

## 1. Holy Trinity Church

Our walk starts at Holy Trinity church on Clapham Common. This active community church is usually open to the public and often in use, but can be accessed by small groups by prior arrangement.\*

An English Heritage blue plaque on the front of the church is dedicated to William Wilberforce and other members of the Clapham Sect who worshipped here while campaigning to abolish the slave trade. Wilberforce lived in Broomfield House on the west side of Clapham Common and another blue plaque marks the site of that house at what is now 110 Broomwood Road. A further, bomb-damaged plaque on the exterior south wall of Holy Trinity church also commemorates ten of the Clapham sect members by name.

The Clapham Sect was a group of evangelical Christians - among them Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Granville Sharp and the Rev. John Venn (whose father Henry as a curate in the 1750s helped launch Clapham on its evangelical course). Through their connections to the Sierra Leone Company this group was central to the establishment of Sierra Leone as a refuge for freed slaves. Their members also founded the Church Mission Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The interior of the church features stained glass windows depicting members of the Clapham Sect interacting with saints. Thornton and Venn family memorials are also located about the building.

Leaving the church, follow the path running east across the common past the "Temperance and Providence" statue and cross The Pavement to stand facing No. 5.

## 2. No.5 the Pavement

This was the home of Zachary Macaulay who became the governor of Sierra Leone and his son Thomas Babington Macaulay, the historian and parliamentarian. The site is marked by an English Heritage Blue Plaque. Zachary Macaulay was the son of a Scottish minister. He was sent aged 16 to Jamaica where he worked on a sugar plantation and eventually became a manager. Macaulay's experiences in Jamaica made him a committed opponent of the slave trade and he became a member of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade on his return to England. In 1794 he took up the post of Governor of Sierra Leone. The West African colony was established in 1788 initially as a home for some of London's black poor, however before long it would become home to people of African descent from all over the world. Macaulay was Governor until 1799 when he returned to Clapham together with twenty-one African boys and four girls destined to be educated locally.

Retrace your steps back along The Pavement and turn right into the Old Town. As the name suggests, this was the original centre of the village of Clapham. Fork right at the top of Old Town into Rectory Grove.

## 3. The African Academy, 8 Rectory Grove

Rectory Grove ends with a short row of imposing Georgian properties leading towards the gate of St Paul's Church, Clapham. It was here that the African Academy was originally located. The pupils, all boys aged 10-17 from Sierra Leone, were educated here between 1799-1805. They were the sons of African traders and families of influence. They were taught a range of subjects but the emphasis was on religious instruction. Although many of the academy's pupils would die of measles, a growing body of opinion suggests that a larger number of pupils survived and returned to Sierra Leone than was formerly supposed.

The young ladies were educated by Marianne Thornton, the wife of Henry Thornton, the banker and philanthropist at an address in Battersea Rise.

Recent research suggests that the current no. 8 Rectory Grove housed the first academy and that the institution was later moved to no. 21 Clapham Common North Side.

Continue along Rectory Grove and turn left into St Paul's churchyard.

## 4. St Paul's Churchyard and Matrimony Place

St Paul's was Clapham's original parish church, but as the village became a fashionable suburb of London, the elegant Holy Trinity church was built on Clapham Common in 1776 to be more convenient for the wealthy Londoners who had moved out to the new-built villas that edged the common. The medieval church was demolished and the present St Paul's built on the site in 1815. However its original church yard remained in use as the burial ground for the parish. A number of young men from the African

Academy were buried here. The notes beside their names in the Clapham burial register reveal their diverse origins. Some are the sons of families indigenous to Sierra Leone, others though hailing from the same country are recorded as originating from the communities of free Black settlers from Nova Scotia, Canada or from the Maroon settlements of Jamaica. The stories that are revealed by these parish records offer new insights into the African Diaspora and its complex struggles against slavery in the Caribbean, Africa and North America. Also buried at St Paul's is George Hibbert, who headed the largest company trading with Jamaica at the time, and from 1789 until the passage of the Slave Trade Act he was one of the country's most vocal anti-abolitionists, opposing William Wilberforce in print and on the floor of the House of Commons.

Most of the grave stones in St Paul's have now been cleared; the burial places of the former African academy pupils are not now known. However, Hibbert's raised white tomb is the most prominent structure to be seen as you approach the entrance to the church.

Come out of the churchyard and turn left and follow the steps down Matrimony Place; this was the original, ancient footway that led from the main London road to Clapham church and village. Turn left into Wandsworth Road and cross North Street.

## 5. The Hibbert Almshouses, Wandsworth Road

The generational wealth of the West India planters and merchants can be seen in the legacy of these almshouses which were built for the local poor and elderly by the daughters of George Hibbert. In addition to his trading interests Hibbert was also the chairman of the Court of Directors of the West India Dock Company and under his guidance the West India Docks were opened in September 1802.

The almshouses opened in 1859. The plaque above the central door records 'These houses for eight aged women were erected by Sarah Hibbert and Mary Anne Hibbert in grateful remembrance of their father, William Hibbert.'

Continue down Wandsworth Road then turn left into The Chase; the name commemorates its earliest use as the carriage driveway that led to the Gauden family's 17th century mansion house on the common.

## 6. The Chase & Nos. 29 & 31 Clapham North side - 'The Trinity Hospice'

Following the length of the Chase back to Clapham Common, on the right hand side, you are walking along the boundary of two very large garden grounds that were purchased with slave trade wealth.

Older maps of this area show how the adjoining gardens of Robert Barclay, the banker and George Hibbert, the merchant and planter, extended 500 metres along The Chase from their houses on the north side of Clapham Common right up to the Wandsworth Road. Similarly-sized estates around the fringes of Surrey and 'Kentish London' were bought by families made wealthy by plantation and banking fortunes. Robert Barclay lived at no. 29 North Side until his death. This house now forms part of the Trinity Hospice. The original house on the site of the present no. 31, also now part of the hospice, would have housed George Hibbert's family as well as his vast collection of books and plants from around the world. As well as being a plant collector and antiquarian, Hibbert was the head of the largest company trading with Jamaica. In order to better voice his pro-slavery views he became an MP, appropriately for the "rotten borough" of Seaford. His maiden speech to the Commons in 1806 was an attempt to postpone the passage of the Slave Trade Act.

A short walk along Clapham Common North Side (passing the later site of the African Academy at what is now No.14) takes us back to Holy Trinity church where the walk ends.

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# Clapham and slavery a historic walk

# Lambeth and the Abolition

The parishes of Holy Trinity and St Paul's Clapham in the borough of Lambeth are one very small part of South London, yet within their boundaries lie connections to almost every aspect of the transatlantic slave trade – from slave uprisings and the beginnings of the 'Back to Africa' movement to the roots of the antislavery movement, as well as the legacy of those who grew rich on the trade in human lives. This walk, commissioned by Lambeth Council as part of its commemoration of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007, takes you on a tour

around Clapham and uncovers some of the area's powerful historical links with both the slave trade and the battle to abolish it.

The circular route is less than one and a half miles and can be walked in under an hour. The start and finish point is Holy Trinity Church, Clapham Common, London SW4. The nearest tube is Clapham Common; nearest rail station is Clapham; buses 35, 37, 137, 155, 255, 322 and 417



Holy Trinity, Clapham Common in 1807, the very same year that Wilberforce and other influential members of the congregation had secured the abolition of the transatlantic trade in Parliament.



The plaque outside the church commemorates the work of the Clapham sect 'who laboured so abundantly for national righteousness and the conversion of the heathen and rested not until the curse of slavery was swept away from all parts of the British dominions.'



William Wilberforce worshipped at Holy Trinity church



The African Academy had moved to no.14 Church Buildings on Clapham Common North side by 1807.



29 Clapham Common North Side, was the family home of Robert Barclay at the beginning of the nineteenth century; George Hibbert was his neighbour.



The Hibbert Almshouses on Wandsworth Road, set up by his daughters in William's memory



The Victorian stained glass in the church celebrating the Clapham sect helped perpetuate the notion that the abolition of the slave trade was just something that white people did to help black people.



The house at no. 8 Rectory Grove that served as the first home for the African Academy from 1799.



A page from the Clapham parish register listing some of the boys at the African Academy who were baptised in 1802.



Clapham's medieval parish church was still standing in 1807. It was in this churchyard that the African boys from the academy were buried.



St Paul's was built in 1815 on the site of the medieval church.



William Hibbert's tomb in St Paul's churchyard.