

Panel 4 The Slave Trade, the Caribbean and the Royal Navy

During the 17th Century the adoption by the English of plantation settlements in the Caribbean for the production of sugar and tobacco led to the expansion of the slave trade.

The island of Jamaica, captured by the English from the Spanish in 1655, was settled with a system of sugar producing plantations. It became the largest single sugar producer in the West Indies, within fifteen years there were 57 plantations and by the turn of the eighteenth century, 124. The trade in sugar and in the manpower (slaves) needed to grow and harvest the crop grew massively during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the same period, sugar consumption in the UK rose more than ten fold.

Amongst the Chatham ships involved in naval actions in the Caribbean during this time was the 40 gun ship, *Lion*, which was at the capture of the island of Jamaica in 1655.

1.



Scene of Port Royal and Kingston, in Jamaica

James Hakewill

Courtesy: © National Maritime Museum, London

2.



Shipping Sugar from Antigua

Courtesy: © National Maritime Museum, London

Panel 5 **Chatham ships and their role in international wars of the 17th and 18th Centuries**

Throughout the 18th Century, Britain and her enemies fought to control the islands of the Caribbean which were home to thousands of enslaved people and the lucrative sugar and tobacco industries.

The American War of Independence (1775-1783) saw fighting throughout the Caribbean as the British fought the French and their allies, the Spanish and the Dutch. Medway built ships fought off Barbados, St Lucia, Grenada, Haiti, Martinique, Bermuda, St Kitts, St Martin, Dominica, Puerto Rico and San Domingo. In 1778, the Chatham built 6th rate, *Ariadne*, was involved in Rear Admiral Samuel Barrington's re-capture of the island of St Lucia from the French.

Fighting in the Caribbean continued during the French Revolutionary (1792-1802) and the Napoleonic (1803-1815) Wars. In February 1806, four months after the Battle of Trafalgar, Sir John Duckworth defeated a French squadron of ships off San Domingo, Caribbean. The Chatham built 2nd rate, *Atlas* was involved in this action.

1.



Barrington's Action at St Lucia, 15 December 1778

Dominic Serres, the Elder

Courtesy: © Greenwich Hospital Collection, National Maritime Museum, London

2.



Duckworth's Action off San Domingo, 6 February 1806

Nicholas Pocock

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