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THREE PIGEONS

LASSCO Three Pigeons

Milton Common,

Oxfordshire OX9 2JN

+44 (0)1844 277188

3pigeons@lassco.co.uk

BRUNSWICK HOUSE

30 Wandsworth Road,

London SW8 2LG

+44 (0) 20 7394 2100

brunswick@lassco.co.uk



RIDING HOUSE STREET MAPLE STRIP

Reclaimed from Charles Bell House UCL Medical Sciences Faculty
Canadian maple strip flooring

DIMENSIONS: 8.25cm (3¼") Wide, 2.5cm (1") Thick, varied lengths

STOCK CODE: RHS001



HISTORY

Charles Bell House is named after the Professor of Physiology, who gave UCL's inaugural lecture in 1828 and now houses a number of departments in the Medical Sciences Faculty of that college.

It was built as an extension to the 'Courtauld Institute of Biochemistry' which was opened by the immortal philanthropist and Collector Samuel Augustine Courtauld, in 1928, the foundation stone having been laid on 20 July 1927. Notable researchers working on or near this site included Frank Dickens FRS, Edward Charles Dodds FRS and Sir Brian Wellingham Windeyer FRCS. These men were all involved in early, serious and valuable research into the the causes, affects and amelioration of Cancer.

The Middlesex hospital, of which the institute formed a part before its closure in 2005, had a history of charitable provision of medical treatment to the poor of London's West end reaching back to its Foundation on Windmill street in 1745.

By a pleasing coincidence it is an advent shared with this plot's most illustrious resident, Olaudah Equiano, known in his own time as Gustavus Vassa. Equiano, a prominent African of Igbo extraction, was a tireless and indefatigable opponent of the Slave Trade and lived on a house on this site as a freed slave himself in the mid 18th century. It was from this very site that he penned and published his celebrated memoir entitled "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African" (1789). It is one of the very first examples of published writing by an African writer to be widely read in England. Equiano worked his whole life, through his writings and the power of his own London-wide celebrity, to assail and condemn the British Slave Trade as well as for the 'Relief of the London Black Poor'.

Sadly he died in 1797, only ten years before the Slave Trade Act of 1807 permanently outlawed the Slave Trade in Britain and all her Colonies. Equiano lived at this site on Riding House Street (then called Union Street) with his English wife Susanna Cullen and their two daughters and is memorialised on a City of Westminster Green plaque.