

London, Sugar & Slavery

Legacies of the British trade in enslaved Africans in London's Docklands

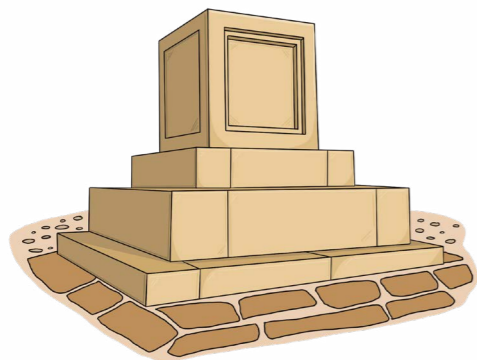
Support your school visit to the London, Sugar & Slavery gallery by exploring the area around the museum. Use the landmarks highlighted on this map as conversation starters with your students, thinking about the legacies of the trade in enslaved Africans that we can still see in London today.

LONDON MUSEUM DOCKLANDS

1 London Museum Docklands



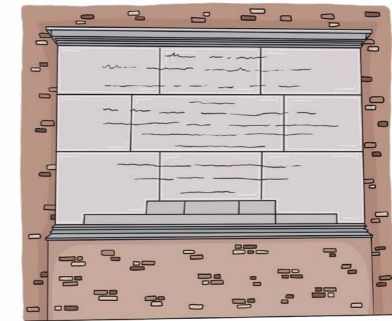
2 Empty plinth



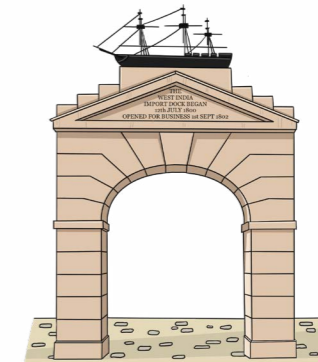
3 West India Quay DLR station



4 Ornamental foundation stone



5 Hibbert's Gate



6 Canary Wharf



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LONDON MUSEUM DOCKLANDS

1 London Museum Docklands

The museum is housed in No.1 Warehouse – a 200-year-old former sugar warehouse in what was the world's first dock complex, built in 1802.

Although enslaved Africans never laboured inside this building, the sugar (and rum created from it) stored here in the 19th century was grown and harvested by enslaved African people on plantations in the Caribbean.

The building of the warehouse itself was also funded by the proceeds generated from the trade in enslaved Africans and the goods resulting from their forced labour.

2 Empty plinth

Between 1997 and June 2020, a statue of the London-based merchant, Robert Milligan, stood on this plinth. The statue had been created in 1809 to celebrate Milligan's role in driving the construction of the West India Dock.

Neither the statue nor its inscription made any mention of the 526 enslaved Africans Milligan claimed ownership of upon his death in 1809, or the wealth he had generated by buying enslaved African people and selling them to other enslavers.

The statue was removed by local authorities in 2020 in response to a worldwide movement to remove statues which commemorate supporters of slavery.

3 West India Quay DLR station

In 1802 when the West India Dock was constructed, it was so named because many of the goods arriving here came from the Caribbean, commonly referred to by the colonial term the 'West Indies'.

The area around the museum still has this name, as the DLR station indicates. You will also find the West India Dock Road running behind the museum.

Until 1807, ships also travelled from the West India Dock to West Africa in order to transport enslaved Africans to plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas. At least 22 ships used in the trafficking of enslaved people unloaded produce at these docks.

4 Ornamental foundation stone

This ornamental stone uncritically celebrates the role of George Hibbert, the Chairman of the West India Dock Company from 1800-1802, and Robert Milligan, who was the company's Deputy Chairman at the time, in establishing the West India Dock.

Stating that the building of the West India Dock complex would 'increase' British commerce, it alludes to the fact that the dock was built to make the import of goods like sugar, rum and coffee from the Caribbean more regular, efficient and profitable.

It doesn't mention the fact that this increase in commerce was only possible because of the trade in enslaved Africans and their forced labour on the Caribbean plantations where this produce was grown.

5 Hibbert's Gate

This is a replica of the main gate into to the West India Dock, which was built in 1803, and demolished in 1930. Atop the gate sits 'The Hibbert', a merchant vessel named after George Hibbert. The ship travelled extensively to the Caribbean, bringing back sugar, rum, cotton, coffee and tropical hardwoods. George Hibbert was directly linked with the British trade in enslaved Africans and claimed ownership of a number of enslaved people in the Caribbean.

6 Canary Wharf

Since the late 1980s, the Canary Wharf skyline has become a symbol of London's wealth. But back in the early 19th century, London's prosperity was instead symbolised by the constant flow of ships laden with cargoes coming into this area, and the major infrastructure needed to make that happen.

The money made in these docks, through trading produce grown on Caribbean plantations by enslaved Africans, lined the pockets of powerful people here in London. Some of it was used by individuals like Hibbert and Milligan to build this dock complex.

Some of the money, together with the profits directly generated by the selling and buying of enslaved humans, was used to fund businesses across the city and further London's wealth. Funding libraries, hospitals, museums, educational and charitable institutions, the trade in enslaved people became heavily bound up in the makeup of London's landscape in ways we are still trying to understand.