



Historic walk

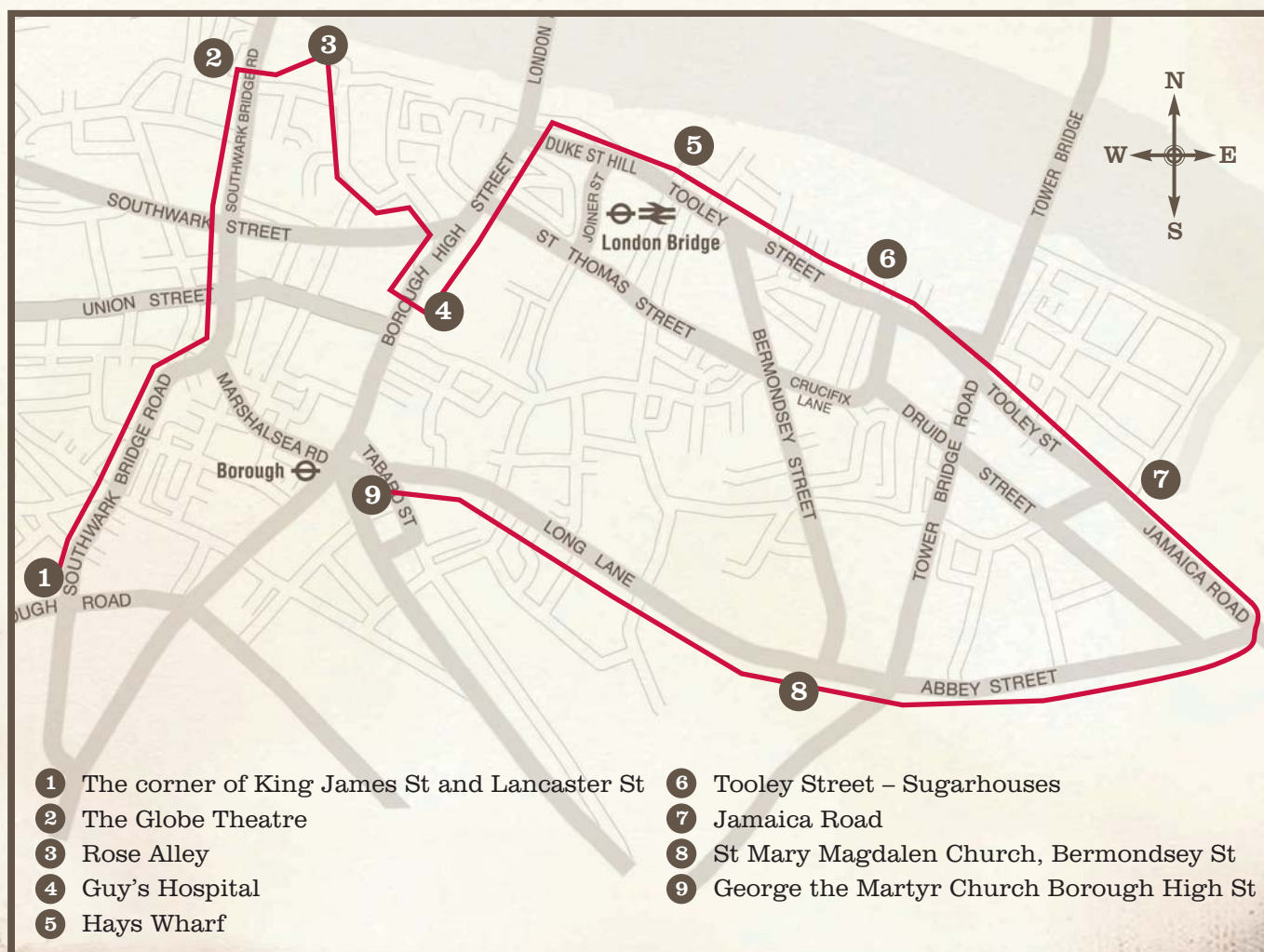
Southwark's connection to the transatlantic slave trade.

Bankside and Bermondsey

This walk highlights various locations that have connections with the transatlantic slave trade and the early presence of Africans in Southwark.

The walk focuses on the importance to Southwark of sugar and other slave produced goods that were landed at the docks and stored in the Tooley Street area. The walk also includes two churches in which many Africans were baptised in the 17th and 18th centuries. In most cases these baptismal records are the only written evidence for the presence of Africans and people of African heritage in Southwark during this period.

The walk has been produced as part of a collaborative project with the Museum in Docklands, as part of research into an online map which can be found at www.museumofdocklands.org.uk



Stop 1

The corner of King James Street and Lancaster Street (off Borough Road)

In 1798 the following flyers could be seen at 1 James Street near Borough Road:

Children are taught reading at 4d per week

writing and reading 5d per week

Arithmetic and both ditto 6d per week

All who will may send their children and have them educated freely and those who do not wish to have education for nothing may pay for it if they please.

The flyer was written by Joseph Lancaster, a pioneer of low cost and free education. It marked the birth of the British and Foreign School Society, later known as the Borough Road School. Inspired by the work of the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, the school was active in the promotion of African literacy and worked closely with the African Institution. Many students from Africa and the Caribbean attended the school. Many of them were former enslaved workers or liberated Africans who later became missionaries or teachers, often starting schools in their homelands.

In 1814 three African youths who had been placed at the Borough Road School by the African Institution were sent to Sierra Leone, including a young man called George Fox, who successfully ran a school of 200 children.

Mary Dudley was a Quaker and antislavery campaigner who lived in Camberwell. She acted on behalf of an unknown African woman who had been brought to England as a slave from Argentina.

Mary Dudley requested funds from the Quakers to enable the young African woman to attend the Borough school. Dudley wrote, that “she appears to be about 15, says she was stolen from the east coast of Africa when she was a very little child. She appears to have made good progress at the school [she] maintains an interest, seeming anxious to learn”.

Stop 2

The Globe Theatre

African people were a regular sight in Elizabethan England. It is likely that playwright William Shakespeare interacted with them in the streets, at taverns or while visiting friends. Shakespeare touched on the issues of race and racism in his plays. Plays such as *Titus Andronicus*, *the Tempest* and *Othello* provide an insight of the impact of different ethnicities on the cultural and social life of the English and the tensions they created.

English Renaissance scholar Imtiaz Habib believes that Shakespeare had an affair with a black woman living in Clerkenwell in the 1580s and 1590s who may have been a prostitute. He could have met her through his professional theatrical associations, since acquaintances with brothel owners and travelling actors would have been common and prostitution flourished in the area around Southwark's theatre district.

Habib says that the experience with this woman affected Shakespeare and that he went to incorporate aspects of it into plays such as Antony and Cleopatra, Othello, Titus Andronicus, and in his sonnets like the one below.

Sonnet 127

*In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame,
For since each hand hath put on nature's power,
Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,*

*But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so.*

Stop 3

Rose Alley

In 1745, an African man called John Sutton was accused of attacking Mary Swain, his common law wife who was of mixed heritage (described as a mulatto in the proceedings of the case which took place at the Old Bailey). It turns out that Mary Swain was jealous of her husband being involved with another woman. She decided to accuse him of raping her so that he would be sent to prison. Sutton was acquitted.

Stop 4

Guy's Hospital

Thomas Guy, another Southwark resident (born in Horsleydown in 1644) left £200,000 in his will to complete the hospital that he started constructing in 1720. A bookseller by profession, Thomas Guy was also an investor in the South Sea Company, which was formed in 1711 to export merchandise to the Pacific and South America. The Company had the monopoly to transport enslaved Africans to the Spanish West Indies via Barbados and Jamaica to work on the sugar and tobacco plantations there.

Stop 5

Hays Wharf

Founded in 1651 by Alexander Hay, the wharf formed part of the area known as London's Larder because of the huge quantities of food products traded and stored along the Thames. The main imports were coffee and tea, much of which was produced by enslaved people working on plantations.

Stop 6

Tooley Street – Sugarhouses

The importation of sugar from the Caribbean resulted in the setting up of a great number of sugarhouses that were needed in the refinement of the sugar. Their presence in Southwark is illustrative of the borough's links with slavery. There were lots of

sugarhouses in this area because of the River Thames. The river was the main waterway in London for ships to depart for Africa and the Caribbean and to return laden with slave produced goods. Tooley Street was home to a number of sugarhouses, none of which exist today. However there were pubs in Southwark called the Sugar Loaf and there was once a Sugar Loaf Alley in the parish of St Olave's. These historic references to sugar reflect Southwark's strong connections with slave grown sugar.

Stop 7

Jamaica Road

Jamaica Road was named after England acquired the colony of Jamaica from Spain in 1655. The road was part of the route connecting the docks and warehouses in Southwark with those in Rotherhithe, Deptford and Woolwich, which were significant for the Elizabethan slave trade. It has also been said that Jamaica Road was named after the Jamaica Tavern, which was visited by the naval administrator, MP and diarist Samuel Pepys. Pepys was an investor in the Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa (1663-72). He also once sold a black servant into slavery.

Stop 8 and 9

St Mary Magdalen Church, Bermondsey Street

Life for Africans living in England in the 17th and 18th centuries was extremely precarious regardless of family ties, employment or even manumission papers (a document proclaiming that the holder was a free person). People could be kidnapped, resold into slavery and put on the next ship bound for the Caribbean. Many mistakenly believed that by being baptised they could protect themselves from danger. Hundreds of African people became Christians.

George the Martyr church Borough High Street

St George the Martyr and other churches in Southwark possess records that indicate that there were a significant number of African people living in the borough who had been baptised. The records sometimes give a profession and ethnicity and sometimes tell us where they came from – Guinea, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Bermuda and South Carolina. The records date from the early 17th century up to the mid 19th century.

For more information about Southwark's rich history:

Cuming Museum

151 Walworth Road, SE17 1RS
020 7525 2332
cuming.museum@southwark.gov.uk

Local History Library

211 Borough High Street, SE1 1JA
020 7403 3782
local.history.library@southwark.gov.uk

These resources were produced in collaboration with the Museum in Docklands and Renaissance London.

Visit www.museumindocklands.org.uk/slavery to find out more.