1776», *American Neptune*, XXXIII (1973) 295-6.
36. Platt, «Triangles and tramping», p. 296-7.
37. Platt, «Triangles and tramping», pp. 297-9.
38. For Barbados, see PRO CO 33/16 (1736-7, 1752-3); for Jamaica, see PRO CO 142/16-19 (1753-64).
39. BL Add Ms 24168 f. 275, Letter from Tenerife, 1 October 1774. According to the naval office shipping lists, seven camels and twelve mules were sent to Barbados in 1752 (PRO CO 33/16) and 32 camels to Jamaica in 1753 (PRO CO 142/15).
40. James C. Beaglehole, *The life of Captain James Cook* (London: A & C Black, 1974) p. 31.
41. Glas, *Canaries*, p. 328.
42. *Commerce of Rhode Island 1726-1800* (2 vols. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1914) II, 413.
43. For the seventeenth century, see William Foster, *The English factories in India, 1618-1669* (13 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906-27) passim.
44. Guimerá Ravina, *Burguesía extranjera y comercio Atlántico*, p. 329.
45. Woodes, A cruisiny voyage round the world (London, 1712), pp. 11-18.
46. Beaglehole, *Captain James Cook*, p. 508.
47. PRO C 109.
48. In 1710 one foreign vessel of 120 tons, in 1711 two of a total tonnage of 320 tons (PRO CO 388/18), in 1718 ten foreign vessels (710 tons) and in 1719 six foreign vessels (151 tons) (CO 390/5) left London for the Canaries.
49. Ralph Davis, *The rise of the English shipping industry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1962) pp. 240-1. In 1686 out of 24 ships which entered London from the Canaries, eight arrived in January, seven in December and none between May and October.
50. See, for example, *Lloyd's List*, 1750, 1771.
51. Davis, *Shipping industry*, p. 241 note 2.
52. *Lloyd's List*, 17 February 1741.
53. Josiah Child, *A new discourse of trade* (4th ed. London, 1693) p. 189. William Letwin *(The origins of scientific economics: English economic thought 1660-1776* [London: Methuen, 1963] p. 233) argues that Child wrote this passage in the late 1660s.
54. *Manuscripts of the House of Lords, new series, VI, 1704-1706* (HMC, 17, 1912) pp. 203-4. For the seventeenth-century position, see Steckley, «Wine economy», p. 345.
55. Charles Whitworth, *State of the trade of Great Britain in its imports and exports progressively from the year 1697* (London, 1776) Part II, pp. 3-4. The published volume gives figures until 1773 but in a volume in the Public Record Office (BT 6/185) the figures are continues until 1801.
56. Whitworth, *State of the trade*, p. xviii.