



## Introduction lesson

### Lesson 6.2: Homeward voyage

#### Medical care

During the entire voyage persons aboard The Unity were given free medical care. The surgeon, Petrus Henricus Couperus, was responsible for the wellbeing of the crewmembers and slaves. A surgeons mate, Laurens Bernard, assisted him. The surgeon brought medical supplies and medicine along from Zeeland. Before departure the trunk was inspected and carefully locked. The surgeon received the key and was responsible for the content of the trunk during the voyage. During the journey surgeon Couperus kept a journal of all the patients and illnesses and medications he administered.

#### Diseases

The diseases that typically occurred on board of a ship with a tropical destination were:

- scurvy
- diarrhea
- red flux or dysentery
- fever / malaria

Scurvy was caused by a lack of vitamin C. On board the disease was treated with lemon- or limejuice. Nearly all people on board the ship, both crew and slaves, sooner or later got diarrhea. Worse was dysentery: a highly contagious infection of the digestive tract. This infection results in a watery diarrhea stool, containing blood and mucus; hence the name: 'red flux'. Many persons on board got malaria. Malaria is an infectious disease caused by malaria parasites, which enter the body following a mosquito bite. The symptoms include fever, chills, muscle aches and headache.

#### Voyage home

The Unity began her voyage home on December 19, 1762. The crew was away from home for more than a year by then, 445 days to be exact. The Unity passed the island of Barbados on December 26<sup>th</sup>, which is the most eastern island of the Caribbean. After Barbados the wind increased severely and stayed that way for months. Late January the ship was caught in a severe storm. With a lot of seamanship the ship finally reached the English Channel on February 13, 1763. The captain decided to wait out the storm in the harbor of Plymouth. In March The Unity finally sailed onto the Western Scheldt only to run aground on a sandbank, even though there was a pilot on board. After a number of problems The Unity sailed into the Middelburg harbor on March 27, 1763. The crew departed the ship and was welcomed home by family and friends. The captain and first mate went to work to finalize the paperwork. The ship's pay book and the muster roll for the triangle voyage of The Unity 1761-1763 were closed.

#### More information:

Medical care on board: <http://eenigheid.slavenhandelmcc.nl/middelburgse-commercie-compagnie-en/medical-care/?lang=en>

The homeward voyage: <http://eenigheid.slavenhandelmcc.nl/trajecten-van-de-reis-en/thuisreis-en/?lang=en>