



Report assessing the connections between the  
transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people and the  
Bridge House Estates

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## **Foreword: a message from our Board chair**

### **A Message from Our Board Chair**

Understanding our history is essential to shaping our future. This independent research into the links between Bridge House Estates (City Bridge Foundation's historical and legal name) and the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people is a necessary step in our ongoing commitment to transparency, equity and social justice.

The report reveals that while the links to the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people were limited and did not transform our charity's finance, some of the individuals who governed us were involved in the traffic's creation and expansion. Their roles within the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people were independent from the charity's investments or activities. We acknowledge the lasting and abhorrent harm caused by this practise and its legacy of inequality that continues to impact communities in London and worldwide. We condemn the role that London and the broader UK played in this period of history.

Our commitment to racial justice is a direct response to this legacy. We believe that by being open about our history, we can build a more just future and strengthen trust with the communities we serve. This honesty is not only about looking backward; it's about giving meaning and purpose to our work today. While this research was not the catalyst for our new Racial Justice programme, its findings underscore the importance of this work.

We are taking steps to address the harm that echoes to this day by dismantling inequitable systems that hold people back. Our future is rooted in social justice, equity, and inclusion, and we will continue to listen and learn.

We hope that by sharing our story, we can foster a broader movement toward transparency and accountability. We invite others to join us in confronting our collective past and its enduring legacy, and in continuing the work of building a more just and equitable future for all.

***Paul Martinelli***

Chair, City Bridge Foundation Board, November 2025

## Executive Summary

- Although the Bridge House Estates were sustained by rental payments made by confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people, these payments did not alter the asset base of the Bridge House Estates.
- Across the period 1650 to 1807, 18 confirmed traffickers in enslaved African people made a total of 358 rental payments to the Bridge House Estates.
- The modal average percentage of the total Proper Rents of the Bridge House Estates paid by confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people across the period 1689 to 1759 (assessed at 10-year intervals) was 2 per cent.
- Across the period 1650-1807, 62 confirmed traffickers in enslaved African people approved the Bridgemaster's rental accounts as officials of the Corporation of London.
- The modal average percentage of the total annual number of signatories approving the Bridgemasters' Account across the period 1653 to 1756 was 25 per cent.
- The tenants of the Bridge House Estates and the signatories of the Bridgemasters' Accounts include prominent individuals in the history of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people including Sir James Bateman, John Bence, Sir John Cass, Sir Samuel Dashwood, Sir Richard Ford, John Gardner, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys, Maurice Thomson, Sir Robert Vyner, and Sir William Withers.

## **Purpose**

This report summarises research commissioned by City Bridge Foundation and completed by Professor William Pettigrew between July and December 2024. The agreed aims of this research are:

1. To support City Bridge Foundation's dedication to equity, diversity, and inclusion by assessing the connections between the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people and City Bridge Foundation's endowment (hereafter referred to as the Bridge House Estates).
2. To embed and encourage responsible business practices within City Bridge Foundation (as well as promoting these values externally) by revealing and communicating historic connections between the Bridge House Estates and the traffic in enslaved African people.

## **Competence**

As Principal Investigator for and Editor of the *Register of British Slave Traders* project I am an expert on traffickers of enslaved African people based in Britain, the corporations who led this traffic, and investment practices and merchant philanthropy in Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## **Historical Background**

The transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people had begun from England in the 1560s but did not become persistent and large scale until the 1640s. It then continued until Parliament ended the traffic with the abolition statute of 1807. Those who organised and financed the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people did so either as the organisers and financiers of independent voyages forcibly transporting enslaved African people to the plantations or as investors in one (sometimes more than one) of the joint stock trading companies established by royal charter. These were the Guinea Company (from 1618), the

Company of Royal Adventurers to Africa (from 1660), its successor, the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa (from 1663), and the Royal African Company (from 1672). In most cases these investors had broad commercial concerns that went beyond trading in enslaved African people.

King James I founded the Governor and Company of Adventurers of London trading into the Parts of Africa (commonly called the Guinea Company) in 1618. Focussed initially on importing gold from West Africa, the Company assisted in the transition from using white indentured to using enslaved African labour in the plantations of Barbados that took place in the 1640s. Several merchants, including Maurice Thomson, had infringed on the Company's monopoly over the burgeoning traffic in enslaved African people during the 1620s and 30s. The East India Company purchased the Guinea Company's charter rights in 1657.

After the end of the English Commonwealth (from 1649 to 1660), the restored monarchy sought out projects to make money and to improve its image. These included the Royal Society (for the promotion of science), the Theatre Royal, and the Company of Royal Adventurers to Africa (founded in 1660). This company proposed to use largely courtly investment to develop trade between England and West Africa, including a traffic in enslaved African people. The Company enjoyed the support of the monarch, Charles II. His brother, James Duke of York, led the Company from his apartments in Whitehall Palace. King Charles issued a new charter in 1663 which re-founded the company as the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa with more input from City of London merchants. Together these two companies trafficked approximately 21,000 enslaved African captives to plantations in the Caribbean. The Company's role in the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667) placed it under immense financial strain and it was again re-established, this time as the Royal African Company in 1672.

The Royal African Company was the single largest contributor to the entire transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people, shipping in the region of 180,000 captive Africans between 1672 and 1731. The Company boasted a royal charter granting it a monopoly over all English trade from modern day Morocco to the Cape of Good Hope for a thousand years. The Royal African Company proved to

be a prolific human trafficking organization, sending out more than 500 ships between 1673 and 1713, minting 548,327 gold guineas, and importing 30,000 tons of sugar and large quantities of redwood dyestuffs and ivory into England. Based at Leadenhall Street in the City of London, the Royal African Company maintained (and sometimes built) a network of forts in West Africa where enslaved people were incarcerated prior to being trafficked to the Americas. Like its two predecessor companies, the Company enjoyed intimate connections with the monarchy. As with its antecedents, the Royal African Company proposed to monopolise the traffic in enslaved African people to London at the expense of the provincial 'outports' like Bristol. It therefore enjoyed especially intimate connections with the Corporation of London.

Founded by King Charles II, and assiduously supported by his brother, James Duke of York (later King James II), the Royal African Company lost its monopoly after James abandoned the English throne in 1688. With James gone and the Royal African Company's monopoly unenforceable due to alterations in the English constitution because of the Glorious Revolution, hundreds of independent traffickers of enslaved African people entered the market, expanding the scale of the traffic by about 300 per cent, and shifting the traffic's centre of gravity away from London to the provinces. This campaign was led by (among others) merchants who - via their role as officials of the Corporation of London - approved the Bridge House Estate's annual rental accounts - like John Gardner, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, and Sir Richard Levett.

Parliament established the South Sea Company in 1711 to convert the huge debts the Government had accumulated over 20 years of warfare into stock in a company. The Government paid the South Sea Company for converting government debt into stock. The Company relayed this to stockholders as a dividend. In 1713, the Government signed the Treaty of Utrecht. This gave the Government the contract to supply the Spanish American colonies with enslaved African people, which it transferred to the South Sea Company. From 1714 to 1740, the South Sea Company forcibly transported at least 36,000 enslaved African men, women, and children to (and within) the plantations of South America and the Caribbean. Holders of stock in the South Sea Company financed and benefitted from this business, and those who purchased South Sea

Company stock were aware that trafficking of enslaved African people was central to its operation. In 1718, Parliament expanded the Company's financial role by converting all government debt, apart from that owed to the Bank of England and the East India Company, into South Sea stock. This led to frenzied demand for South Sea stock that inflated the famous financial bubble which burst in the summer of 1720. At around this time, the Royal African Company was refinanced with a fresh and largescale infusion of new capital, under the leadership of James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos.

## **Work, Methodology, and Scope**

A trafficker of enslaved African people was someone who invested directly in a crossing violently transported enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. An investor in the traffic was anyone who contributed financially to the outfitting of a crossing which violently transported enslaved African people or to a company - like the Company of Royal Adventurers trading to Africa, the Royal African Company, and the South Sea Company - which outfitted such crossings for the duration of that company's active participation in the trafficking of enslaved Africans, in expectation of a profit share. Not always passive, certain large-scale investors in these companies also became leaders of these organisations as Assistants (African companies) or Directors (South Sea Company).

This report explores connections between traffickers of captive Africans and the Bridge House Estates from 1650 to 1807. It traces two types of connection: financial and governmental. The properties managed by Bridge House had largely been gathered prior to Londoners' engagement with the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people. The Bridge House Estates were not added to by any donation or legacy during this period. For this reason, and unlike other long-established City of London institutions, the Bridge House Estates were not altered by the profits of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people.

The research underpinning this report focusses on those confirmed traffickers of captive Africans who were tenants of the Bridge House Estates during this period. I read the Bridgemaster Accounts and Rentals for the period 1650 to

1807. I crosschecked the names of all tenants against my list of confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people to generate a list of trafficker tenants who contributed to the Bridge House Estates income. The report therefore shows the prevalence of traffickers of enslaved African captives as tenants of the Bridge House Estates, who often sub-let these properties. These tenants contributed to the annual income of the Bridge House Estates, but did not alter the Estates' financial prospects. I made periodic (ten yearly) assessments of the significance of trafficker rental payments to the total income from the Bridge House Estates 'Proper Rents' i.e. those derived from properties held in the City of London, on London Bridge itself, and in Southwark. I did not include the payers of quitrents in this analysis, because these were not a core income stream for the Bridge House Estates in this period.

As well as tracing financial connections, the research underpinning this report records those officials of the Corporation of London who approved the Bridge House Estates' annual accounts. At the end of each of the Bridgemaster Account books, officials of the Corporation, including Lord Mayors and Alderman, who served on the Corporation of London's Bridge House Committee, approved the rental accounts by signing them. I then crosschecked the list of signatories to these accounts against my confirmed list of traffickers of enslaved African people to generate a list of trafficker auditors of the Bridgemaster's Accounts. This governmental connection between the Bridge House Estates and the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people is one mediated by the governmental role the Corporation of London had over the Bridge House Estates. There was no overlap between the Bridgemasters and the confirmed traffickers of enslaved African captives.

It is vital to stress that while there is every possibility that the rental payments made by confirmed traffickers in enslaved African people to the Bridge House Estates could have derived from profits generated by the tenant's participation in the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people, it is not possible to confirm with any certainty or precision that these donations came directly from the profits of the traffic. Money is fungible and, in the case of all tenants, profits from the traffic in enslaved African people would have been mixed with money generated elsewhere in a tenant's financial career. This report necessarily

focuses on the individuals who sought to profit from the enslavement of those African men, women, and children, whose identity was – for the most part – erased from the historical record.

## **Overall Findings**

### **Financial Connections**

One of the Bridgemasters during this period, William Mingay, the woollen draper of Gracechurch Street, was also financially connected to the transatlantic traffic of enslaved African people. Mingay was Bridgemaster from 1744 to 1746. He had purchased £500 (book value) of stock in the Royal African Company in the Spring of 1720.

### **Tenancies**

Across the period 1650 to 1807, 18 confirmed traffickers in enslaved African people made a total of 358 rental payments to the Bridge House Estates. The first of these payments was made in 1650 (Sir John Lawrence) and the last was made in 1787 (Michael Peter Touray). These tenancies lasted from a single year (Lawrence) to 36 years (Deodatus Staverton junior) and ranged across the Bridge House Estates properties, including tenements, warehouses, and wharfs from Wood Street off Cheapside, to All Hallows by the Wall and London Bridge to the Wharfs of Southwark.

Of the 18, two were investors in the South Sea Company, including one prominent director, Sir James Bateman, who was one of the architects of the South Sea Company. Four tenants were investors in independent crossings trafficking enslaved African people (Isaac Da Costa Alvarenga, Valens Comyns, Maurice Thomson, and Michael Peter Touray). Three (Bence, Lawrence, and Mountney) were investors in the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa. Five were investors in the Royal African Company and three were Assistants (equivalent to directors) of the Royal African Company (Clayton, Lockwood, and Withers). One, Mary Hobby, was female. Five (Bateman, Chaplin, Clayton, Lawrence, and Withers) were Lord Mayors of London.

Fourteen out of 18 (or 78 per cent) of these tenants rented Bridge House Estates properties while they had active investments in crossings that trafficked enslaved African people. In two instances (the Mountney, Staverton families) different generations of the same family continued their tenancies with the Bridge House Estates. On one occasion, a single property, a tenement at All Hallow's by the Wall, was held by one investor in crossings trafficking enslaved African people (Mary Hobby) and was later held by another investor in the traffic, (Isaac de Costa Alvarenga).

The merchants who were tenants of the Bridge House Estates who mounted independent crossings trafficking enslaved African people made various contributions to the traffic. Maurice Thomson's intended crossings were intercepted by officials enforcing the monopoly of the Guinea Company. Valens Comyns' single crossing trafficked 288 captive Africans, and Touray's single voyage trafficked 98. The crossings part-financed by Isaac Da Costa Alvarenga in the ship *Abraham and Isaac* violently transported 190 enslaved African captives to Jamaica in 1712 and 209 to Kingston, Jamaica in 1713. In 1714, the captain and crew of the *Abraham and Isaac* were overcome by the captive Africans and the ship ended its crossing in Portugal.

**Table 1: A List of Bridge House Estates Tenants who trafficked enslaved African people**

Name	Date Range	Category	Property	Type	Payments
Bateman, Sir James	1707 - 1719	SSC Director	Christ Church	Tenement	12
Bence, John	1662 - 1669	CRA	All Hallow's by the Wall	Tenement	8
Chaplin, Sir Francis	1667 - 1683	RAC Investor	Southwark	Warehouse	7

Clayton, Sir Robert	1669 – 1685	RAC Director	St Margaret Pattens	Tenement	16
Comyns, Valens	1746- 1756	Independent	Christ Church	Tenement	10
Da Costa Alvarenga, Isaac	1716 – 1737	RAC Investor	All Hallow's by the Wall	Tenement	21
Dottin, Henry	1734 – 1745	RAC Investor	West Cheap	Tenement	11
Hobby, Mary	1678- 1707	RAC Investor	All Hallow's by the Wall	Tenement	29
Lawrence, Sir John	1650	CRA	London Bridge	Tenement	1
Lockwood, Richard	1733- 1750	RAC Director	Southwark	Wharfs	44
Mountney, Nathaniel	1671 – 1699	RAC Investor	Paternoster Row	Tenement	28
Mountney, Richard	1660- 1670	CRA	Paternoster Row	Tenement	10
Staverton, Deodatus (jun)	1724 – 1760	RAC Investor	London Bridge	Tenement	61
Staverton, Deodatus (sen)	1698- 1724	SSC Investor	London Bridge	Tenement	26
Sweetapple, John	1685 – 1699	RAC Investor	Christ Church	Tenement	14
Thomson, Maurice	1669 – 1676	Independent	Christ Church	Warehouse	7
Touray, Michael Peter	1786 – 1787	Independent	St Margaret Pattens	Tenement	2
Withers, Sir William	1670 – 1721	RAC Director	St Mary Woolnoth	Tenement	51

**Note:** CRA is Company of Royal Adventurers trading to Africa, SSC, South Sea Company, RAC, Royal African Company.

Together, the list of Bridge House Estates tenants who were also traffickers of enslaved African people represents a summation of London's contribution to that traffic: from the early, elite pioneers of the state-sponsored monopoly companies who laid the infrastructural foundations for Britain's contribution to the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people (Bence, Lawrence), to the community of investors in those company's stocks, to the prominent merchants (Thomson) who integrated human trafficking with their plantation ownership (and their ownership of trafficked Africans), to marginal figures in London (Touray) who participated in the traffic once its centre of gravity had moved from London to Liverpool by the second half of the eighteenth century. One of the tenants, Valens Comyns, financed a crossing trafficking enslaved African people that departed from Liverpool.

Throughout the period in which Londoners were active in the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved African people, the Bridge House Estates had hundreds of tenants. Tenants who also trafficked enslaved Africans were therefore a small minority of the Bridge House Estates tenants. Taking snapshots every ten years from 1689 to 1759, the combined rental payments of tenants also active in trafficking enslaved Africans was 1 per cent of the total Proper Rents (1689), increasing to 3 per cent in 1699, and levelling at 2 per cent from 1709 to 1729. The figure increased dramatically in 1739 because the Royal African Company director, Richard Lockwood esquire, rented three expensive properties: Stout's, Ramsay's, and Hammot's Wharfs in Southwark, adjacent to his own property at Marigold Alley. These rental payments increased the share of proper rents paid by confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people in the year 1739 to 13 per cent. After that, the percentages decreased back down to 2 per cent (1749) and then one per cent (1759).

## **A Directory of Key Tenants**

The Bridge House Estate tenants listed below were of particular importance to the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people either because of their role in shaping that business or because of the scale and persistence of their contribution to it.

### **Sir James Bateman**

The son of a Flemish immigrant, Bateman (1660-1718) was a prominent financier in the early eighteenth century. Bateman was a Member of Parliament and became Lord Mayor of London in 1716. He became one of the architects of the South Sea Company and served as Sub-governor of that Company from 1711 until his death in 1718 (and subscribed £9,000 to the scheme). He donated substantial sums to many London charities. During his financial connection to the South Sea Company that organisation mounted 39 crossings trafficking enslaved African people. Bateman rented a tenement in Christ Church parish from the Bridge House Estates from 1707 to 1719, during his involvement in the South Sea Company.

### **John Bence**

From a prominent mercantile family in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, Bence (1622-1688) was a leading City of London merchant specialising in cargoes to Portugal, Brazil, and the Levant. He also supplied bullion to the East India Company. Bence was a member of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa (with an £800 share in June 1663) and was an assiduous attender of its board meetings throughout 1664. Bence was also a founding subscriber to the Royal African Company (investing £1,500) and served as an Assistant of that Company in 1672-73, 1675-1677, 1680-1682, 1685-1687. Subscribers to the Royal African Company were especially important to that organisations' prospects because they provided initial funding and reputational capital to the venture. Bence did not buy any more African Company shares but sold £500 early in 1672 and £500 early the following year. He held the rest of his stock until his death. During his financial connection to both African companies they mounted 293 crossings. Bence rented a tenement at All Hallow's by the Wall from the Bridge

House Estates from 1662 to 1669, which overlapped with his interest in the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa.

### **Sir Robert Clayton**

Clayton (1629-1707) was a prominent scrivener, banker, and financier who was a partner in the banking firm Clayton and Morris. By 1670 Clayton was a wealthy man, and he diversified his investment portfolio to include shares in overseas trading companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company and the Royal African Company. He was an initial subscriber to the African Company in 1672 with an investment of £500. While not the mainstay of his wealth, Clayton did profit from his involvement with the African Company from 1672-81. Clayton was a managing director of the African Company in these years but did not regularly attend meetings of the company's governing board, the Court of Assistants. However, he was highly active in public life; both in local and national politics where he was a vocal supporter of the Whig cause, and through the money and energy he devoted to philanthropic causes. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 100 crossings. Clayton and his partner, John Morris, rented a tenement at St Margaret Pattens from the Bridge House Estates from 1669 to 1685 at the height of his involvement in the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people.

### **Mary Hobby**

Mary Hobby (1628-1707) was a London-based investor. She began investing in the Royal African Company in May 1688 (with a £200 share purchased from her near neighbour in the City of London, the African Company executive, Benjamin Bathurst) and purchased £2,000 in February 1692. She transferred holdings to family members, including £1,600 to Stephen Jermyn (her cousin) who used this large holding to qualify himself to become an Assistant of the Company from 1697. The timings of her investments suggests that her dealings in Royal African Company stock were largely profitable. Mary was the widow of the wealthy Clothworker, John Hobby. She appears to have held £1,700 in African Company stock at her death in 1707. Hobby seems to have divided her time between a city residence at All Hallows, London Wall (where she rented a tenement from the Bridge House Estates), a suburban residence at Stoke Newington, and a further

residence at Tottenham in Middlesex. As well as being a prolific investor, she donated substantial sums to City of London charities, including Christ's Hospital (£100), St Thomas' Hospital (£100), Bethlem Hospital (£100), St Bartholomew's Hospital (£100), and £50 to the London Corporation Workhouse in Bishopsgate (as well as £10 to the poor of the two parishes she resided in: All Hallow's London Wall and Tottenham). She was buried in the churchyard of All Hallows, Tottenham. During her financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 194 crossings. Mary Hobby rented a tenement from the Bridge House Estates at All Hallow's London Wall from 1678 to her death in 1707. Her legacy to the poor of this parish suggests that she lived in this property some of the time.

### **Sir John Lawrence**

Lawrence (died 1692) appears to have been born into a modest background in the City of London. He climbed socially as a successful East India Company merchant to become Lord Mayor. As Lord Mayor he led the City's response to the outbreak of plague in the year 1665. He invested £200 in the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa and £1,600 in the Royal African Company as a subscriber in 1672 and was an Assistant in that Company in 1672. Lawrence appears to have retained his shares until his death. His investment in both African Companies connects him to 358 slave trading voyages. As a strident Whig, he took a stand against James II's intermeddling in the City of London Corporation and in non-specialists interfering in trade. Lawrence rented a tenement on London Bridge from the Bridge House Estates in 1650, prior to his involvement in the Company of Royal Adventurers.

### **Richard Lockwood**

Lockwood (1676-1756) began his commercial career as a Levant merchant. He became an Assistant of the Royal African Company in 1721 after the James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos' relaunch and served in that capacity until 1725. He remained a close friend of the Duke and acted as his banker. Lockwood also had interests in a colliery and copper works at Treboeth near Swansea which he granted to his son, John. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 74 crossings. Lockwood rented four Bridge

House Estate properties across 1733 to 1750. These included expensive wharf facilities in Southwark which he sublet as well as a tenement in Christ Church Parish. Although his copper business likely supplied plantations in the Caribbean, where copper kettles for boiling sugar were in high demand, Lockwood's Bridge House tenancies did not overlap with his direct involvement in the Royal African Company.

### **Richard Mountney**

Mountney (sometimes Mounteney, died 1683) was Receiver General in the London Custom House. He invested in the Company of Royal Adventurers. Although he held a £400 share in June 1663, he did not attend any of the company's meetings. During his financial connection to the company that organisation mounted 82 crossings. Mountney rented a tenement at Paternoster Row from the Bridge House Estates from 1660 to 1670, during the period in which he was active in the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people. He passed this tenancy to his son, Nathaniel Mountney, who was an investor in the Royal African Company at the same time as being a Bridge House tenant.

### **Maurice Thomson**

Thomson (1604-1676) was a leading English colonial trader of the mid-seventeenth century, with an expansive commercial outlook which included the British Isles, European trade, North America, the Caribbean, West Africa, and the East Indies. He was also a pioneer of England's transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people. In 1623-24 Thomson established the first permanent English colony in the Caribbean at St Christopher (St Kitts), and in 1626 trafficked 'about sixty slaves' to his 10,000-acre plantation on the island. This voyage constitutes the first recorded slaving venture organised in England that trafficked African captives directly to an English colony. He was an early adopter of sugar production in 1640s Barbados and co-owned a Barbados plantation. Thomson had interloped in the Guinea Company's trade in the 1620s and 30s but became a member in the early 1650s. Prior to this, Thomson participated in two interloping slaving voyages in 1652. Both crossings failed to disembark their human cargoes in the Caribbean. Thomson was a prominent supporter of the

Parliamentary cause in the English Civil War and was one of the architects of the Western Design, which led to the English conquest of Jamaica in 1655. Thomson rented a commercial facility under the meat market at Christ Church from 1669 to 1676, long after he had ceased to finance crossings of enslaved African people. This tenancy passed to his son, Sir John Thompson, who became Lord Haversham.

### **Sir William Withers**

From a well-established London mercantile family, Withers (1654-1721) rose to the top of the City of London hierarchy as Lord Mayor and sought to shape the City according to his staunchly Tory views. He served as Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1697-1698, 1703-1709 (and as Sub-Governor in 1707, 1708-9). He held stock from 1689 onwards. Withers served the Company at precisely the point at which it was under most intense political attack from proponents of a deregulated traffic in enslaved African people. Along with others, in 1710 he sought to block the bill to construct the dry dock at Liverpool to restrict the emerging competition in the traffic in enslaved African people that was appearing there. During his leadership of the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 189 crossings trafficking enslaved African people to the plantations. Withers rented a tenement close to St Mary Woolnoth from the Bridge House Estates from 1670 until his death in 1721. This was throughout the period in which he also served as a governing official with the Corporation of London.

### **Governmental Connection: Auditors**

Across the period 1650-1807, 62 confirmed traffickers in enslaved African people approved the Bridgemaister's rental accounts as members of the Corporation of London. They did so from 1653 to 1756 (though not in every year). Of the 62, one (Sir Thomas Vyner), was an investor in the Company of Royal Adventurers, 23 were investors in the Royal African Company, 10 were independent traffickers of enslaved African people (Bethell, Bludworth, Fryer, Gardner, Heathcote, Jefferies, Knipe, Levett, Scott, and Travers) with

Bludworth, Gardner, and Jefferies also serving as Assistants (or directors) of the Royal African Company prior to that. Twenty were directors of the Royal African Company, and 4 were directors of the South Sea Company (Bateman, Crowley, Eyles, and Hoare). Five continued their investment in the Company of Royal Adventurers into the Royal African Company (Ford, Robinson, Torriano, Sir Robert Vyner, and Warren), with all but Warren serving as Directors of the Royal African Company. Two (Marshall and Masters) invested both in the Royal African and the South Sea companies. John Gardner and Sir Gilbert Heathcote were especially important and effective advocates for increasing the capacity of Britain's traffic in enslaved African people by ending the monopoly of the Royal African Company, while Sir William Withers, as an Assistant of the Royal African Company, sought to stop the development of the port of Liverpool. Thirty-eight of these individuals (or 61 per cent) served as Lord Mayor of London. Six of the auditors were also tenants of the Bridge House Estates.

Ten auditors who also helped finance independent crossings trafficking enslaved African people. The single crossing Sir Thomas Bludworth helped finance was captured by the Dutch in 1668 and the 264 enslaved Africans were forcibly disembarked at Surinam. The single crossing financed by the partnership of Sir John Fryer and Sir Randolph Knipe captured enslaved people at Madagascar and forcibly transported 220 to Barbados in 1717. The single crossing part financed by Sir Gilbert Heathcote forcibly transported 236 enslaved African captives. Sir Jeffery Jefferies was co-owner of 13 crossings (as well as his involvement in leading the Royal African Company's business prior to his entry into independent trafficking of enslaved Africans). Sir Richard Levett was part owner of 4 crossings. Robert Scott contributed to two crossings trafficking 523 enslaved Africans to the Caribbean. Samuel Travers part financed two crossings which together transported 503 enslaved African people.

**Table 2: A List of Bridge House Estates Auditors who trafficked enslaved African people**

Name	Years as Auditor	Lord Mayor	Category
Bateman, Sir James	1707-1709, 1711, 1717	1	SSC Director
Bellamy, Edward	1723, 1725-1728, 1731, 1733, 1735	1	RAC Investor
Bethell, Slingsby	1750-1752, 1754-56	1	Independent
Bludworth, Sir Thomas	1666, 1668	1	Independent and RAC Director
Brewis, Valentine	1724-25		RAC Investor
Brocas, Sir Richard	1721-22, 1724-25, 1729-30	1	RAC Director
Cass, Sir John	1711-1715		RAC Director
Champion, Sir George	1730, 1732-35, 1737, 1739		RAC Investor
Chaplin, Sir Francis	1676-79	1	RAC Investor
Clayton, Sir Robert	1679, 1681,	1	RAC Director
Conyers, Sir Gerard	1714, 1717, 1719-23, 1725-27, 1730-31	1	RAC Investor
Cowing, Humphrey	1701-1702, 1704		RAC Investor
Crowley, Sir Ambrose	1711		SSC Director

Dashwood, Sir Samuel	1700, 1702-04	1	RAC Director
Delme, Sir Peter	1714, 1718-1719, 1721-22, 1724-25, 1727-28	1	RAC Director
du Bois, John	1676/77, 1679-1680		RAC Investor
Edwards, Sir James	1677-78, 1683-84	1	RAC Director
Eyles, Sir John	1719-20, 1727	1	SSC Director
Fawkener, William	1691-92		RAC Investor
Fazakerly, William	1699		RAC Investor
Fleete, Sir John	1692, 1704-1709, , 1712	1	RAC Director
Ford, Sir Richard	1669/70	1	CRA and RAC Director
Fryer, Sir John	1719-1721 1724	1	Independent
Gardner, John	1687		Independent and RAC Director
Geffrey, Sir Robert	1673-4, 1683-4, 1688-1691, 1694, 1698, 1700-02	1	RAC Director
Godschall, Sir Robert	1736	1	RAC Investor
Hankey, Joseph	1737, 1739-41		RAC Investor
Heathcote, Sir Gilbert	1706, 1711, 1724-1726	1	Independent
Heatly, Thomas	1676-77		RAC Investor
Hoare, Sir Richard	1703, 1706/7, 1709-1711, 1713, 1715-1716	1	SSC Director

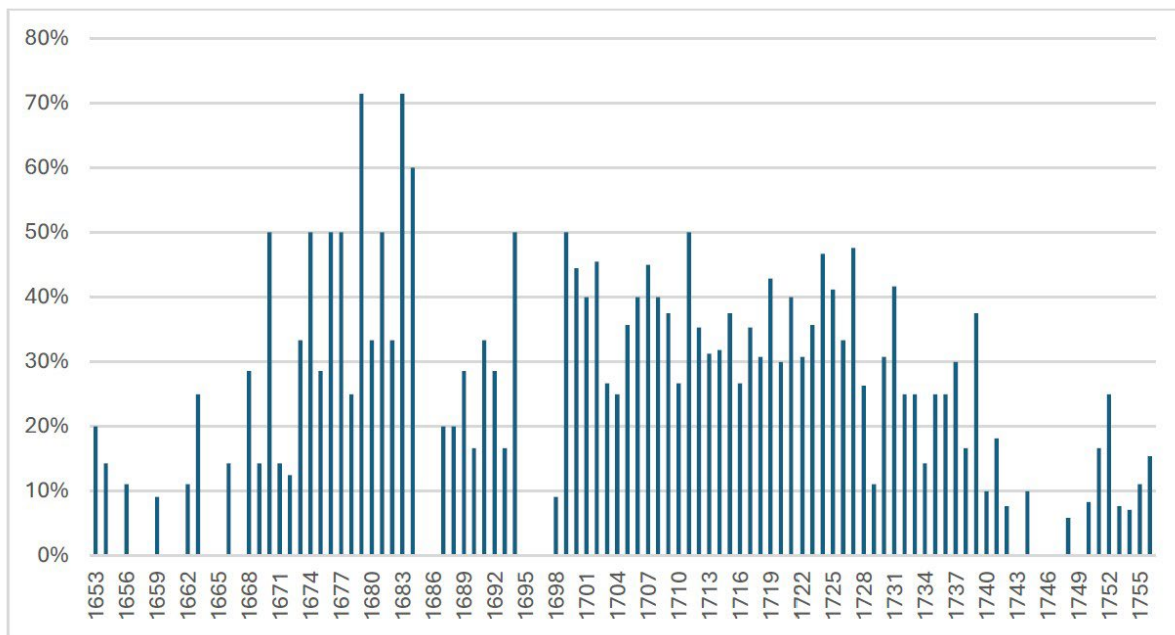
Humphreys, Sir William	1710-1717, 1719, 1722, 1726	1	RAC Director
Ironside, Edward	1748	1	RAC Investor
Jeffreys, Sir Jeffrey	1703, 1706, 1709		Independent and RAC Director
Knipe, Sir Randolph	1721, 1723-24, 1726-27		Independent
Lane, Sir Thomas	1694, 1701, 1705, 1707-8	1	RAC Investor
Lawrence, Sir John	1663, 1689	1	RAC Director
Levett, Sir Richard	1699, 1702-08	1	Independent
Levett, Richard Junior	1727		RAC Investor
Ludlam, Sir George	1711-12, 1714-15, 1718-19		RAC Investor
Marshall, Sir Henry	1738, 41	1	RAC and SSC Investor
Masters, Sir Harcourt	1719-1720, 1724-24, 1727-28, 1730-31		RAC and SSC Investor
Moore, Sir John	1670, 1679, 1681, 1694,	1	RAC Director
Paravicini, Sir Peter	1683-84		RAC Investor
Pitts, James	1731-32		RAC Investor
Prichard, Sir William	1681-83, 1694, 1700, 1702,	1	RAC Director
Robinson, Sir John	1659, 62, 63	1	CRA and RAC Director

Scott, Robert	1752, 1756		Independent
Sheldon Sir Joseph	1674-76,	1	RAC Investor
Stanier, Sir Samuel	1705, 1707-1721	1	RAC Director
Sweetapple, John	1693		RAC Investor
Thompson, Sir John	1726-1728, 1731-32, 1735-38, 1742	1	RAC Director
Torriano, George	1679-80		CRA and RAC Director
Travers, Samuel	1727-28		Independent
Tulse, Sir Henry	1681-83	1	RAC Director
Turner, Sir William	1668	1	RAC Investor
Vyner, Sir Robert	1674	1	CRA and RAC Director
Vyner, Sir Thomas	1653/4	1	CRA
Warren, Sir William	1674-5		CRA and RAC Investor
Waterman, Sir George	1670-3	1	RAC Investor
Williams, John	1736	1	RAC Investor
Withers, Sir William	1701, 1705-1720	1	RAC Director
Woolfe, Sir Joseph	1707-1708		RAC Director

**Note:** CRA is Company of Royal Adventurers trading to Africa, SSC, South Sea Company, RAC, Royal African Company.

The changing prevalence of confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people within the cohort of officials of the Corporation of London who approved the Bridge House Estates' accounts across the period 1650 to 1807 reflects (as with the data on Bridge House Tenants above) the changing importance of the traffic for London across this period. The concentration of officials with direct connections with the trafficking of enslaved people increased from an average of 8 per cent from 1653 to 1659, prior to the formation of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, to 20 per cent during the period in which that company was active. As the state took on more advice and finance from the City of London to expand the scale of the traffic, the concentration of those who financed it within the Corporation of London increased markedly. During the high point of the Royal African Company's monopoly from 1672 to 1688, investors in the traffic made up, on average, 41 per cent of the officials auditing the Bridge House Estates (with the highest concentration, 71 per cent, achieved when that Company's Governor and a leading investor, James Stuart, was also King of England in 1681 and 1683). The concentration reduced to 33 per cent while the African Company sought to extend its monopoly. After it had failed to do so, from 1712, the traffic in enslaved African people began to leave London for the western ports of, first Bristol, then Liverpool and the concentration of trafficking auditors reduced to 23 per cent from 1713 to 1756.

**Chart 1: The percentage of Bridge House Estates auditors who trafficked enslaved African people 1653-1756 (date for some years is missing)**



## A Directory of Key Auditors

The Bridge House Estate auditors listed below were of particular importance to the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people either because of their role in shaping that business or because of the scale and persistence of their contribution to it.

### Sir Thomas Bludworth

A Londoner by birth, Bludworth (1624-1682) sustained his father's business as a Levant merchant trading to the Ottoman Empire. He also owned property in the City of London and invested in the East India Company. Bludworth became famous for failing to act quickly enough as Lord Mayor during the Great Fire of London. He was heavily invested in the traffic in enslaved African people both as a financier and Assistant in the Royal African Company. He also invested in an independent voyage trafficking enslaved African people to the plantations with

Sir William Rider. Bludworth served as a member of the Court of Assistants of the Royal African Company from 1675-6 and in 1678. He subscribed £500 original Royal African Company stock. By 1678, Bludworth's holdings had grown to £1,300. He profited handsomely from these investments. During his financial connection to the African Company, it mounted 42 crossings that trafficked enslaved African people. Bludworth approved the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1666 and 1668.

### **Sir John Cass**

Cass (1661-1718) was a London businessman and a prominent politician and philanthropist in the City of London. Having made a fortune by supplying the Ordnance Board, Cass became an Assistant of the Royal African Company in 1705 (having invested £1,000 in the previous year). He held £6,000 in 1705 and held smaller investments in the Company until his death in 1718. He was a dedicated attender of the African Company's board meetings from 1705 to 1708. Cass played a role in helping the African Company to promote its cause before Parliament. He left substantial sums to various City of London charities, including the school at Aldgate that bore his name until 2020. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 131 crossings. Cass approved the Bridge House accounts from 1711 to 1715.

### **Sir Samuel Dashwood**

Dashwood (1643-1705) was a highly successful City of London merchant who served as Lord Mayor in 1702. Samuel was an especially long-serving Director of the Royal African Company, appearing in this capacity in the years: 1672-4, 1677-9, 1682-4, 1687-9, 1692-3, 1698-9, 1701-3, and at his death in 1705. He held stock in April 1695 with a book value of £1,000. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation managed 411 crossings. Dashwood audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1700, and 1702-4.

## **Sir Peter Delme**

Sir Peter Delmé (1667-1728) was a London merchant specialising in trade in wool to Portugal and the Levant. He was appointed a Director of the Bank of England in 1698, served as its Deputy Governor from 1713 to 1715, as its Governor from 1715 to 1717, and sat on the bank's Court of Directors until his death in 1728. He was also elected Lord Mayor of London from 1723 to 1725. Delme was a Director of the Royal African Company from 1703 to 1708. In December 1713, he held £850 of Royal African Company stock. He made charitable bequests to many City of London charities. During his leadership of the Royal African Company that body led 71 crossings. Delme audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1714, 1718-1719, 1721-22, 1724-25, and 1727-28.

## **Sir James Edwards**

Edwards (died 1691) was a London merchant with substantial holdings in the East India Company (£15,500 at his death). Edwards was an Assistant of the Royal African Company in 1676. He held £2,000 of African Company until his death in 1691. He was Lord Mayor of the City of London in 1678. He gave large sums away as legacies in his will to City of London charities. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation led 286 crossings. Edwards audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1677/8, and 1683/4.

## **William Fawkener**

Fawkener (1642-1716) was a wealthy Levant merchant. He was a Director of the Royal African Company from 1679 to 1681. He held stock in the Company from 1678 until 1683. He made bequests to City of London charities and to the poor of his native parish, Uppingham in Rutland. Sir Peter Delme was the executor of this will. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation led 78 crossings. Fawkener audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1691-2.

## **Sir John Fleete**

The son of a Buckinghamshire inn keeper, Fleete (1647-1712) became a prominent City of London merchant specialising in sugar refining, and trade to the West Indies. He became a leading City of London merchant politician, serving as Alderman, Governor of the East India Company, MP for London, and Lord Mayor. Fleete was an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1693-4, 1699-1702, 1704, was Sub-Governor in 1698. He sold his £2,000 holding in the Royal African Company on 1 March 1698. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 105 crossings violently transporting enslaved Africans to the plantations. Fleete audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1692, 1704-9, and 1712.

## **Sir Richard Ford**

Ford (1614-1678) was a West Country merchant who achieved eminence within the great institutions of the City of London but did not secure vast wealth. He led the merchants' contingent within the Company of Royal Adventurers, becoming Deputy Governor from 1663 with a holding in the Company worth £1130 in September 1663. Ford lent money to the Company of Royal Adventurers in March 1663. He attended 22 meetings of the Company of Royal Adventurers from March 1664 until October 1672. This made him the 8th most persistent attender at these meetings and the 4th most persistent merchant. Ford encouraged other London merchants to invest in the traffic in enslaved African people by proposing that if they did so, they could position themselves for lucrative contracts to supply the Royal Navy. Ford then subscribed to the Royal African Company and became an Assistant at that Company's foundation in 1672. Ford's investments in the Company of Royal Adventurers and the Royal African Company connected him to 72 slave trading voyages. He also supplied the Company of Royal Adventurers with Asian spices to export to the West Coast of Africa. He died interstate. He served as Lord Mayor of London in 1670. Ford approved the Bridge House Accounts in 1669/70.

## **John Gardner**

Gardner (died 1690?) was a leading sugar importer and an Assistant of the Royal African Company in 1675 holding stock in the Company until 1682. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 98 crossings. He was also an Alderman of the City of London. He later became a leading lobbyist (alongside Sir Gilbert Heathcote) for the cause to open the traffic in enslaved African people from the perceived confines of the Royal African Company's monopoly. In 1686, he imported £28,394 of sugar from the West Indies. The Whig journalist, John Oldmixon, commented 'The opening the African Trade was...more owing to his [Gardner's] Contrivance and Industry than any other Person or Persons whatsoever.' He often signed petitions and appeared before public enquiries about the future of the traffic in enslaved African people. Gardner approved the Bridge House accounts in 1687.

## **Sir Robert Geffrey**

Originating in Cornwall, Geffrey (1613-1703) became a leading City of London merchant and politician. He served as Lord Mayor of London in 1685/6. He also served as an Assistant in the Royal African Company in 1691 having subscribed £400 into the original stock in 1672. He sold £1,600 of Royal African Company stock on 5 January 1692 after his service as an Assistant came to an end. Geffrey was also a famous City of London philanthropist endowing alms houses in Hackney for the Ironmongers' Company, which now house the Museum of the Home. He requested to be buried in the same vault at St Dionis Backchurch as fellow Royal African Company assistant, Sir Henry Tulse. During his long and profitable financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 284 crossings forcibly transporting enslaved African people to the plantations. Geffrey approved the Bridge House accounts in the following years: 1673-4, 1683-4, 1688-1691, 1694, 1698, 1700-02.

## **Sir Gilbert Heathcote**

A leading London merchant with commercial interests in the Baltic, the Iberian Peninsula, and across the Atlantic, Gilbert Heathcote (1652-1733) was also a Member of Parliament, Governor of the Bank of England and co-owner of a

voyage forcibly transporting enslaved African people which departed London in 1703. Although Heathcote's involvement in the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people was brief, he played a larger part in priming the political context to embrace the deregulation of monopoly companies, which helped to expand the traffic in enslaved African people from 1688. He died reputedly the richest commoner in the Kingdom. Heathcote approved the Bridge House Accounts in 1706, 1711, and in 1724-26.

### **Sir William Humphreys**

Humphreys (died 1735) was an ironmonger, oilman, and dry salter in the City of London merchant. He was an active City politician serving as an Alderman of Cheap ward, Sheriff of London from 1704-5, and Lord Mayor of London in 1714, officiating at the coronation of George the First on 1714. He purchased and lived in Hever Castle, Kent and gave legacies to three London hospitals. Humphreys was a member of the Court of Assistants of the Royal African Company from 1683 to 1685 and from 1688 to 1690. He attended Board of Trade hearings about the state of the Company's operations on the West coast of Africa in 1711. During his association with the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 141 crossings. Humphreys approved the Bridge House accounts in 1710-1717, 1719, 1722, and 1726.

### **Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys**

Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys (c. 1652-1709), London merchant, MP and trafficker of enslaved African people, was the co-owner of thirteen slaving voyages. He specialised in tobacco trading. He served as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1684-86 and 1692-98. After the deregulation of the traffic, Jeffreys became a leading independent trafficker of enslaved Africans, sending out three slave ships of his own 1702-04. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 170 crossings, in addition to the 13 independent voyages he part financed. Jeffreys approved the Bridge House accounts in 1703, 1706, and 1709.

## **Sir Richard Levett**

Lord Mayor of London in 1699, Levett (1629-1711) mounted four crossings forcibly transported enslaved African people to the Americas. The builder of Kew Palace, Levett was married to Elizabeth Crispe, the daughter of Sir Nicholas Crispe, who had been the proprietor of the English forts on the West coast of Africa during the middle years of the seventeenth century, and was brother-in-law to Sir John Holt, the judge who had struck down the enforcement powers of the African Company's monopoly in 1689. He appears to have entered the traffic in enslaved Africans to support his existing, successful Chesapeake tobacco and cloth businesses. He also lobbied on behalf of the cause of deregulated trafficking in enslaved African people. Levett approved the Bridge House estates accounts in 1699, and in 1702 to 1708.

## **Sir John Moore**

Born in Leicestershire into a non-conformist family, Moore (1620-1702) traded in lead and became a very successful East India Merchant and - putting his religious background aside - became a leading member of the City of London merchant establishment serving as Lord Mayor in 1681/2 and as the Member of Parliament for London. Moore epitomised the often-Tory City grandees who lent their political capital to support the Royal African Company at the heights of its power in the 1670s and 80s. Moore held £1,000 of Royal African Company stock from 30 May 1676 and bought and sold large amounts (including a £3,000 purchase on 28 January 1692). He complained to his nephew on 24 December 1695 that he had lost money in the 'Guinea Trade', but his transactions in African Company stock prior to the 1690s appear to have been profitable. Moore was an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1687-89 and then again in 1700. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation organised 251 crossings forcibly transporting enslaved African people to the plantations. Moore approved the Bridge House accounts in 1670, 1679, 1681, and in 1694.

## **Sir William Prichard**

Prichard (1632-1705) made a fortune supplying the Royal Navy with rope during the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars. He then became a prominent City merchant and politician. He served as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1698-1700 and again from 1703 to 1704. He had purchased £600 of African Company stock on 4 January 1678. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 335 crossings. Prichard audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1681-83, 1694, 1700, and 1702.

## **Sir John Robinson**

A successful and broad-ranging London merchant, Robinson (1615-1680) brokered the City's transition from the Cromwellian to the Restoration period. His association with the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa was persistent (dating from June 1664) and reflected his broader interest in the joint stock companies of the 1660s and 70s. He was also a subscriber to the Royal African Company (investing £500) and served as an Assistant from 1673-5. He sold his shares in the Royal African Company for a profit. During his association with both companies, they together mounted 118 crossings trafficking enslaved African people to the plantations. Robinson approved the Bridge House Accounts in 1659, 1662, and 1663.

## **Sir Samuel Stanier**

Stanier (1649-1724) was a London draper and merchant who became Lord Mayor in 1713. Stanier was a longtime servant of the Royal African Company serving as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1686 to 1688 and then again from 1691 to 1699, 1702-1708, and 1710/11 (serving as Deputy Governor in 1693-4). He sold most of his large (c. £4,000) holding in company in February 1698. During his long financial association with the company that organisation mounted 119 crossings. Stanier approved the Bridge House Accounts in 1705, and from 1707 to 1721.

## **Sir John Thompson**

Sir John Thompson (died 1750) was an Alderman of the City of London and an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1726 to 1732. He is listed as holding a share in the African Company with a book value of £3,000 in 1727. He was Alderman of Candlewick Ward from 1726, served the office of Sheriff in that year as well, and became Lord Mayor in 1737. During his financial association with the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 22 crossings. Thompson audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1726-28, 1731/2, 1735-8, and in 1742.

## **George Torriano**

Torriano (died 1685) came from Italy via Geneva, where his father had been a Protestant priest. George was a City of London merchant trading with France and Spain. Torriano purchased a £400 share in the Company of Royal Adventurers from his kinsman, Peter Proby, in December 1664. He was elected to the company's board in 1667, but only attended a single company meeting in June 1671. He also invested in the Royal African Company but sold his £400 share on 23 January 1673. During his financial connection to both African Companies they mounted 14 crossings. Torriano audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1679-80.

## **Sir Henry Tulse**

Tulse (died 1689) was a successful and prominent City of London merchant serving as Master of his livery, the Worshipful Company of Grocers, and as Lord Mayor. Tulse served as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1675 to 1677, again from 1680 to 1682, and again from 1685 to 1687. He purchased £1,900 of African Company shares across the 1670s and 80s and held £400 until his death. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 264 crossings trafficking enslaved African people to the plantations. The area of south London, Tulse Hill, is named after him. Tulse approved the Bridge House Accounts in 1681-83.

## **Sir Robert Vyner**

Vyner (1631-1688) followed his uncle, Sir Thomas into the centre of Restoration state and private banking. He became Lord Mayor of London in 1674/5. With a remarkable breadth of clients, had £400,000 involved in the Stop of the Exchequer. He invested £400 in a share in the Company of Royal Adventurers in January 1663. His holding had grown to two shares (£800) by August of that year. In January 1665 he purchased a further £1,200 from the Countess of Chesterfield. He was elected to the company's board and served from 1667 until 1670, but only attended the board from 1671 until the company's dissolution. This placed him well to invest in the newly formed successor to the Company of Royal Adventurers, the Royal African Company. He subscribed to that company with a very large (£5,000) investment. He served as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1672 to 1674. During his financial connection to both African companies they mounted 81 crossings. On visiting Sir Robert Vyner's house near Ickenham to the West of London on 7 Sept 1665, the naval official and diarist Samuel Pepys was shown Vyner's recently deceased black servant, who Vyner maintained had died of consumption. Instead of expressing any consolation about the boy's death or arranging a respectful burial, Vyner had the boy's body dried in an oven to show to visitors. Robert Vyner approved the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1674.

## **Sir Joseph Woolfe**

Woolfe (1655-1711) was a prominent City of London merchant and Sheriff (1704) as well as Master of the Mercer's Company (1703). He was also a Governor of both Bridewell and St Thomas' Hospitals. He served as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1688 to 1690 and again in 1692. He purchased £400 of stock in January 1688 and £1000 more in December 1695. During his financial connection to the Royal African Company that organisation mounted 57 crossings. Woolfe audited the Bridge House Estates accounts in 1707-8.

## Conclusions

Compared to other large London charities, the financial connections between the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people and the Bridge House Estates appear less substantial. The Bridge House Estates endowment was not transformed by the profits of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people. A small proportion of the Estates' income was paid by tenants who were also confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people. This financial connection proved persistent across a range of Bridge House Estates properties from the mid seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. The list of Bridge House Estates tenants who were also confirmed traffickers of enslaved African people includes individuals representing all aspects of that traffic: investors in all the African companies as well as corporate leaders, and pioneers of the independent traffic. The rental payments made by the 18 Bridge House estates tenants who were also active as traffickers of enslaved Africans was – on modal average – approximately 2 per cent of the total Proper Rents of the Estates.

Traffickers in enslaved African people also appeared as auditors of the Bridgemaster's account across the period 1653 to 1756. Numbering 62, their prevalence within this group of auditors (a much more selective group than the total number of tenants of the Bridge House Estates) was – by modal average – approximately 25 per cent. Their connection to the Bridge House Estates was, however, secondary to their connection to the Corporation of London because they approved the Bridgemaster's accounts as officials of the Corporation. The depth and persistence of these connections between the signatories to the Bridgemaster's Accounts and the traffic in enslaved African people confirms the success that the originators of the African companies had in gathering the business acumen of the merchants of the City of London to the cause of building an expanded traffic in enslaved African people. The declining prevalence of traffickers in enslaved African people among the auditors of the Bridgemaster's accounts from the 1730s reflects the declining role of the Royal African Company in the traffic and the eclipsing of London's contribution to the traffic first by Bristol and then, ultimately, by Liverpool.

Some of the most influential and foundational traffickers in enslaved African people are among the tenants of the Bridge House Estates, men like Sir James Bateman, one of the main architects of the South Sea Company, and Maurice Thomson, a pioneer of the plantation system and the deregulated traffic in enslaved African people. Dedicated traffickers in enslaved Africans are also conspicuous among the auditors of the Bridgemaster's Accounts: John Bence, who was conscientious in support of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, Sir Samuel Dashwood who served on the Court of Assistants of the Royal African Company throughout the 1670s, 80s, and 90s (and held stock during a period in which that organisation mounted 411 crossings forcibly transporting enslaved African people to the plantations), and Sir John Cass and Sir William Withers, who used their influence over the Corporation of London to protect the interests of the Royal African Company. This list also includes John Gardner, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, and Sir Richard Levett who used the political capital that leadership of the Corporation of London gave them to assist in lobbying against the Royal African Company's monopoly and increasing the capacity of Britain's transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people still further. It is interesting how the power structure of the Corporation of London could be used by proponents of both the monopolistic and free traffic in enslaved African people. This possibility was embodied in the person of one Bridge House auditor, Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys, who both led the African Company and then took advantage of the ending of its monopoly by mounting 13 crossings of enslaved African people.

Placed into a cohort of organisations of similar age and wealth, then, the Bridge House Estates' financial connection to the transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people appears smaller than average. The organisation's connections to the traffic broader, however, through connection to the auditors of the Bridge House Estates' accounts. Because the trustees of the Bridge House Estates cannot be said to have governed the Bridge House Estates in ways that advanced the trafficking of enslaved Africans, and because the profits of that traffic did not reshape the financial fortunes of the Bridge House Estates, it is sensible to suggest that the ex-officio connection between the Bridge House Estates and the City of London Corporation made the broad and deep connections between the Bridge House Estates and leading architects of the

transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people secondary to those architects' leadership of the City of London Corporation.

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