

July 2017 - A Visit to London Docklands



Saturday 1st July was a good day to go to the Docklands Museum at West India Quay as there were very few people around compared to an earlier visit on a Wednesday in June. The Crossrail exhibition is excellent- the finds are exhibited according to where they were found along the route of the new Elizabeth line – there are a number of videos to watch as you make your way around ranging from the excavating team to the specialists still working on the finds and volunteers who are working to look up family records of those buried on the site of the Bedlam burial ground. The upper floors of the museum have an extensive history of the docks which includes the slave trade and the sugar trade. There are paintings, models of boats and some creepy reconstructions of how the area would have looked. The ground floor has a coffee bar and also an area specifically for children – it looked like good fun as well as being educational – unfortunately we couldn't go in as we didn't have any children with us! The photograph to the left shows two of our members looking at the statue of Robert Milligan just outside the entrance to the Museum. Milligan

was mainly responsible for the funding, planning and building of the West India Dock in the early 19th Century. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Milligan for more details. The Museum website is here:

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands>

After lunch we travelled over Tower Bridge to Rotherhithe to visit the Brunel Museum.

This is a surprisingly shady area with a terrace looking out over the Thames, a very old pub the 'Mayflower' with a deck again looking out over the river and the church of St Mary where Christopher Jones (captain of the Mayflower – born in Harwich) was buried in 1622- a blue plaque



commemorates this on the outside wall of the church We all went down into the original shaft which would have led to the Thames tunnel built by Brunel- the shaft is 50' diameter and about the same in depth now – it was originally much deeper and when the tunnel opened in 1843 there were zigzag stairs going down to the entrance of the tunnel.

At the base of the shaft, we were treated to a short video, and a very informative talk by Brenda on the history of the tunnel- the lighting was very atmospheric, as you can see in the photograph on the right.



The tunnel was never used for its purpose of carrying goods through the tunnel by horse drawn vehicles as a) funds ran out or b) they forgot to buy the land either side of the river! It became a visitor attraction.

The shaft, which has a herb garden on the roof is now used for corporate events, parties etc.

The Engine House adjacent to the shaft was built to house machinery for draining the tunnel and is now the museum and a scheduled ancient monument.



Link to the Brunel Museum site: <http://www.brunel-museum.org.uk/>

The Mayflower Pub:

<http://www.mayflowerpub.co.uk/landing>

Christopher

Jones: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Jones_\(Mayflower_captain\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Jones_(Mayflower_captain))

