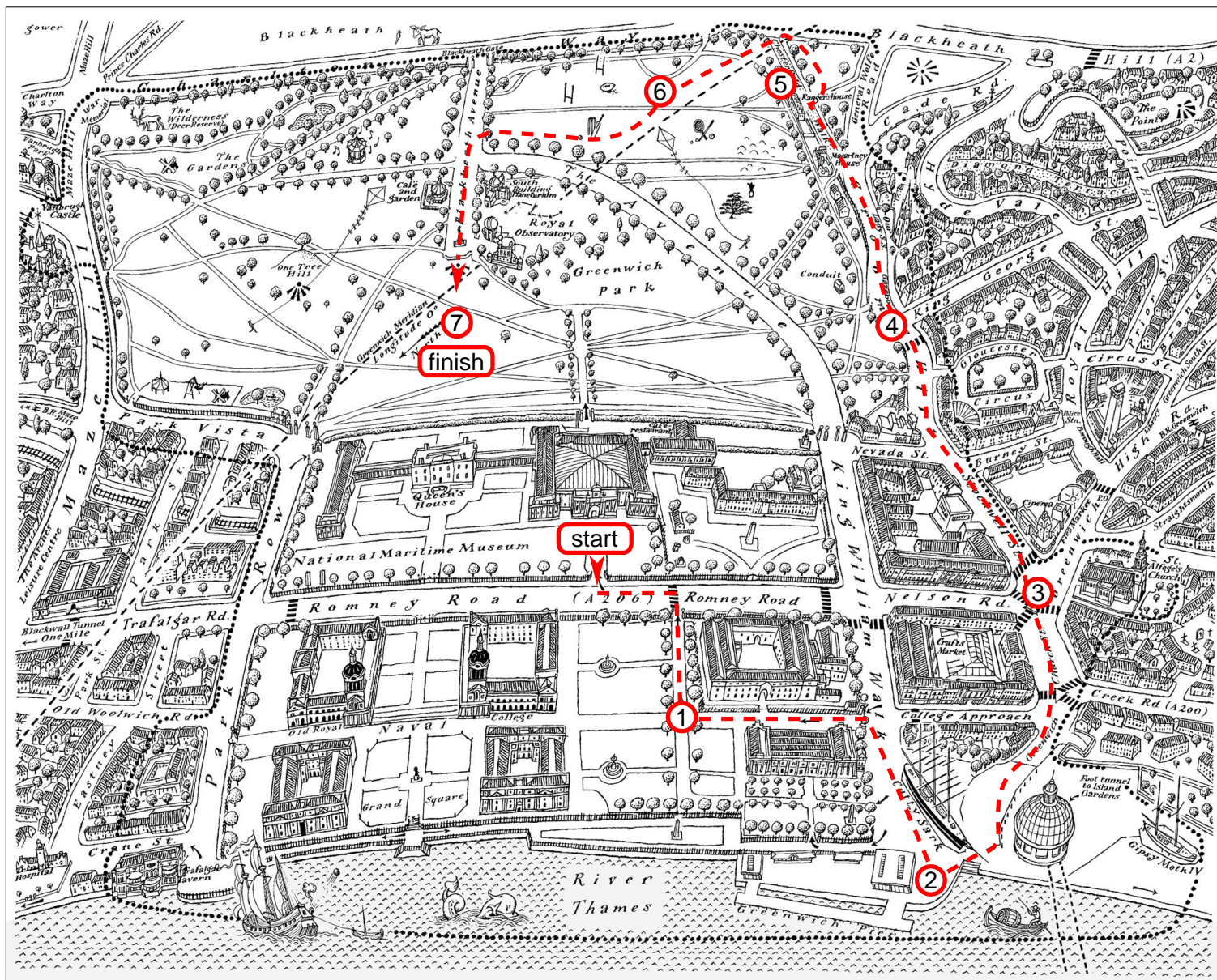


# PORTCITIES London

visit [www.portcities.org.uk/london](http://www.portcities.org.uk/london)

## GREENWICH SLAVERY TRAIL



Map © Neil Gower

1. Royal Naval College

2. Greenwich Pier

3. St. Alfege's Church

4. Croom's Hill

5. Chesterfield Walk, Shooter's Hill

6. Montagu House

7. Royal Observatory

## Royal Naval College

These buildings originally housed the Royal Hospital for Seamen. Stories of the comparatively large numbers of African and West Indian mariners who passed through the gates can be traced through slave narratives, journals and newspaper accounts.

A magazine article from April 1834 stated that 402 West Indians and 130 Africans received treatment at this institution. By 1875 this figure had risen to 2340 West Indians and 599 Africans. These figures do not include the African Americans or Black British-born seamen whose presence was also noted in newspaper and court reports of that period.

The Naval hospital at Greenwich was mentioned in the *Narrative of Briton Hammon* (published in 1760), who was a slave to Major John Winslow of Marshfield, Massachusetts. In his narrative Hammon recounts how, having been discharged from the 74-gun ship *Hercules* on the 12 May, he was '...put into the Greenwich Hospital where I stay'd and soon recovered'.

## Greenwich Pier

Upstream from Greenwich Pier you can see the site of the old Deptford Dockyard. It was from here that John Evelyn, the 17th-century diarist, witnessed the departure of the *Ruby* and the *Diamond* on 15 March 1652.

These two vessels played a central role in capturing a number of Caribbean islands as part of Oliver Cromwell's plan to gain and consolidate English territories in the region. Jamaica was taken from the Spanish in 1655 and Barbados became a slave trading centre during this period.

It was also from the Wharves of Deptford that the 18th-century black writer, political agitator and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano was allegedly 'kidnapped' and re-sold into slavery by his owner. From here he was plunged into a 'new slavery; in comparison of which all my service hitherto had been perfect freedom; and whose horrors... now rushed on it with tenfold aggravation...'

## St Alfege's Church

The church's records of baptisms and burials reveal a lot about the composition of London's 18th-century black poor and the area's general black population, including people's origins and some of the reasons behind their presence in Greenwich.

Most entries follow the pattern first found with John Good who is described as a 'negro servant to Captain Sanderson, buried 1703'. The baptismal register is interesting for a number of reasons. Many individuals were baptised as adults (for example Ann Unus in July 1781, described as a 'negro from America' and Thomas Johnson Samuel in the same year), which is significant because such ceremonies were very rare in the 18th century. In the absence of other data they are often interpreted as referring to potential converts from Judaism or other religions.

For black people, a formal baptism carried great status. The American origin of a proportionally high number of baptisms reflects the presence of a great many black loyalists who had fought with the British in the American war of Independence in the 1780s. With the collapse of the colonial adventure, hundreds of former enslaved people and former soldiers took up residence in London, Liverpool and Dublin. However, it is also important that between 1754 and 1813 Greenwich registered the baptism of 27 Black people who were neither enslaved nor otherwise in service.

## Croom's Hill

Many important families lived on Croom's Hill. The Falkingham family was resident here throughout the 18th century. Edward Falkingham was appointed Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Newfoundland in 1732 and in 1755 Comptroller of the Royal Navy. Shortly before his death in 1757, Falkingham allowed the family's 20 year-old black servant - John Bristol - to be baptised. The fashion for having Black servants was widespread among Greenwich families with seafaring or military connections.

The Falkinghams knew the Guerins, a family of army agents who lived across Greenwich Park at Maze Hill. During his first extended visit to London, the young Equiano was sent to stay with the Guerin's elderly daughters. Edward Falkingham's son John (himself a captain in the navy) was a good friend of another local family, the Warners, who, as prime movers in the islands of Barbados and Antigua, also had Black domestic servants.

## Chesterfield Walk, Shooter's Hill

From this point you can overlook Blackheath and the properties of a number of families and businesses that profited directly from the transatlantic trade in enslaved people. These firms included Camden Calvert and King.

This powerful company was the largest in the slave trade - at one time a fifth of all slaving ships that set sail from London were theirs. In the late 1780's they chose to diversify their business and won a licence to transport convicted people to Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand.

One of its owners, Thomas King, was also a member of the Royal Blackheath Golf Club, the first official golfing club in Great Britain. Its membership was exclusively Masonic and disproportionately connected to local slave trading interests, from the plantation owner turned banker Francis Baring, to the slave trader turned Lloyds bank founder, John Julius Angerstein.

The Greenwich iron merchant Ambrose Crowley, who manufactured shackles and collars and the West India merchant William Innes were also members. The golf course became an ideal place to share ideas and make trading alliances.

## Montagu House

Prior to its demolition in 1815, the Duke of Montagu lived here. The Duke's singular interest in Black people led him to sponsor Francis Williams (the free-born Jamaican who he sent to an English grammar school and afterwards to study Mathematics at Oxford) and Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, also known as Job Ben Solomon, an enslaved person whose transcriptions of the Koran (three times in its entirety from memory) are still kept in Oxford.

Montagu House was also where Ignatius Sancho (the 18th-century Black correspondent and composer) was employed as a butler and where through 'unwearied application' he taught himself to read.

## Royal Observatory

From this vantage point you can see many of the Port of London's connections with the transatlantic trade in enslaved people. The towers of the City lie to the east, many of which were built on the financial wealth of specialist bankers-to-the-slavers.

Also visible is Cabot Hall, named after Italian Giovanni Caboto who in 1497, under his anglicised name John Cabot, claimed the territory of North America for England, along with the right to explore and settle all parts of it that were not occupied by Christians. Elizabeth I used this claim 100 years later to encourage settlement in Virginia and the subsequent plantations.

The Thames disappears from view past the old Woolwich dockyards. This was the route taken by more than 3,000 slaving ships that left from London during the period of Britain's involvement in the transatlantic trade.

**PORT** **CITIES** London

visit [www.portcities.org.uk/london](http://www.portcities.org.uk/london)

**NATIONAL**  
**MARITIME**  
MUSEUM

**ROYAL**  
**OBSERVATORY**  
GREENWICH

  
New Opportunities Fund  
**LOTTERY FUNDED**