

A fuller picture of the business activities of Sir John Moore

In June 2020, the Trustees of the Sir John Moore Foundation commissioned historical research to establish a fuller picture of the business activities of Sir John Moore during the 17th century. The aim was to address ethical concerns about the sources of wealth which founded our charity and school. Our society today rightly expects that if a person's philanthropy rests on unethical foundations it needs to be confronted and not overlooked. Our national legacy regarding the hidden history of slavery and racism in Britain's rise as a global trading power, makes this imperative.

The new research confirms that the foundation of his wealth was his success as a lead merchant in London and as a substantial supplier of lead to the East India Company for export to Asia. He subsequently enhanced his wealth through substantial investment in the East India Company. He became a Director for 30 years until the end of his life. The primary business of the East India Company was trade in commodities, but it did procure slaves from both Asia and Africa for labour in its overseas trading posts. Sir John Moore participated in Board decisions regarding this. Later in life Sir John Moore was also a Director of the Royal African Company for 4 years. Its main business focus was the transatlantic slave trade. In the late 17th century, it played a key role, with royal support, in establishing the supremacy of Britain in this trade. As a member of the company's Board of Directors, Sir John Moore contributed, for a period, to the organisation of voyages which transported thousands of enslaved Africans to the Caribbean plantations.

These links with slavery are at odds with the values of equality, tolerance and decency that we hold and promote as a charitable Foundation. We are saddened by this and regret it. The Foundation is determined that we promote a full and honest account of the complex legacy of Sir John Moore. This will facilitate learning and discussion of the ethical implications of his story for business and politics in the contemporary world. We will develop such a programme and explore opportunities for it through our Heritage Centre and the School Curriculum. In this way we hope to enrich the future outcomes of his legacy.

Trustees of the Sir John Moore Foundation, February 2021