

# Freedom

Slavery is a state in which another person controls you against your will.

Being enslaved means an absence of freedom.

In thinking about slavery, it is helpful to consider freedom.

Freedom is an ability to act in accordance with one's own true self and values.

A sense of freedom is different for everyone.

## **What does freedom mean to you?**

**Here are some examples of the different types of freedom:**

Freedom of speech

Freedom of choice

Political freedom

Freedom of thought

Freedom of information

## Slavery in Pre-historic Times

Archaeology shows evidence that slavery has been happening since pre-historic times. For example, an Iron Age slave chain was found at Llyn Cerrig Bach in Wales.

This was probably used to force a number of slaves to walk together and to prevent them escaping.

People became enslaved for different reasons. Some people were enslaved because they were victims of warfare. Warring groups may have taken prisoners from their defeated enemies. These captives had to do what their captors wanted them to do. In effect, they were slaves.

Others may have been enslaved so that they would carry out arduous work tasks for their captors such as digging the giant banks and ditches of Iron Age hillforts.

Yet other people may have been taken for ritual reasons and archaeologists believe that the bound bodies found in the bogs were slaves who were offered to the 'gods' as human sacrifices.



Bronze Age Axe Head.  
Herefordshire Heritage Services.

Left: Midsummer Camp, Malvern Hills.

Below: Midsummer Camp Iron Age Hill Fort.  
Woolhope Naturalists Field Club.





## Slavery in the Classical World

In Ancient Greek and Roman times, social position was very important. If you were not a citizen you had very few rights and you could become a slave in the following ways:

- Born into slavery by being the child of a slave.
- Taken prisoner if your city was attacked.
- Abandoned as a baby by your parents (anyone could claim you and then enslave you.)
- You might be sold into slavery; for poor families this was often their only way of surviving.

### Different types of slaves

#### Domestic slaves

These slaves did good jobs and were often treated as part of the family. Some domestic slaves bought their freedom from their masters.

#### Slave labourers

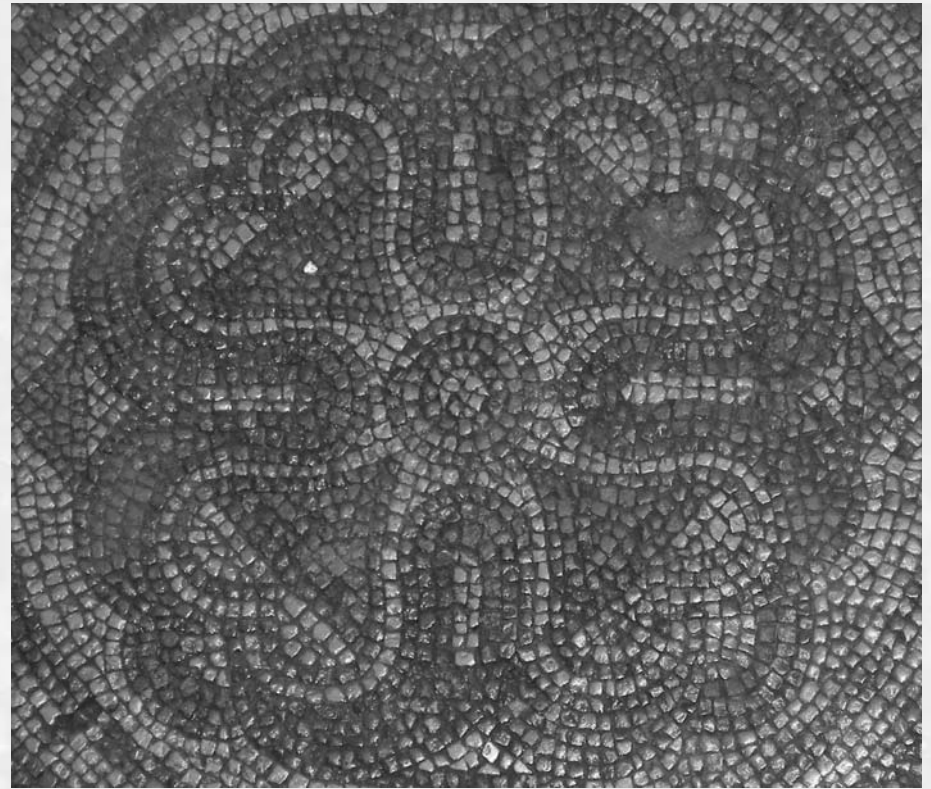
They often did the most dangerous and difficult work such as mining.

#### Public slaves

These slaves worked as police officers, secretaries and street sweepers.

#### War captives

They carried out largely unskilled tasks and were often chained up to do their work.



Top: Roman Mosaic from Magna. (Kenchester). 4th century AD. Villas owned by wealthy people would have had mosaic floors like this.

*Herefordshire Heritage Services.*

Right: Roman candlestick. Domestic slaves would be responsible for tending to lighting.

*Herefordshire Heritage Services.*

Below left: Roman slave shackles.

*Herefordshire Heritage Services.*

Below: Painted wall plaster.

*Woolhope Naturalists Field Club. Copyright: G.C.F. Hayter*



Roman Magna (Kenchester); 4th century AD. Roman towns like Kenchester would have had domestic slaves.

*Reconstruction by Brian Byron.*

## Slavery in the Medieval World

The Domesday book was commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086. It lists who owned property in England, for the purposes of taxation. Most landowners had slaves listed as part of their property.

What did being a slave mean in Medieval times? Slaves were people who owed personal service to another. They were not free and could not move house or change their job without permission. Medieval slaves' loyalty belonged to the landowner on whose land they lived.

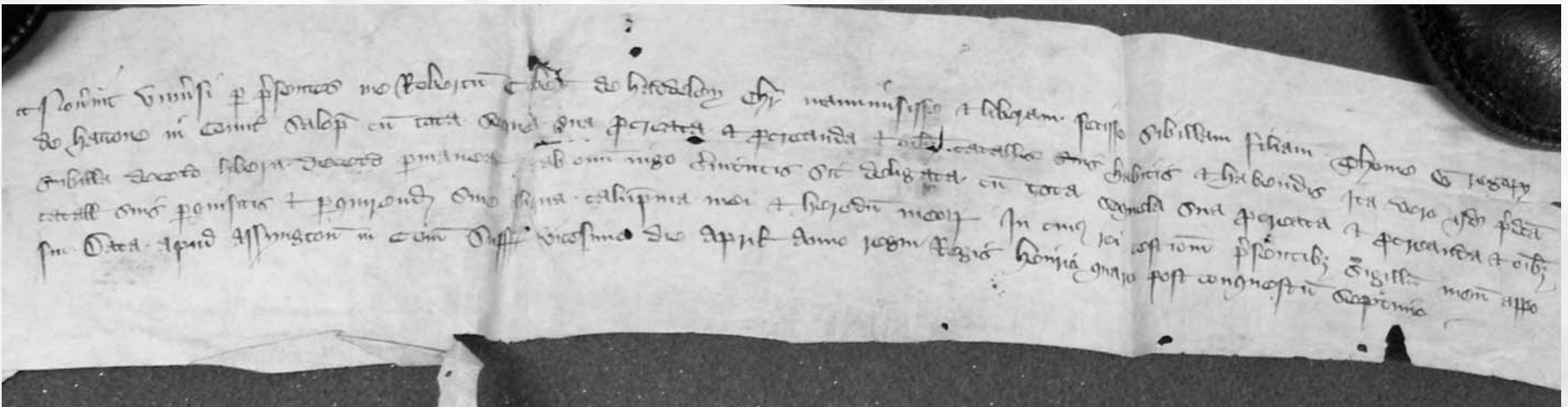
The Domesday book for Herefordshire shows us just how common slavery was at the time of Norman conquest.

It lists who owned how many slaves and whether these slaves were male or female. Virtually every hundred had slaves working there and church lands were no exception.

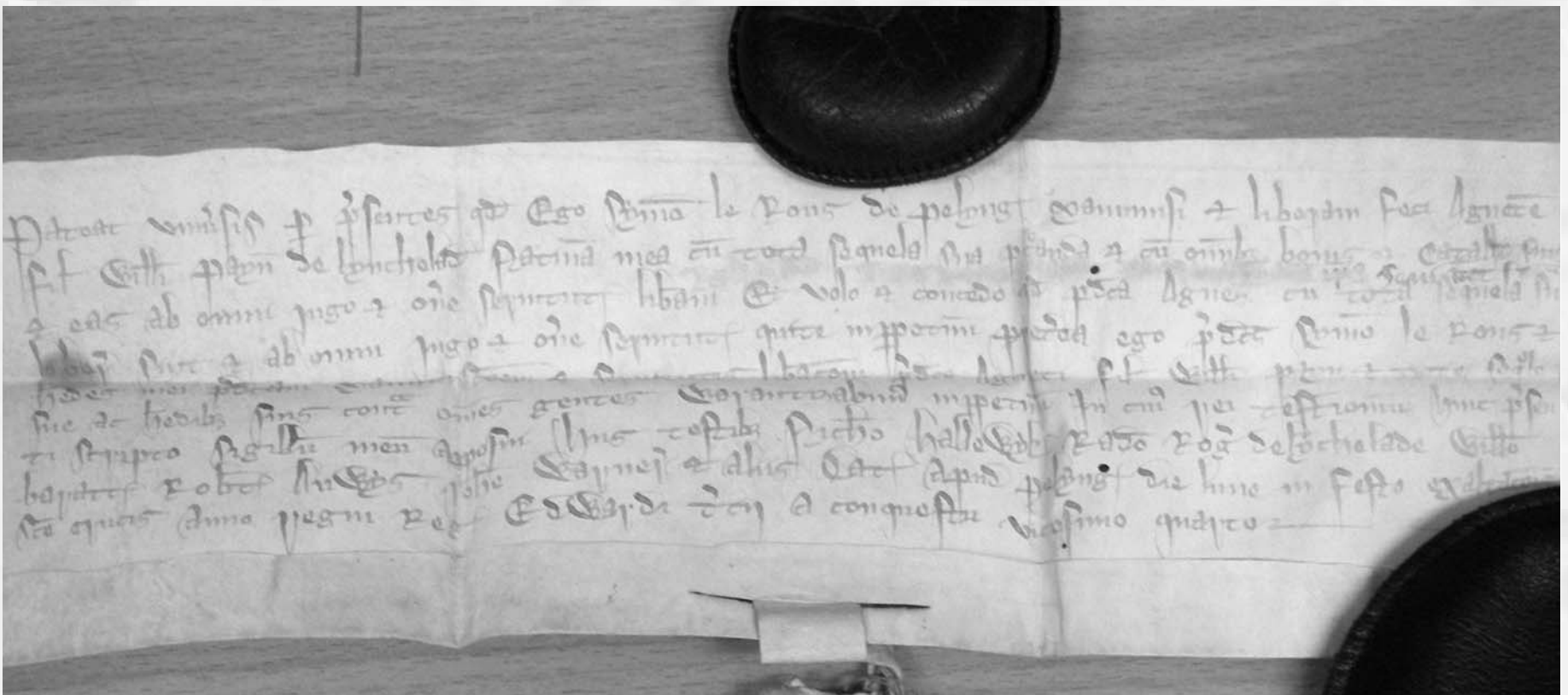
For example, Wulfwy of Ashperton in Herefordshire had 13 slaves listed for his land in the Domesday Book.



Cosh used for controlling and punishing slaves.  
Herefordshire Heritage Services.



Above and below: Manumission documents stating that an enslaved person is now free. Copyright: Shropshire Archives.





## Economic Drivers for the Slave Trade

Human slavery had been going on throughout history before the Transatlantic slave trade.

However, the industrial and political situation in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, created an economic climate that brought about enslavement of African peoples on a large scale.

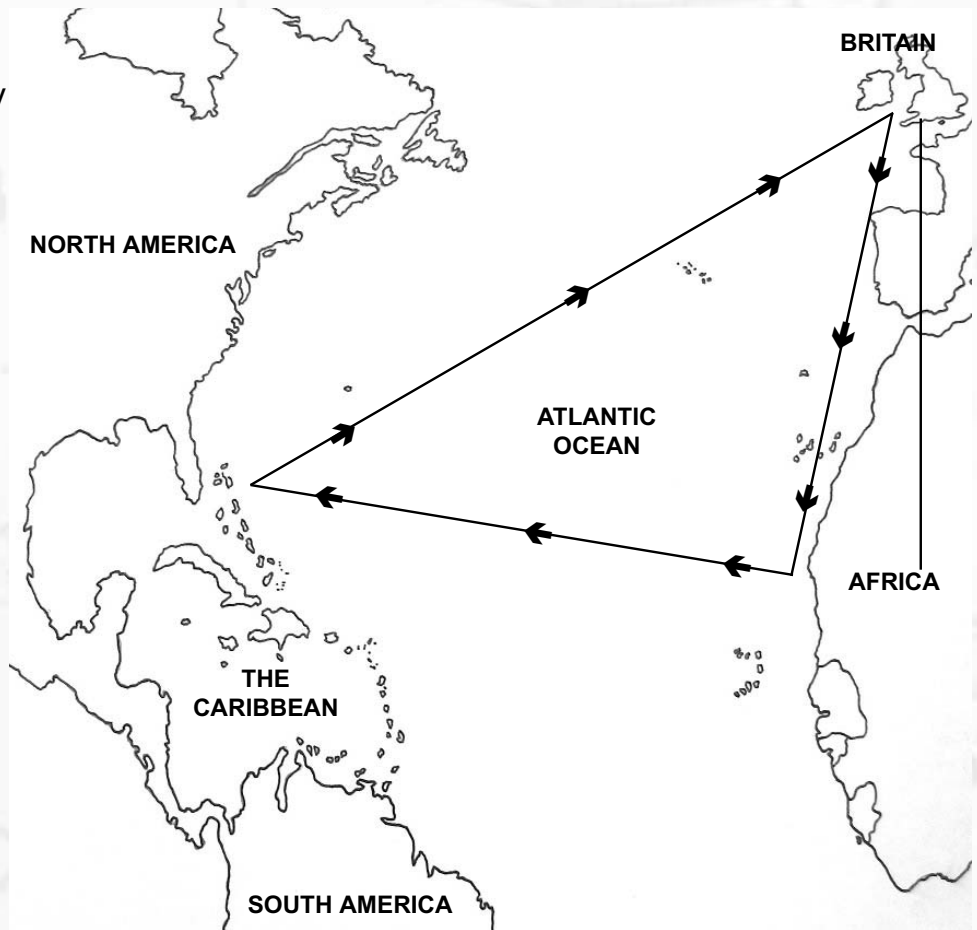
Slavery was also already known amongst African peoples before the Transatlantic trade. Enslavement of powerful people helped political stability when a new ruler took over or poor people may have been enslaved to pay off a debt.

Chiefs also sold people as a form of punishment.

This trade in slaves was known to European explorers and traders who would exchange European goods with African traders in exchange for slaves.

When a demand for cheap labour in the Americas emerged as a result of the development of new sugar and cotton plantations, traders turned their attention to Africa to create a slave workforce.

This prompted African slave traders to go on raids specifically to provide slaves for the Transatlantic slave trade.



Map showing the 'Triangular Trade' route.

Sugar production map, 1822.

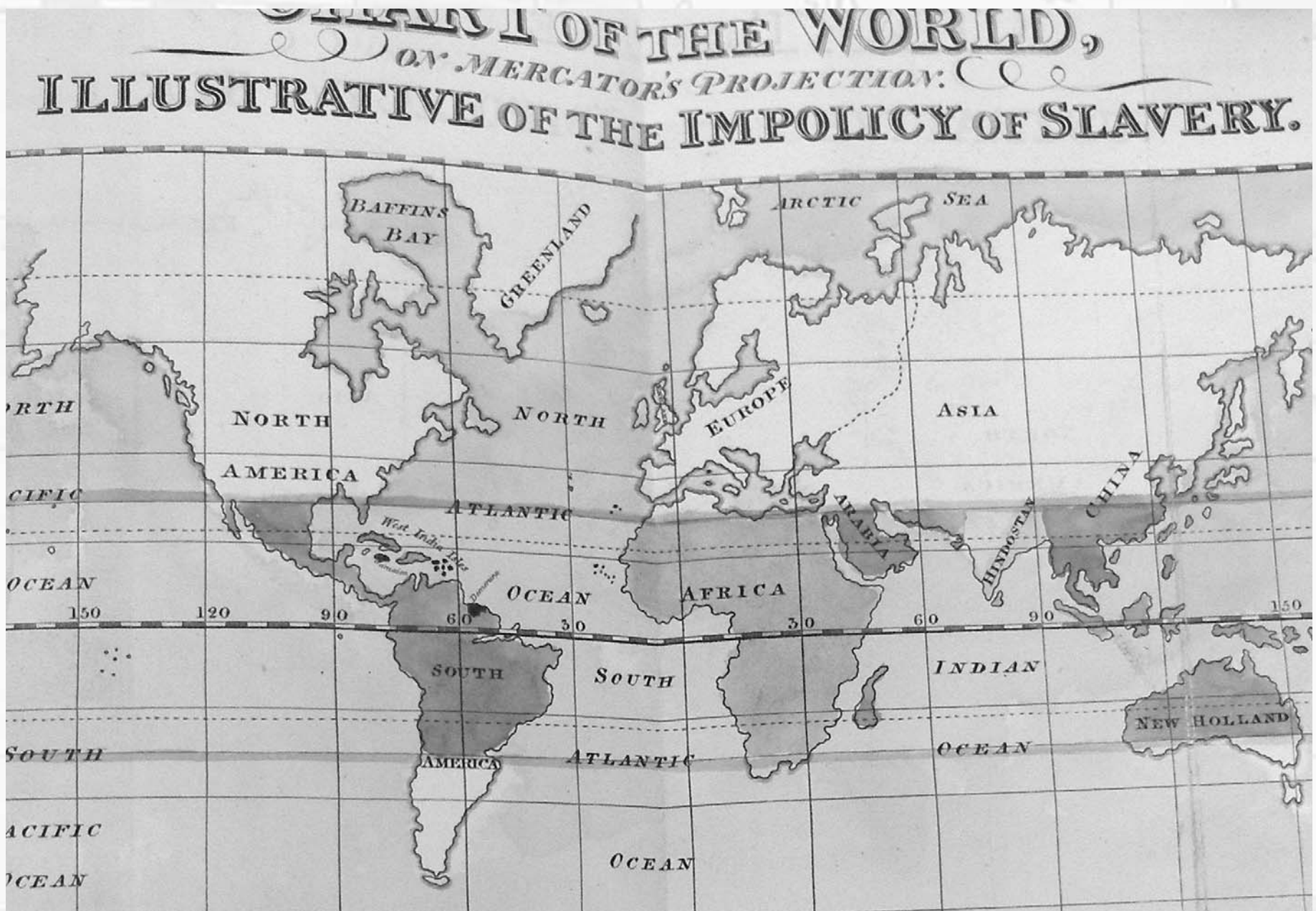
Red: Countries from which Britain obtained sugar.

Blue: No sugar cultivation due to slave trade.

Pink: Trade in sugar restricted.

Green: Duties too high for Britain to buy sugar.

Copyright: Shropshire Archives.



## Triangular Trade

John Hawkins was the first major English slave trader and he has local connections because he married Margaret Vaughan of Kington.

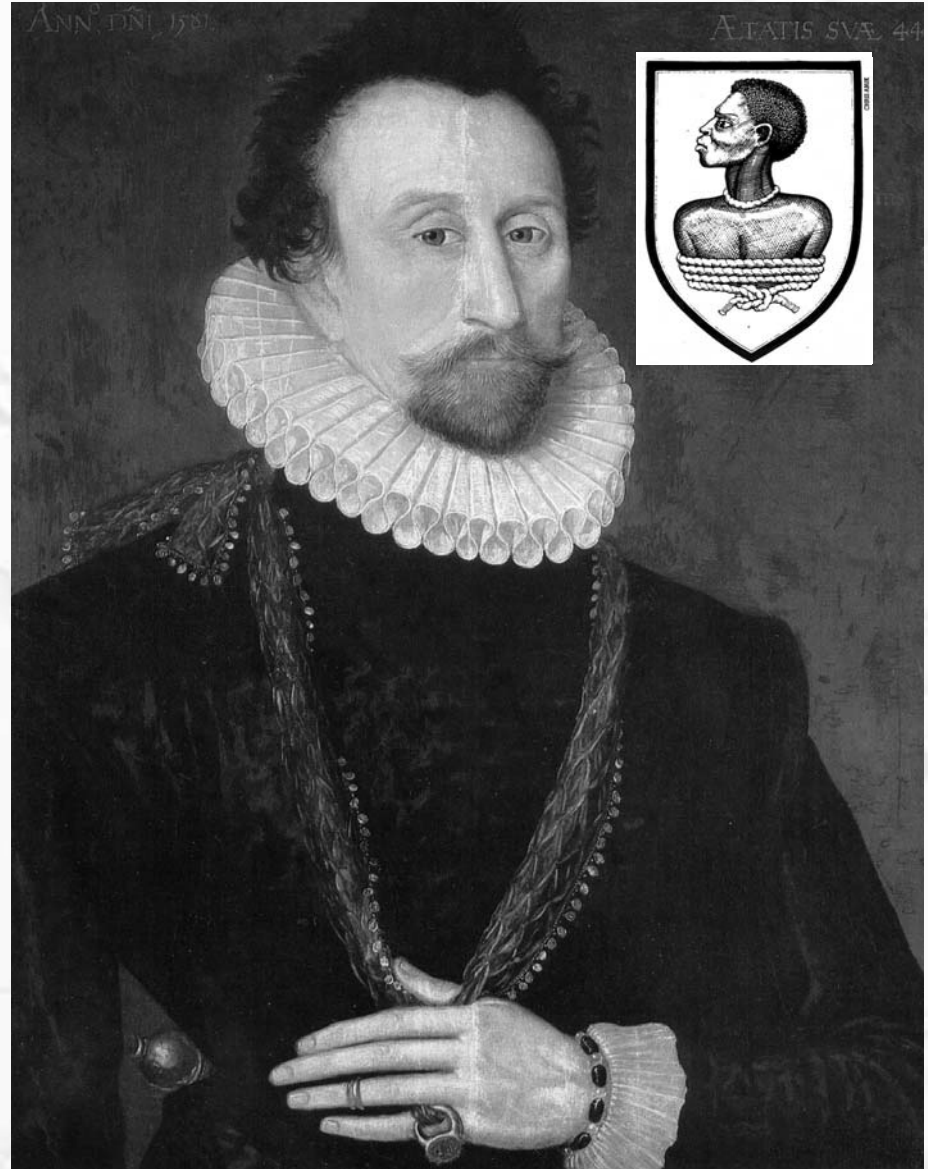
His first slave-trading voyage was in 1562. At this time, the trade was dominated by Spain and Portugal.

Hawkins acquired his cargo of 300 slaves by stealing them from the Portuguese off the coast of Sierra Leone.

He took these slaves by ship to San Domingo in the Caribbean, where he sold them and made a profit.

He then returned to England with tropical produce from the Caribbean, which he sold on, making even more money.

This three-part trade of goods from Britain to Africa, slaves from Africa to the Caribbean and of Caribbean produce to Britain became known as the "Triangular Trade" and it was the driving economic force behind the Transatlantic slave trade.



John Hawkins.

*Wikimedia commons.*

*Top right:* Hawkins altered his crest, to show an enslaved African, representing his slave trading activities.

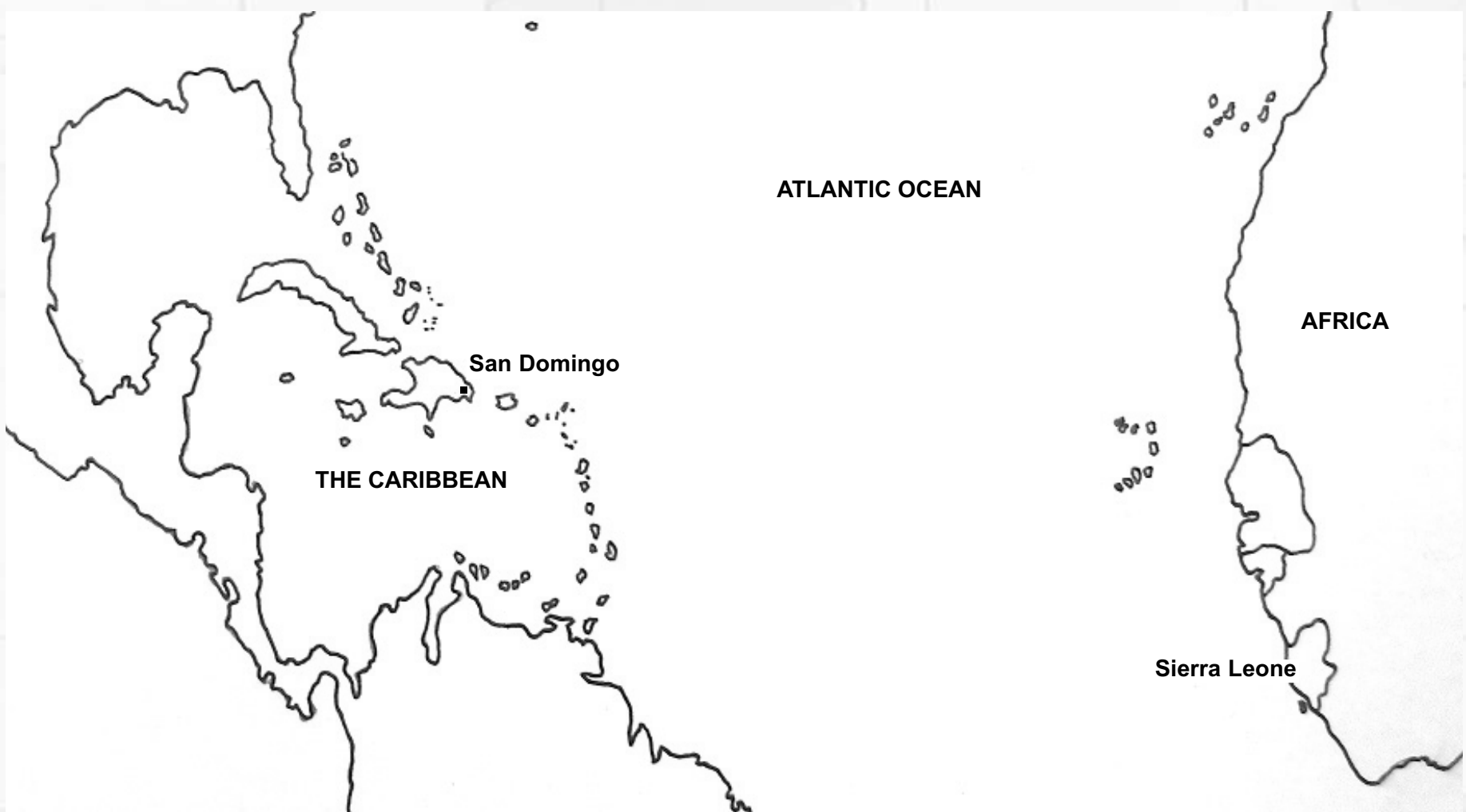
*Illustration by Chris Abuk.*



*Left:* African beaded jewellery.

*Herefordshire Heritage Services.*

*Below:* Map showing John Hawkins' first voyage carrying enslaved people from Africa to the Caribbean.





## Captured! Being enslaved

African peoples from over 173 African city states and kingdoms were enslaved during the 400 years of the Transatlantic slave trade.

The European slave traders relied upon developing good relationships with the African slave traders so they could get the required number of slaves at the right price when they wanted them.



Porcelain bowl showing possible slave ships and slave fort off the coast of Africa

*Herefordshire Heritage Services*



African beaded necklace.

*Herefordshire Heritage Services.*

Slave ship.  
Wood engraving by Garrick Palmer.

*Herefordshire Heritage Services.*

African slavery was different to the chattel slavery of the Transatlantic slave trade, where people became the possessions of their owners. African slavery was more like bonded labour: enslaved people had the right to buy their freedom after a period of time.

The Transatlantic slave trade was a much more brutal and degrading form of enslavement than African peoples had experienced before.

This brutality started straight away: captured Africans were held, often for months, in coastal forts waiting to be loaded onto Transatlantic slave ships.

