

An inspirational exhibition, *MAKING FREEDOM*, showing how Africans hastened full emancipation and ended forced servitude on the 1st August 1838, will be on display at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) from 6 November 2013 to 21 December 2013. The new exhibition which is presented by Windrush Foundation marks the 175th anniversary of the liberation of nearly a million Africans in the Caribbean.

The exhibition, which includes stories of riots, rebellions and revolutions in the Caribbean, takes guests on a journey up to and beyond the 1st August 1838. This is the first time that important collections from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), the National Maritime Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Archives, Anti-Slavery International, and the Imperial War Museum have been brought together in an exhibition to tell the stories of emancipation. The exhibition features 83 images from the Society's Collections and includes a number of audio-visual booths for visitors to delve deeper into individual stories. Members of London's diverse communities have already participated in the design of the exhibition by giving feedback on a version of *Making Freedom* at the Marcus Garvey Library in Tottenham over the past three months.

The exhibition is a major part of a heritage project run by Windrush Foundation which focuses on the socio-political, economic and legislative changes that preceded (and resulted in) full emancipation on the 1st August 1838. It shows that on every colony in the Caribbean there were rebellions by enslaved Africans; some lasted hours other for several days. In Berbice (Guiana) in 1763, Africans led by Cuffe (Kofi), militarily had defeated their enslavers and placed a revolutionary government in power for almost a year. But it was the event in St Domingue (Haiti) from 1791 that was the most notable. Led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian Revolution brought freedom to hundreds of thousands of Africans on the island. The *Making Freedom* exhibition also features a rebellion that broke out under the leadership of Jack Gladstone, the son of African-born Quamina. Jack's surname was also that of plantation owner Sir John Gladstone (1764–1851), the father of British Prime Minister William Gladstone (1809–1898).

But it was the rebellion in Jamaica that showed that enslavement could no longer be sustained in the Caribbean. Baptist deacon Samuel Sharpe was the leader, and his plan was originally to refuse to work after Christmas 1831 unless wages were paid to the enslaved Africans. However, their demands were refused, and with the burning of the Kensington Estate in western Jamaica, the protest escalated into a full-scale rebellion. Over the following days, it spread, eventually involving over 60,000 enslaved Africans, and damaging estates valued at over £1 million (£1 billion in today's money). The Jamaica rebellion hastened an earlier emancipation for the enslaved, and showed also that Africans were agents of their own liberation.

The post-emancipation stories told in the exhibition include the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica, which saw the deaths of hundreds of local people. The rebellion was severely crushed by Governor Edward John Eyre. His actions sparked intense controversy among prominent British intellectuals led by John Stuart Mill and Thomas Henry Huxley advocating his arrest and trial for murder; Thomas Carlyle, and Charles Dickens were among those who sided with Eyre.

The *Making Freedom* exhibition also explores the transitional system of Indentureship that saw the arrival of Portuguese, West African, Indian and Chinese indentured labourers to replace former enslaved Africans, as a part of the workforce in the Caribbean. Also, it tells stories of the roles of Caribbean soldiers in WWI and WWII, the hundred-year-old fight for self-determination of Caribbean people and the major strikes by labourers throughout the colonies in the 1930s that led to a Royal Commission chaired by Lord Moyne. The larger colonies won independence from Britain during the 1960s.

After its display at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), the exhibition tours other venues in London and British cities. It will be available on loan from Windrush Foundation

Further details from: windrush.project@gmail.com

www.makingfreedom.co.uk