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of 15 Lord Mayors of London, 25 Sheriffs and 38 Aldermen of the City of London who were shareholders in the Royal Africa Company. These connections to the slave trade increased during the 18th century.

John Francis Moore (1725–1809) **Monument to Sir William Beckford**

William Beckford (1709–1770) is described as the “uncrowned king of Jamaica” and amassed a considerable fortune as the sole owner of over 20,000 acres of plantations and 3,000 slaves on the island. He was twice Lord Mayor of London (1762 and 1769), as well as MP for the City of London.

This statue of William Beckford, the only Lord Mayor to have a statue in Guildhall, was commissioned by the City of London Corporation in 1770 to memorialise his speech petitioning George III. His speech, admonishing the King, was heralded as a noble declaration of the rights of the people and Beckford became the hero of political reformers. Doubts were later cast on whether in fact he spoke the words which are inscribed at the base of the monument.

Future of the Statue

Following an initial process of reflection, discussion, and a public consultation, in October 2021 the Court of Common Council – the City of London Corporation’s primary decision-making body – decided to keep and explain the statue of Beckford in its current position.

The City Corporation will work with a youth and intergenerational panel to create plaques which recontextualise and reinterpret the statue. The plaque will also include a poem, especially commissioned as part of the project.

The City Corporation is committed to equality, inclusivity and diversity and to tackling slavery and racism in all its forms. Alongside addressing the statues, the City Corporation is also taking action to improve diversity and inclusion by hosting educational and cultural events that directly address the context of the statues and the contemporary issues they raise.

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Louis Francois Roubiliac (1702–1762)

Sir John Cass

'John Cass (1661–1718) was a London businessman, a Member of Parliament for the City, and the founder of a charity school in Portsoken ward, Aldgate. He built on the fortune that his father, Thomas Cass, had amassed by operating as a major building contractor to the Ordnance Board, the government body in charge of the defence of the realm and the supply of munitions' (Ogborn, 2021). In 1705 he became an assistant in the Royal African Company and subsequently achieved greater prominence in City circles. He was actively engaged in the company's trading operations until August 1708, established the school that until recently bore his name in 1711 and pursued a successful career in both City and national politics. He was knighted in 1712.

The Sir John Cass Foundation commissioned the original statue in 1751. It stood for many years on Aldgate High Street, before being relocated to the John Cass Institute (now London Metropolitan University) in Jewry Street in 1869. The statue was relocated to the Guildhall in 1980 where it was placed on permanent loan to the City Corporation. A fibreglass replica replaced the original at London Metropolitan University, where it has stood since 1998.

1751 | Lead | No. 4415 | On loan from The Portal Trust

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Ogborn, M. (2021) Sir John Cass: the Royal African Company and the Slave Trade 1705–1718

