

*British Records Relating to
America in Microform (BRRAM)*

The Hobhouse Papers, 1722-1755

Introduction by Walter E. Minchinton

with contents of the microfilm
collection

Publication no. R03744

MICROFORM ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS

THE HOBHOUSE PAPERS 1722 - 1755

Letters and other papers of
Isaac Hobhouse & Co., Bristol merchant

in
Bristol Central Library
and
Bristol Record Office

Introduction by
Walter E. Minchinton

First published in 1967

© **2006 Microform Academic Publishers**
Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF3 2AP, UK
www.microform.co.uk/academic
Tel: +44 (0)1925 825700
Fax: +44 (0)1924 871005
Email: map@microform.co.uk

THE HOBHOUSE PAPERS 1722 - 1755

Letters and other papers of Isaac Hobhouse & Co. Bristol merchants

1. PROVENANCE

The bulk of the material microfilmed, consisting of about 140 letters to Isaac Hobhouse & Co. and other papers, came into the possession of a leading Bristol antiquarian, Charles Thornton Jefferies in the late nineteenth century and was purchased from him for the Bristol Central Library in 1893. The Hobhouse Papers form part of the Jefferies Collection which contains much material about the history of Bristol. As will be obvious from a study of the material on the film, these letters and other papers consist of remnants which were saved from destruction. It is evident that Isaac Hobhouse & Co. kept their papers in good order and it is regrettable that journals, ledgers and account books as well as the out-letters have all disappeared. As far as is known no other Hobhouse Papers survive in private hands. In the Bristol Record Office in the Council House, Bristol, however, there are a further eight letters (BRO 8029(16)a-g) written by correspondents to Isaac Hobhouse & Co. (two of which are duplicates of those in the Jefferies Collection). These, too, are reproduced here.

The material is microfilmed in archive order: first, the letters and other papers from the Jefferies Mss. and then the eight letters from the Bristol Record Office.

2. ISAAC HOBHOUSE & COMPANY

Isaac Hobhouse & Co. were a leading Bristol merchant house in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The firm was founded by Isaac Hobhouse who had been born in 1685 and brought up at Minehead in Somerset. Directly he reached manhood, he succumbed to the attractive power of Bristol, fast increasing in importance as 'the metropolis of the west', the second largest English city and seaport at that time. There Hobhouse was firmly established by the time this correspondence opened in 1722/3. His commercial interests were largely concentrated in trade between England, the west coast of Africa and either the West Indies or the southern plantation colonies, Virginia and South Carolina. Often eighteenth-century merchants were shipowners as well and this was true of Isaac Hobhouse. Like other Bristol merchants of his time, Hobhouse had industrial interests. He was a partner in Joseph Percivall & Copper Co. and had shares in a sugar refinery at Redcliffe, Bristol.

Though Hobhouse was regarded by his contemporaries as an eminent merchant, he did not, like many of them, hold office in the government of the city of Bristol of which he became a free burgess in 1724, or in the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol, of which he became a member in the same year. Possibly owing to some physical infirmity he seems to have shunned public life. But he joined with other Bristol merchants to send petitions to the government about the Virginia trade in 1723, the South Carolina trade in 1734 and the Africa trade in 1739. When the new Africa Company was founded in 1750, he became a member. According to his obituary, he retired from business about 1758 and died, unmarried, at his house in Queen's Square, Bristol on 20 February 1763.

Like many other eighteenth century trading concerns, the firm of Isaac Hobhouse & Co. was a terminable partnership, and the partners, other than Hobhouse himself, changed from time to time. They included a number of other Bristol merchants, most of them prominent in the life of the city. John Bartlett was sheriff in 1727 and mayor in 1742. He died on 22 August 1748. Lewis Casamajor, a Huguenot, settled in Bristol in 1695, became a member of the Society of Merchants in 1725 and died in April 1743. William Challoner, member of a well-established Bristol family, was master of the Society of Merchant Venturers in 1740 and died on 21 April 1743 aged 67. James Laroche was sheriff of Bristol in 1734, mayor in 1750, master of the Society of Merchants in 1751 and died about September 1770. Lyonel Lyde, an eminent Bristol Virginia merchant, sheriff in 1722 and mayor in 1735, master of the Society of Merchant Venturers in 1741, had interests in a glass house at Stanton Drew, Somerset and in an ironworks in Virginia. He was one of the Bristol merchants concerned in the transport of felons to the colonies. He died in early 1745. Noblet Ruddock, sheriff in 1721, was partner in the Sea Mills Dock Co. He became bankrupt in 1727 when he left Bristol for the West Indies where he continued to trade. Onesiphorus Tyndall was sheriff of Bristol 1707 and died on 27 August 1748, aged 91.

3. THE CORRESPONDENTS

For a number of the correspondents of Isaac Hobhouse & Co., the only information about their existence is that they signed letters written to the Bristol merchant house. Some of them were masters of vessels such as Captain Japhet Bird, Captain Owen Arnold, John Davis, master of the Friendship, and Edward Holden, master of the Greyhound. Others were merchants or planters in the West Indies or the mainland colonies like Samuel Weekes of Boston, John Molineux of Montserrat, Crumpe & Hasell of Barbadoes and Tyndall & Assheton of Kingston, Jamaica. This Tyndall was probably related to Onesiphorus Tyndall of Bristol, one-time partner in Isaac Hobhouse & Co. But about a few of the correspondents a little more is known. John Micel Chenevard was a Huguenot who lived in Newport, Rhode Island. He died on 7 April 1735 aged 56 years. More too is known about the Virginia correspondents.

Augustine Moore, a Virginia tobacco planter, was born in England about 1685 and went to Virginia in 1700. Colonel John Tayloe was a prominent Virginian who lived at Mount Airey on the Rappahannock River. He had close connections with Bristol. He was a partner with Lyonel Lyde, another of Hobhouse's partners, in the Bristol Iron Works, Virginia, and married Elizabeth, the widow of Stephen Lyde, formerly of Bristol. George Braxton, the third of the Virginian correspondents, came from a leading merchant family in that colony.

4. CONTENTS OF THE FILM

Most of the material here reproduced consists of letters to Isaac Hobhouse & Co. from correspondents in other places. The following list shows the dates and places of origin of the letters.

LONDON	1729, 14 August 1750, 11 July
MADEIRA	1723, 10, 23 April; 12 May
BOSTON (Mass)	1722/3, 15, 17, 18 January 1723, 23 May; 11 June 1723/4, 2, 13(3), 19 January 1727, 30 November 1730/1, 6 January 1736, 3 September; 23 November
NEWPORT (RI)	1722/3, 14 March 1723, 29 March; 27 May 1723/4, 3 February
PHILADELPHIA	1736, 12 June
VIRGINIA	1722/3, 11 February; 8 March 1723, 26 March; 30 April; 2, 3, 6, 9, 20, 26, 29 May; 4, 21, 22, 25 June 1741, 8 June
SOUTH CAROLINA	1722/3, 17 February 1723, 9 March; 17 April 1723/3, 25 January 1736, 9, 30(2) June
ANTIGUA	1723, 10 June 1729, 16 December 1736. 2, 12, 16 June
BARBADOES	1723, 25, 26(2), 27, 28 March; 24(2), 30(2) April; 15, 17(2) May; 1, 8, 21(2) 29 June; 1 July 1723/4, 3 January; 13 March 1729, 29 March 1730/1, 12 January

1731, 1 June
1733, 25 July
1736, 6 June

JAMAICA 1722/3, 16 February; 10 March
1728/9, 5, 13(2) February; 2 March
1729, 19, 25 (2) April; 3 May; 5, 6, 8(2) June 18, 20, 21 July; 9, 14, 22,
August; 7, 8(3), 12 September; 13(2), 14, 25, 26 October, 1, 3, 13, 15,
16 November; 3 December
1729/30, 3, 7, 30, 31 January; 2, 17(2) February; 13, 16 March
1730/1, 18 February
1738, 14 December
1748, 13 October

MONTserrat 1722, 6 April
1722/3, 4, 5, 30 January; 22, 23, 24 February; 23, 24(2) March; 3, 5,
6(4), 8, 10(2), 16 April; 14, 16(2) May

ST CHRISTOPHER 1729, 20 December
1736, 16 September

Where there is more than one letter for the same date, this is indicated by a figure in brackets after the date.

It was a prevalent eighteenth-century practice, occasioned by the uncertainty oceanic travel, to send more than one copy of a letter, Separate copies were dispatched by different routes at the same time. In addition, sometimes a copy of an earlier letter accompanied a later one. Examples of both kinds are to be found in this correspondence.

The other material consists of various business documents connected with the affairs of Isaac Hobhouse & Co. It is here listed in chronological order:

1. Account of sale of goods sent to South Carolina by Isaac Hobhouse and Stephen Perry with letter from Charles Hill, 1722/3,
2. Manifest of the Dispatch and letter of instructions to the master from I. Hobhouse & Co. 1725.
3. Deed of establishment of a factory in the West Indies 1725.
4. Sale of a cargo of slaves tor Freke & Co. Barbadoes 1730.
5. Public instrument, verification and survey concerning damage to sailcloth at Boston 1731.
6. Letter of instructions to Capt. Richard Prankard, 29 January 1732/3.
7. Power of attorney to enable Capt. John Davis to act on Isaac Hobhouse's behalf in

Newfoundland 1739.

8. Bill of lading of goods shipped from Bristol to Jamaica, 8 January 1742/3.
9. A list of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa 1755.
10. Cargo for a slave vessel, undated.

The Hobhouse Papers give a vivid picture of the manner in which trade was conducted from Bristol in the early eighteenth century. They give details of the commodities carried, the methods of payment and the problems connected with the trade with Africa, the West Indies and the plantation colonies. They illuminate, too, the various functions of the merchant, as shipowner, as factor, as banker and as friend. The letters also cast light on colonial shipbuilding.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Some of the Hobhouse papers have already appeared in print; they are to be found in:

Elizabeth Donnan, ed. Documents illustrative of the history of the slave trade to America (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution, 1930-5; New York: Octagon Books, 1965) II and IV

Walter E. Minchinton, The trade of Bristol in the eighteenth century (Bristol Record Society, XX, 1957)

-----, 'The Virginia letters of Isaac Hobhouse, merchant of Bristol', Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVI (1958) 278-301

-----, 'Shipbuilding in Colonial Rhode Island', Rhode Island History, XX (1961) 119-24

2. More information about the trade of Bristol in the eighteenth century can be found in the above and also in:

John Latimer, Annals of Bristol in the eighteenth century (Bristol 1893)

Charles M. Maclnnes, A gateway of empire (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1939; Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1968)

Richard Pares, A West-India fortune (Longmans, 1950)

BRITISH RECORDS RELATING TO AMERICA IN MICROFORM (BRRAM)

General Editor: Professor Kenneth Morgan, Brunel University

This series of microfilms, which includes over 100 titles, covers many aspects of American history. Material ranges in time from the colonial period to the twentieth century and in place from Quebec to the West Indies. The series includes records relating to trade, industry, slavery & plantations, agriculture & ranching, immigration & settlement, the anti-slavery movement, politics and military affairs. There are personal papers and diaries as well as state documents and the records of industrial and commercial concerns. Primary printed material (newspapers, pamphlets, bibliographies, etc.) as well as manuscript collections are also included.

We are constantly seeking to publish new titles in this series and any suggestions for material for inclusion should be sent to our General Editor:

Professor Kenneth Morgan,
Gaskell Building,
Brunel University,
Uxbridge.
UB8 3PH
Email: kenneth.morgan@brunel.ac.uk

Full details of all titles published in this series is available on our website: **www.microform.co.uk/academic**. Or alternatively, request further information from the publishers direct (details below).

Microform Academic Publishers
Main Street, East Ardsley, Wakefield,
West Yorkshire, WF3 2AP, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1924 825700 Fax: +44 (0)1924 871005
Website: www.microform.co.uk/academic
Email: map@microform.co.uk