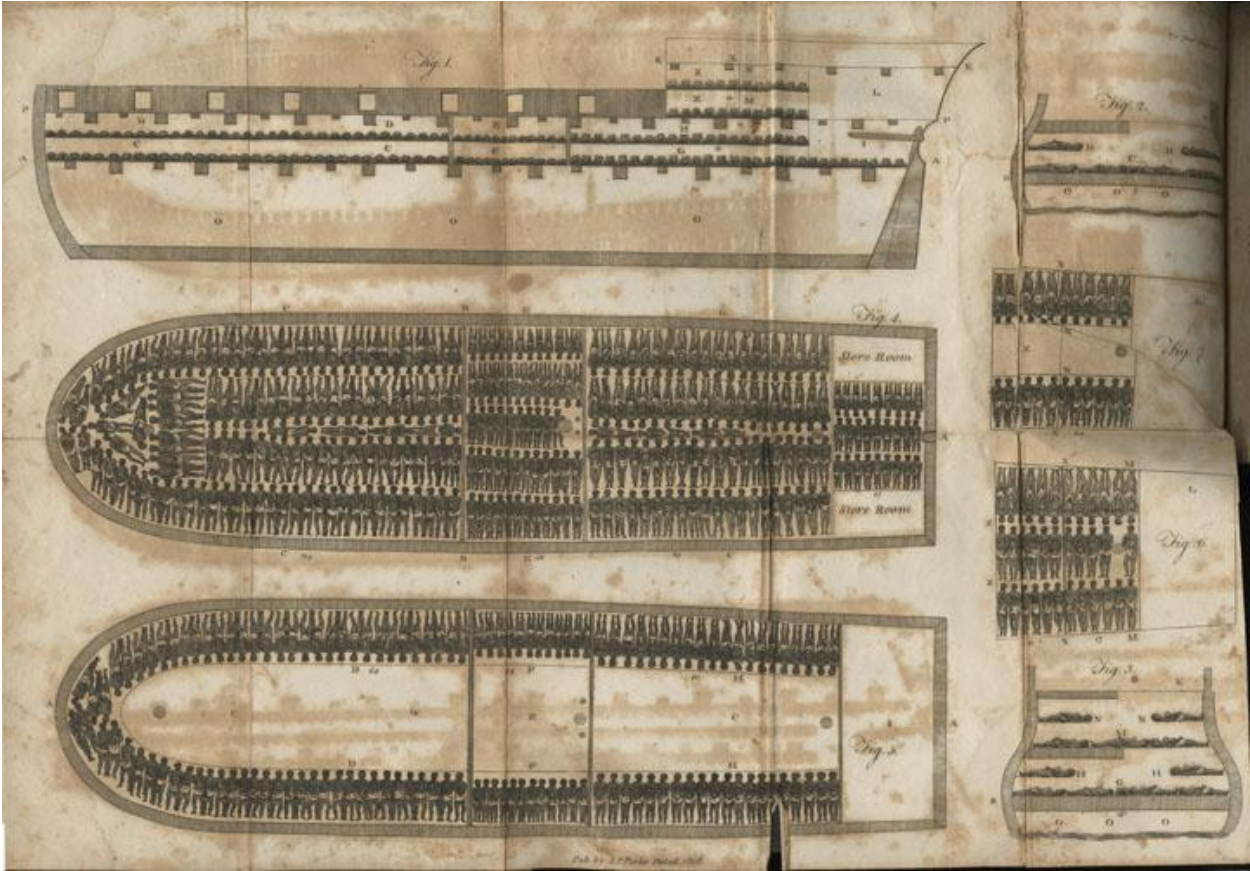


# The Slave Ship *Brookes*



Source: Thomas Clarkson (1808). *The History of the Rise, Progress & Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African slave-trade by the British Parliament*. OHS Archives/Library V 326.1 C 561 h 1808 v. 2. Image Number: TAH0854

## A Description of the Slave Ship *Brookes*

would be ruined by their voyages. The work was called *An Essay on the comparative Efficiency of Regulation or Abolition as applied to the Slave-trade.*

→ The committee also in this interval brought out their famous print of the plan and section of a slave-ship; which was designed to give the spectator an idea of the sufferings of the Africans in the Middle Passage, and this so familiarly, that he might instantly pronounce upon the miseries experienced there. The committee at Plymouth had been the first to suggest the idea; but that in London had now improved it. As this print seemed to make an instantaneous impression of horror upon all who saw it, and as it was therefore very instrumental, in consequence of the wide circulation given it, in serving the cause of the injured Africans, I have given the reader a copy of it in the annexed plate, and I will now state the ground or basis, upon which it was formed.

It must be obvious that it became the committee to select some one ship, which had been engaged in the Slave-trade, with her real dimensions, if they meant to make a fair representation of the manner of the transportation. When Captain Parrey of the royal navy, returned from Liverpool, to which place government had sent him, he brought with him the admeasurement of several vessels, which had been so employed, and laid them on the table of the house of commons. At

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the top of his list stood the ship *Brookes*. The committee therefore, in choosing a vessel on this occasion, made use of the ship *Brookes*; and this they did, because they thought it less objectionable to take the first that came, than any other. The vessel then in the plate is the vessel now mentioned, and the following is her admeasurement as given in by Captain Parrey.

	Ft.	In.
Length of the lower deck, gratings, and bulk heads included at A A,	100	0
Breadth of beam on the lower deck inside, B B,	25	4
Depth of hold O O O, from ceiling to ceiling,	10	0
Height between decks from deck to deck,	5	6
Length of the men's room, C C, on the lower deck,	46	0
Breadth of the men's room, C C, on the lower deck,	23	4
Length of the platform, D D, in the men's room,	46	0
Breadth of the platform, in the men's room, on each side,	6	0
Length of the boys' room, E E,	13	9
Breadth of the boys' room,	23	6
Breadth of platform, F F, in boys' room,	5	0
Length of women's room, G G,	23	6
Breadth of women's room,	23	0
Length of platform, H H, in women's room,	23	6
Breadth of platform in women's room,	6	0
Length of the gun-room, I I, on the lower deck,	10	6
Breadth of the gun-room on the lower deck,	12	0
Length of the quarter deck, K K,	33	6
Breadth of the quarter deck,	19	6
Length of the cabin, L L,	14	0
Height of the cabin,	5	2
Length of the half deck, M M,	16	6
Height of the half deck,	6	2
Length of the platform, N N, on the half deck,	15	6
Breadth of the platform on the half deck,	6	0
Upper deck, P P,		

The committee, having proceeded thus far, thought that they should now allow certain dimensions for every man, woman, and child; and then

see, how many persons, upon such dimensions and upon the admeasurements just given, could be stowed in this vessel. They allowed, accordingly, to every man slave six feet by one foot four inches for room, to every woman five feet by one foot four, to every boy five feet by one foot two, and to every girl four feet six by one foot. They then stowed them, and found them as in the annexed plate, that is, they found (deducting the women stowed in Z of figures 6 and 7, which spaces, being half of the half deck, were allowed by Sir William Dolben's last bill to the seamen) that only four hundred and fifty could be stowed in her, and the reader will find, if he should think it worth while to count the figures in the plate, that, on making the deduction mentioned, they will amount to this number.

The committee then thought it right to inquire how many slaves the act of Sir William Dolben allowed this vessel to carry, and they found the number to be four hundred and fifty-four; that is, they found it allowed her to carry four more than could be put in without trespassing upon the room allotted to the rest; for we see that the bodies of the slaves, except just at the head of the vessel, already touch each other, and that no deduction has been made for tubs or stanchions to support the platforms and decks.

Such was the picture, which the committee were obliged to draw, if they regarded mathema-

tical accuracy, of the room allotted to the slaves in this vessel. By this picture was exhibited the nature of the Elysium, which Mr. Norris and others had invented for them during their transportation from their own country. By this picture were seen also the advantages of Sir William Dolben's bill; for many, on looking at the plate, considered the regulation itself as perfect barbarism. The advantages however obtained by it were considerable; for the Brookes was now restricted to four hundred and fifty slaves, whereas it was proved that she carried six hundred and nine in a former voyage.

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The committee, at the conclusion of the session of parliament, made a suitable report. It will be unnecessary to detail this for obvious reasons. There was, however, one thing contained in it, which ought not to be omitted. It stated, with appropriate concern, the death of the first controversial writer, and of one of the most able and indefatigable labourers, in their cause. Mr. Ramsay had been for some time indisposed. The climate of the West Indies, during a residence of twenty years, and the agitation in which his mind had been kept for the last four years of his life, in consequence of the virulent attacks on his word and character by those interested in the continuance of the trade, had contributed to undermine his constitution. During his whole illness he was cheerful and composed; nor did he allow it to hinder