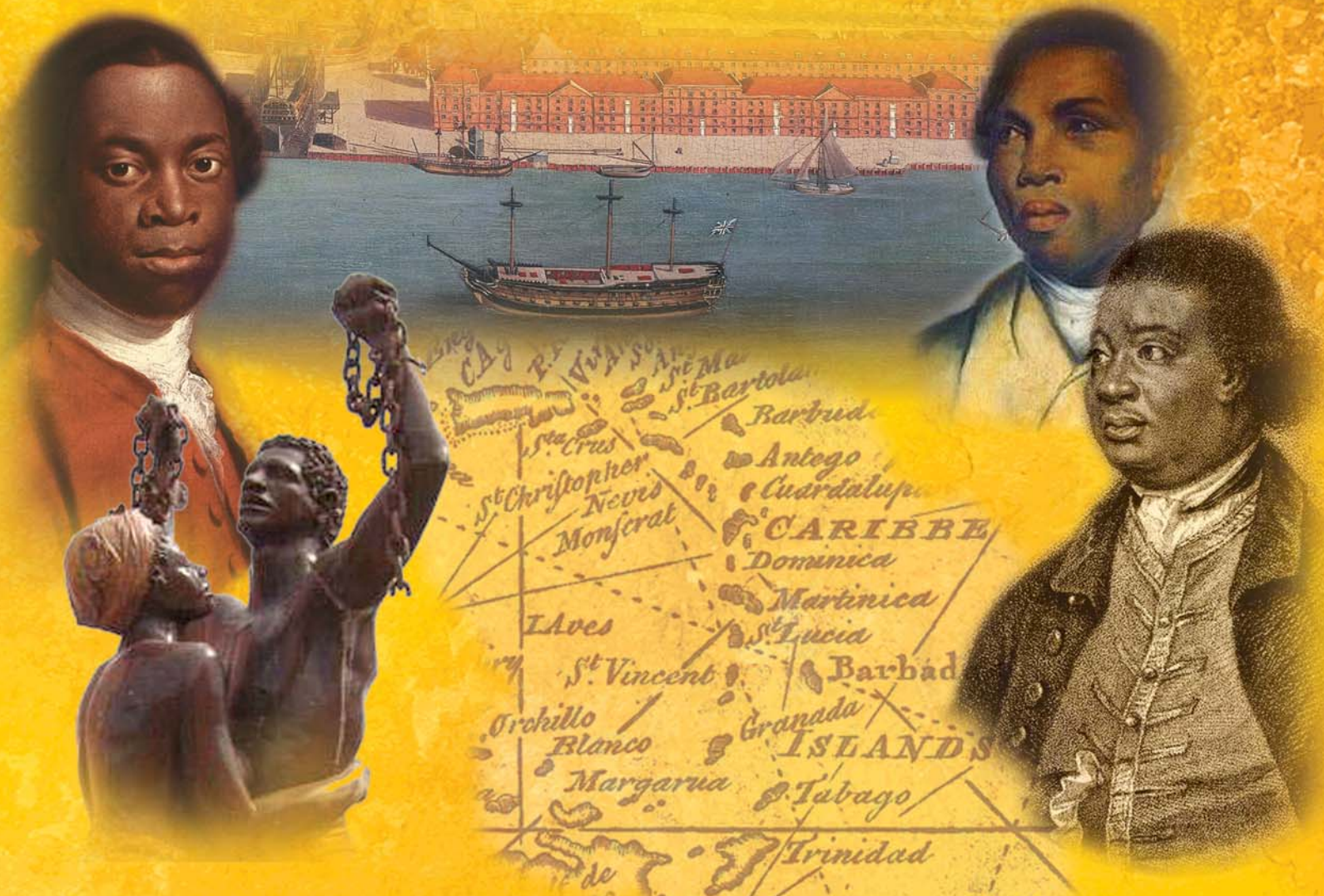


# EMANCIPATION OF THE DISPOSSESSED

Slavery, Abolition and Us – a South East London angle



**Deptford guided walk** A walk through DEPTFORD and GREENWICH, exploring the history of SLAVERY and its ABOLITION

## **PART 7 Deptford guided walk** A walk through DEPTFORD and GREENWICH, exploring the history of SLAVERY and its ABOLITION

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This guided walk explores Deptford's links to the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Follow the route to uncover stories of some of the local people who played an important role in the beginnings of the slave trade or the campaign for its abolition, which was achieved in 1807.

Until Liverpool and Bristol eventually became the main slave-trading ports, London was an important slave trading port. Ships sailed from London to Africa to trade. African people were kidnapped and made to work as slaves on plantations in British colonies in the Caribbean. These colonies were protected by the British Royal Navy, whose ships were built and prepared for voyages at the royal dockyards at Deptford.

You can tell the story of slavery from many locations. You can tell it from Liverpool. You can tell it from Bristol. Both these cities were built on the profits of the slave trade that prospered through their ports. What makes the Deptford and Greenwich focus so revealing is proximity to the centre of government and the history of England as a naval power.

Henry VIII decided Deptford would be the ideal location for the first purpose-built naval dockyard. He had been born in the Royal Palace in Greenwich. His marriage was solemnised there and Greenwich remained a favoured hunting ground for the King. Henry saw Deptford bustling with ship yards. As Britain became economically stronger, (newly unified and efficiently taxed under his father Henry Tudor), historical rivalries with Scottish and European maritime powers, together with the consistent harassment of Pirates, made Henry realise that England needed a designated Navy; as opposed to the ad hoc leasing of ships from seafaring aristocratic families whenever duty called.

John Hopton had been appointed Keeper of the Storehouse at Deptford and given the responsibility of ***the making of a pond wherein certain ships of our sovereign Lord...shall ride afloat.*** The 'pond', British Naval documents record, would have to:

***be made and cast in a meadow, next adjoining unto the store of our said sovereign Lord at Deptford Strand, at the west end of the old storehouse...and also certain able sluices through which the water may have entry and course into the foresaid pond as well at spring tide as at neap tide.***

Deptford had been growing as a port because of its nearness to London, the principle market and distribution centre. When, in 1509, Southampton lost its Italian trading connection (the Venetians abandoned the trade because they were under attack at home), the way was open for London to take over as the leading south coast port.

A new guild of Pilots, known as Trinity House at Deptford Strand, helped make the intricacies of the Thames much less hazardous to strangers. Developments in ship design added to the attractions of London's river and merchants moved to Deptford.

### **The walk begins**

We will begin our walk at the John Evelyn Pub on the corner of Evelyn Street and Grove Street, Deptford, London SE8. The pub has recently become famous as a location for the acclaimed BBC documentary *The Tower*, which depicted the lives of the different communities of the Pepys Estate.

**Turn down Grove Street** and you are entering the **PEPYS ESTATE**. (Note 1) The estate is built on the site of the Naval Dockyards. It takes its name from Samuel Pepys, the famous seventeenth century diarist of public and private life.

Pepys was Secretary to the Admiralty and worked at the Royal Naval Dockyards. Locals pronounce the name of the estate 'Peppese'. This was also a variant of the pronunciation of his surname during Samuel's lifetime. History is alive in these streets.

Although not a seaman, Pepys was an able administrator, and is credited with ushering in the early stages of the professionalisation of the Royal Navy. He lobbied for regular funding. He negotiated a job lot of Norwegian pine trunks. The waves that were to be ruled by Britain needed a Navy that was efficiently administered. And the Secretary who gave his name to the Pepys Estate was just the man for the job.

In 1660, Pepys became Clerk of the Acts of the Navy Board, at a salary of £350 a year with a house thrown in plus two assistants. His job was to take minutes at meetings and have full responsibility for all naval records. He soon became the Board's most crucial appointment. He studied. He simulated naval situations with model ships. He made himself expert in ordering and buying supplies for fitting out ships: timber, hemp, sail cloth, tar, flags and spars. The conditions of seamen, their pay and employment, the provision of food for voyages, the uses of the meagre budget voted to the Navy by Parliament, became Pepys specialities. In particular, Pepys made himself master of the methods and practices of Government Dockyards here at Deptford. He built an overview of the visible and the invisible workings of the Navy. He made himself, by his own diligence, the foremost expert on naval affairs in the country.

**Carry on down Grove Street.** There's a car breakers yard on your left. But leave the sound of groaning chassis behind. On your right you come to a white stone gateway with two arches. This, the plaque will tell you, is

the entrance to the **ROYAL VICTORIA VICTUALLING YARDS**. Queen Victoria came down and named the Yards in 1874 but the Dockyard had been there for three hundred years. Ships of the Navy were built and provisioned here. On your left as you pass through the gates are the officers' cottages.

**Turn left past the cottages** and in front of you is the Foreshore of **DEPTFORD STRAND**, (Note 2) and beyond that, the River Thames. The Foreshore has been landscaped and there is a plaque to Deptford's maritime history as well as a canon or two and a viewing platform. It is a bit time worn now, but rust and patina give character to these local historical signposts.

To your left is **ARAGON TOWER**. (Note 3) Where did they get that name? Aragon sounds like something out of Lord of the Rings. The clay coloured relief casts on the wall look like death masks. This is the Wall of Our Ancestors by Martin Bond and I can assure you that some of those depicted are still very much alive. The artist has placed local residents of today amongst the figures of history. So Tony O'Leary and Peter Pope stare soberly out at the grey river's ebb and flow, along side such historical luminaries as Francis Drake, Olaudah Equiano and Catherine of Aragon.

**Look out at the river** as you contemplate the incredible life of Equiano. Olaudah Equiano was captured in West Africa. He first glimpsed the possibility of freedom on the Thames, off Deptford. He was cruelly denied - he could not set foot on Deptford Strand. His Master cast off and sailed down river to Gravesend where he sold Equiano on to another Master which resulted in another slave trip to the Caribbean. Years later Equiano bought his freedom and eventually, for a while, set up home in Greenwich. As a free man, Equiano bumped into his former Master in Greenwich Park. He met him with the words *Sir you used me ill*.

Equiano fought for the Crown. He sailed to the Arctic. He campaigned for Abolition. With Granville Sharp, he organized the project which set out to establish a colony

in Sierra Leone for free black people. The ships sailed to Sierra Leone from Deptford, which means they sailed from where you stand. Equiano became a successful writer. His auto- biography was a powerful voice for Abolition. And some historians argue that there is evidence that the beginning of his narrative may have been false and that his birth was on a plantation in the southern states of America.

**Walk along Deptford Strand**. Look up river. Find another eddy in the flow. John Hawkins sailed from here. Hawkins earned the historical nickname the English father of the Atlantic Slave Trade. His diary tells us "The men of the fleet were kept busy going ashore every day to capture the Negroes and spoiling their towns and many were taken... By the 21st December, the raiding parties had taken all the Negroes they could find."

On his third trip in 1567, Hawkins noted "*Now had we obtained between four and five hundred Negroes wherewith we thought it somewhat reasonable to seek the coast of the West Indies; and there for our Negroes and other our merchandise, we hoped to obtain whereof to diligence, furnished our watering, took fuel and departed the coast of Guinea the 3rd of February*". This was during the reign of Elizabeth I. She knighted Francis Drake here. That's why his face is on the **WALL OF ANCESTORS**. There's a **PLAQUE** (Note 4) to him on the Strand. Hawkins took Drake, his cousin, on that third trip teaching him the business of the slave trade. Drake, besides his circumnavigation and seeing off the Armada with the help of a storm in the Channel, was an active slave trader. Hawkins, too, was knighted for his exploits. He lived, whilst in port, at the Treasurers House, Deptford Dockyard. You see you could say this is where the history of English slave trading began.

**Look down river**. Captain William Bligh sailed from Deptford. His diary entry for 16th August 1787 reads, "*The King, having been graciously pleased to comply with a request from the planters interested in his Majesty's West India possessions, that the bread fruit tree might*

*be introduced into those islands, a vessel proper for the undertaking was bought and taken into dock at Deptford to be provided with the necessary fixtures and preparations for executing the object of the voyage...The ship was named the Bounty...*" Bread fruit from the South Seas, together with yam and plantain became the staple diet for the enslaved Africans on the plantations and, once introduced, cost nothing.

The economics of the slave trade were all about maximising profit and key to that were sea voyages that began in Deptford Dockyards. The plants may well have been transported in pots from a pottery on Deptford Creek. Remains of a pottery on the Creek have been discovered by local historians. The Creek enters the Thames just round the bend.

Catherine of Aragon's face looks out wistfully at the Thames from the wall of the modern tower block which bears her name as if calmly awaiting a fate which she sees coming as surely as the tide. Catherine of Aragon was Henry VIII's first wife. He was still a young Prince. It was an arranged marriage. His father, Henry Tudor, seeking to cement good diplomatic relations with Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, married her at first to Arthur, his elder brother, the Prince of Wales. Arthur died, but undeterred, Henry Tudor had his younger son tie the royal knot with Catherine. Such marriages of convenience were quite common in those far off days (as they still are today, for that matter.) The marriage was solemnised after Henry ascended the throne. The ceremony took place at Greenwich. Though the couple had a daughter, Mary Tudor, there was no male heir and the young king, dreaming of ensuring the longevity of the Tudor line and immortality, began to imagine defying the Catholic Church's ban on divorce.

The story of Henry VIII's marriages has overshadowed that of the founding of the Fleet, becoming the dominant theme of Henry's reign. England was a Catholic nation. Henry argued theology with Martin Luther. The Pope declared Henry "Defender of the Faith". Catherine

became more popular as she maintained her dignity during the estrangement that followed before the King got his divorce and Britain got the Church of England with the reigning monarch at its head.

For those who prefer their history to be one of Kings and Queens and, in Henry's case, Popes, it could be claimed that if Henry was the father of the Royal Navy, then Catherine, as relations deteriorated with the most powerful nation on the continent, was its long suffering mother.

**From the far end of Deptford Strand from Aragon Tower** you can see **CONVOYS WHARF**. (Note 5) It's in disguise at the moment underneath tarpaulin and scaffolding, currently under redevelopment after a battle by dedicated local action groups to preserve its maritime associations. In 2000, archaeologists revealed the Tudor remains of the Royal Naval Dockyard.

**Leave the Strand turning up Barfleur Foreshore on the right.**

**Carry on up Bowditch, back to Grove Street with Pepys Park on your left.**

Beyond the park, after Barnes Terrace, you'll find **SAYES COURT PARK** (Note 6) on your left. Sayes Court Park is on the site of the garden of the long since demolished Sayes Court Manor, the home of another famous diarist, John Evelyn. Evelyn and Pepys knew and respected each other.

**Turn into the park** and walk through it. Many old sea dogs harboured there. Admiral Benbow, before sailing off to Jamaica and Czar Peter the Great, before returning to Russia, having completed his studies of Navy building.

Pepys Park is an appropriate memorial for Evelyn who was a ground breaking gardener, introducing new plants to the country. He was treasurer of the Royal Hospital for Seamen, Greenwich. He also served on many committees of State including the Council for Foreign Plantations, advising King Charles II on the management of newly acquired possessions overseas.

Emerging the other side of the Park, on Prince Street, cross **CZAR STREET**, (Note 7) New King Street, Watergate Street and walk down Benbow Street before turning right onto Deptford Green which brings you to **ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH** (Note 10) on the corner, on the left.

Turn into the church yard beneath the skulls on the ancient gates. St. Nicholas' Church is the oldest church in Lewisham. There's a memorial in the church to the man whose street you've just walked down – **ADMIRAL BENBOW** (Note 9) who was a property owner on Hughes Fields, Deptford.

You have been walking through Hughesfield Estate. The Admiral died in the battle for Jamaica. Oliver Cromwell had devised his 'Western Design'. *"The design in general is to gain an interest in that part of the West Indies in the possession of the Spaniard."*

Admiral Benbow sailed from Deptford. He provisioned his fleet from The Red House Stores, Deptford Dockyard. Global power politics were at the birth of the Atlantic Slave Trade. John Hawkins' brother William has a statue in the church.

Edward Fenton another slave trader is buried and has a memorial there. In the late 17th Century burial register of St Nicholas' Church, there are also records of several African people. Their names are not identified. The involvement in the slave trade led to the growth in the area of one the earliest black communities in the country.

But history has made its own contribution to a more egalitarian legacy. Many of the impressive plaques, slabs and headstones are now so worn and weathered as to be indecipherable. Even the mighty are anonymous.

**Continue up Deptford Green to Creek Road, turn right and walk up Creek Road till you come to the bottom of Deptford High Street on the other side of the road.**

**Walk up Deptford High Street.** The cultural richness of Deptford is all around you. African, Vietnamese and Afro-Caribbean restaurants offer the cuisine of the world. On

the left hand side of the street is a Salvation Army Charity shop. Above the shop frontage is a sign which tells us that this was once the site of the **FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE**. (Note 12)

The Quaker movement was the cornerstone of the Abolition Campaign. The Quakers had the national organisation that the campaign needed. The zeal of this unorthodox religion with its commitment to the real world and the value placed on believers' contribution to it, translated effectively to the political sphere.

The Abolition Campaign laid the foundation for human rights campaigns from that day to this. The Quakers organized petitions. The Petition at Lea shows the momentum of the local campaign. Women Quakers conceived the first very effective food boycott against sugar from slave plantations. They introduced what we now know as Campaign badges and merchandise. They lobbied Parliament and, most tellingly, created such a persuasive moral case for Abolition that William Wilberforce, the greatest orator of his day, was brought on board.

**Carry on up the High Street to Bar Sonic at the top.** The huge black **ANCHOR** (Note 13) that lies, like the tusks of a prehistoric mammoth, at the junction with Deptford Broadway was acquired from the Port of London Authority as a symbol of Deptford's maritime past.

**Just before Bar Sonic, on the left,** there is a steel plate. It says simply 'Admiralty Buildings'. Samuel Pepys would feel right at home. The Navy that began in Deptford, defeated foreign enemies and pirates and as a recent historian of the period has noted, made the oceans safe for slavery.

An imagined dramatised history walk of this story might involve meeting Samuel Pepys in the John Evelyn Pubic House. Pepys would lead the audience down to the Royal Victoria Dockyard Gates where they would encounter Henry VIII and John Hopton. Pepys would then lead them to Deptford Strand where he would introduce Catherine of

Aragon, Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho, Cugoano, Francis Drake and John Hawkins. Czar Peter the Great would then take over guiding duties, to escort the audience to Sayes Court where John Evelyn would be doing the garden. The Czar would then take the audience to St. Nicholas's Church. There they would meet a group of Quaker women who would guide them round the churchyard before leading on to the Salvation Army shop, and finally to the anchor at the top of Deptford High Street for liberation songs to conclude the dramatised history.

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## Notes to the walk

### 1. ROYAL VICTORIA VICTUALLING YARD GATE AND THE PEPYS ESTATE

The Pepys Estate is named after diarist Samuel Pepys, who was a frequent visitor to Deptford while he was administrator of the Royal Navy from 1660 to 1689.

Where the estate is now was once the site of the Red House wharf, which from 1742 was the official victualling yard for the Royal Navy, where ships were stocked with the provisions, such as ships biscuits, that were stored there. Before then, in the 17th century, records suggest that tobacco shipped to Deptford from Jamaican plantations, grown and cut by African slaves, was unpacked and stored here at the Red House warehouses.

### 2. DEPTFORD STRAND

Records show that ship building has gone on at on Deptford Strand since at least 1418. In 1513 Henry VIII founded a dockyard at Deptford to build ships for the Royal Navy. Henry VIII and Elizabeth I sent ships out to discover new lands and opportunities to trade. In the mid-16th century, the *Primrose*, a naval ship built at this dockyard sailed from Deptford and made contact with the West African kingdom of Benin. Soon afterwards John Hawkins, who lived at the Treasurer's House in the

dockyards, made his first slave trading voyage and the Transatlantic Slave Trade began to develop.



*Deptford Creek where Equiano expected to be set free 'in the Thames at Deptford'.*

### 3. ARAGON TOWER AND THE WALL OF ANCESTORS

The Wall of Ancestors, a sculpture by Martin Bond, can be seen on the wall of Aragon Tower. The sculpture includes the faces of local residents and local historical figures. Among them is Olaudah Equiano. Olaudah Equiano was a black abolition campaigner who lived in London in the eighteenth century. His memoirs tell us that he was born in West Africa and as a child was captured by slavers and taken to Barbados. He worked on slave plantations and on board ships. In his memories he describes arriving at Deptford on his master's ship. He thought he would be made free at Deptford, but his master sold him to another captain and sailed away.

When Equiano eventually returned to London a free man, he began to campaign for the abolition of slavery. Equiano wrote his memoirs in 1789. It described his kidnapping, the terrible conditions on slave ships and his work as a slave. Some historians now question the book's accuracy, but at the time the book came out, people believed it was accurate. It was a bestseller and

it became important evidence in the campaign to abolish slavery.

### 4. PLAQUE COMMEMORATING SIR FRANCIS DRAKE, DEPTFORD STRAND

Captain John Hawkins, who is described by some historians as "the English father of the Atlantic Slave Trade" made four slave trading voyages to Sierra Leone, sailing from Deptford, between 1564 and 1569. On his third voyage his cousin, Francis Drake, captained one of the ships in the fleet. After joining John Hawkins on slave trading voyages, Francis Drake became famous for circumnavigating the globe. In 1581 Francis Drake was knighted by Elizabeth I at Deptford on the deck of his ship the *Golden Hind*.

Drake's last expedition was to the West Indies, with John Hawkins. He died on 28 January 1596 of dysentery off the coast of Puerto Rico. Hawkins died at the same time, and their bodies were buried at sea.

### 5. CONVOYS WHARF

The site of Convoy's Wharf can be seen from the end of Deptford strand.

In 2000 archaeologists digging at Convoy's Wharf uncovered the Tudor remains of the Royal Naval Dockyard. Henry VIII's decision to base his Royal Navy at Deptford made Deptford an important seafaring centre. Ships were built, fitted out and stocked with provisions here before being launched on voyages around the world. Royal Navy ships sailing from Deptford protected Britain's growing empire and trade routes. People interested in sea voyaging came to Deptford, hoping for support from the king or financial backing from rich London merchants, who quickly became interested in trade with Africa, and the developing Transatlantic Slave Trade. Archaeological evidence shows that the Royal Dockyards grew and developed, but began to decline in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Other

dockyards such as Plymouth took over most of the shipbuilding work and Royal Dockyards closed in 1869.

#### 6. SAYES COURT PARK

Sayes Court was home to John Evelyn, the famous diarist who lived in Deptford from 1652 to 1694. The house and grounds were knocked down long ago, but part of the gardens now lies within Sayes Court Park. John Evelyn was an advisor to the king, and treasurer of the Royal Hospital for Seamen in Greenwich, which is now the Old Royal Naval College.

Sayes Court was situated between the dockyard and the



victualling yards and because of its convenient location many seafarers stayed there. Residents included Vice Admiral John Benbow and Czar Peter I.

#### 7. CZAR STREET

Also known as Peter the Great, the Czar was keen to modernise his country and travelled to Europe in 1697 to study new developments in technology. He visited the Royal Dockyard to learn the latest shipbuilding techniques that were being used there. He stayed Sayes Court during his visit and is reported to have caused a lot of damage by throwing drunken parties there. A statue of Peter the Great near Deptford Creek and street names such as this one commemorate his visit to Deptford.

#### 8. MASTER SHIPWRIGHT'S HOUSE, WATERGATE STREET

Deptford flourished during the 17th century as a ship building centre for merchant and naval ships. Shipbuilding was labour intensive, and up to 4000 men worked at Deptford and Woolwich dockyard in the late 18th century. Shipwrights, sailors, craftsmen, sea captains, foremen and officials lived in Deptford, and merchants who profited from overseas trade owned houses nearby. The Master Shipwright was a powerful and well respected man. The Master Shipwright's House was rebuilt in 1708 at the insistence of Deptford's Master Shipwright Joseph Allin.

#### 9. HUGHS FIELD ESTATE (AND BENBOW STREET)

Vice Admiral John Benbow owned a house at Hughes Fields, Deptford. He was a naval officer who fought to defend British colonies in the Caribbean, dying in 1702 from a wound received in battle. The colonies he defended were already becoming very profitable for British merchants who had introduced factory-like sugar plantations, where the labour-intensive work of growing, harvesting and processing sugar cane was done by enslaved Africans.

#### 10. ST NICHOLAS CHURCH

St Nicholas' church is named for the patron saint of seafarers, and has links to sea captain John Hawkins. There is a memorial in the church to Edward Fenton, John Hawkins' brother-in-law, who traded for slaves in Sierra Leone. There is also a statue of John Hawkins' brother, William, who was also involved in the slave trade.



ABOVE: St Nicholas's Church Deptford, which contains a plaque to Admiral Benbow who died in the battle for Jamaica

BELOW: Gate - St Nicholas's Church Yard Deptford



## 11. ST PAULS CHURCH AND CHURCH YARD

From the evidence provided by parish registers, (held at Lewisham local history and archives centre) we know that many black people lived in and around Deptford in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These records show that increasing numbers of black people were baptised or buried at local churches, such as St Nicholas' St Paul's. Many black people landed at Deptford when they arrived in Britain. Some may have been brought from the Caribbean to work in London as slaves, but many were free people and some decided to settle in or near Deptford. Most people of African origin who lived in London had jobs and lived as ordinary members of the working class. Because many black people in London, like many white people, lived in poverty and could not read or write, there are very few detailed records of their lives. Burial registers, such as the records for St Paul's churchyard are often the only records that remain.

## 12. FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, DEPTFORD HIGH STREET

The Quakers (members of the Religious Society of Friends) were among the first groups of people in Britain to begin to question the Transatlantic Slave Trade as owning people as slaves went against the Quaker belief that everyone is equal in the sight of God. When the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed in 1787 most of its members were Quakers and it was led by a Quaker - Thomas Clarkson. It was through meetings, such as those held at the Friends meeting house, that the Society were able to begin build a campaign that contributed to the end of the British slave trade. The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, 1807, and the Slavery Abolition Act, 1833 was the beginning of the end of Britain's slave trade.

## 13. ANCHOR

This modern public sculpture commemorates Deptford's maritime past.



*Plaque commemorating the Quaker Meeting House in Deptford High Street. The Quakers provided the national network for the Abolition Movement.*

## Beyond the guided walk: other sites to visit

### DEPTFORD TOWN HALL

Built in 1905, the ship weather vane commemorates Deptford's maritime history, and its walls are decorated with carvings of famous seafarers. Among them is Sir Francis Drake, who joined John Hawkins on his third slave-trading journey to Africa in 1568, with the support of Queen Elizabeth. Deptford town hall celebrated and glorified British sea power – there was no mention of slavery here. It is now owned by Goldsmiths College.

### NEW CROSS GATE SAINSBURY'S (AND HARDCASTLE ROAD)

Records suggest that Sainsbury's supermarket is on the site of Hatcham house, which in the 18th century was owned by Joseph Hardcastle. Hardcastle put on display the handcuffs, shackles, and thumbscrews used on African slave ships and Hatcham House became a meeting place for people who campaigned for the abolition of slavery. Hardcastle was a valued friend of many abolitionists, including William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, who may have visited here.

## ST ALFREGES CHURCH

The records of St Alfrege's church show that during the 18th century many people of African origin were baptised in the church, and others buried in the churchyard here. Some people buried here were slaves, some may have been soldiers who fought in the American War of independence others are not recorded as being slaves or servants.

It has been estimated that by the end of the 18th century, out of London's 8000,000 residents around 15,000 were people of African origin. Many had landed at Deptford when they arrived in Britain, and eventually settled in South London.

Inside the church is a memorial stone to John Angerstein, a member of the Royal Blackheath Golf Club, who co-owned plantations in Grenada that used slave labour, and founded Lloyds of London which insured slave ships.

## GREENWICH PARK

Montague house stood here until it was demolished in 1815, there is a plaque to Ignatius Sancho on the remaining wall of the house, next to the Ranger's House. In the 18th century Ignatius Sancho lived and worked here as butler. Born on board a slave ship, he was brought to England and given as a gift to three sisters who lived in Greenwich. Later, the Duke and Duchess of Montague employed Sancho in their home, where he learnt to read and write.

In 1773 he opened a grocery shop in Westminster with money from the Duke and Duchess. He also composed music and wrote letters – many to famous Londoners. Books of these letters were published and became best sellers. Ignatius Sancho did not have a large role in the abolition movement (his shop sold sugar and tobacco produced by slaves). But his best-selling books, like the books written by Ottobah Cugoana, Olaudah Equiano and Mary Prince, challenged readers' ideas about African people and about slavery and raised awareness of the suffering of enslaved people.

The Atlantic Gallery at the National Maritime Museum nearby has extracts from Ignatius Sancho's letters on display.



*Plaque in Greenwich Park to Ignatius Sancho*

### **MAZE HILL**

It is said that Olaudah Equiano stayed at a house on Maze Hill twice, in 1755 and 1770. The house was the home of the Guerin sisters, who taught Equiano to read and write. Equiano wrote a book in 1789 that described how he was kidnapped in Africa, sold as a slave, resold into slavery at Deptford and eventually bought his freedom. Although many historians now doubt that his story was accurate, at the time the book was a very important part of the campaign to abolish slavery.

### **BLACKHEATH**

In the 18th century many wealthy businessmen had their London homes in Blackheath. Many were members of The Royal Blackheath Golf Club, thought to be the oldest golf club in Great Britain, and many were closely involved with the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Members of the club included:

Thomas King of the largest London-based slave trading firm Camden Calvert and King, who lived in Greenwich.

Ambrose Crowley, an iron merchant, produced iron

manacles, shackles and collars used on slave ships to prevent enslaved Africans from fighting back or committing suicide to resist slavery.

Francis Baring, who in 1796 bought the Manor House, Lee, and is said to have made his first money from dealing in slaves when he was 16. He later founded Barings bank.