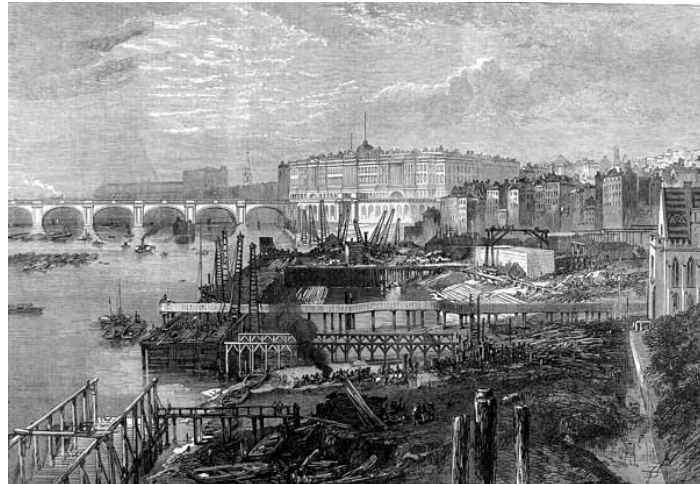


# Victoria Embankment

The Victoria Embankment is part of the Thames Embankment, a road and walkway along the north bank of the River Thames in London. Victoria Embankment extends from the City of Westminster into the City of London

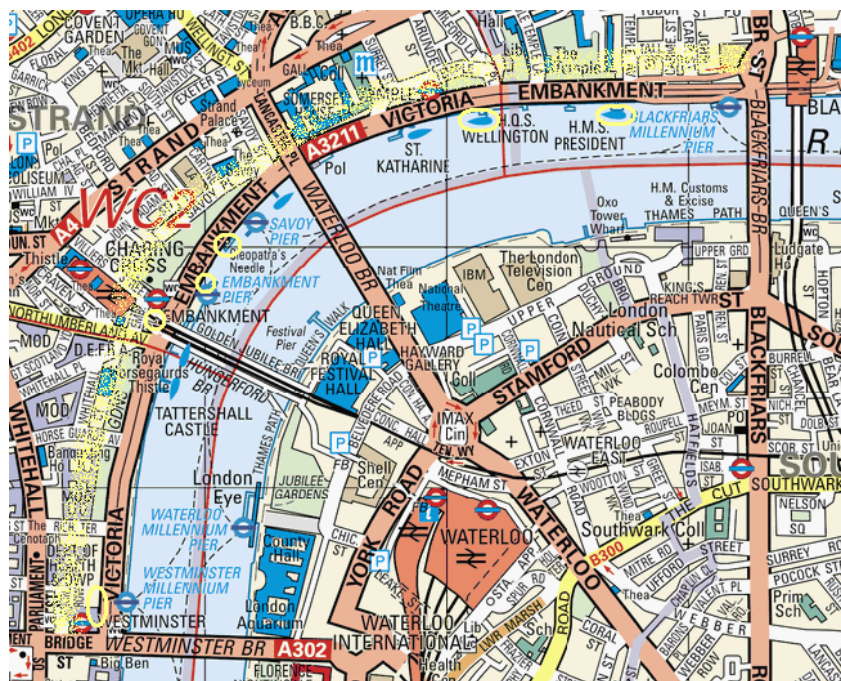
## History

The Victoria Embankment's construction started in 1865. It was completed in 1870 under the direction of Joseph Bazalgette, and was a project of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The original impetus was the need to provide London with a modern sewerage system. Another major consideration was the relief of congestion on The Strand and Fleet Street.



The Victoria Embankment under construction in 1865

The project involved building out onto the foreshore of the Thames, thus narrowing the river. The construction work required the purchase and demolition of much expensive riverside property. The tunnels for the District Line were built underneath the Embankment. At ground level, in addition to the new roads, two handsome public gardens were laid out. One of these backs onto the government buildings of Whitehall, and the other stretches from Hungerford Bridge to Waterloo Bridge. The gardens contain many statues, including a monument to Bazalgette. The water gate, its main historical feature, was built in 1626 for the Duke of Buckingham.



## Route

The Victoria Embankment (part of the A3211) starts at Westminster Bridge, just north of the Palace of Westminster, then follows the course of the river bank north, past Hungerford Bridge, Waterloo Bridge, and then ends at Blackfriars Bridge.

## HMS President

HMS President is an Anchusa class corvette of the Royal Navy, completed in 1918. She was originally named HMS Saxifrage, from the Saxifrage genus of plants which includes the variety London Pride.



HMS President is permanently berthed in the River Thames on the Victoria Embankment. Saxifrage part of a small class of convoy protection ships built to look like merchant ships for use as Q-ships in World War I. HMS President is listed on the National Register of Historic Vessels and currently serves as a venue for conferences and functions. It was purchased in April 2006 by the serviced office company,

MLS Group Plc. The HMS President (1918) currently also houses the architectural offices of Small Architecture Ltd. as well as the 4M Group

## HMS Wellington

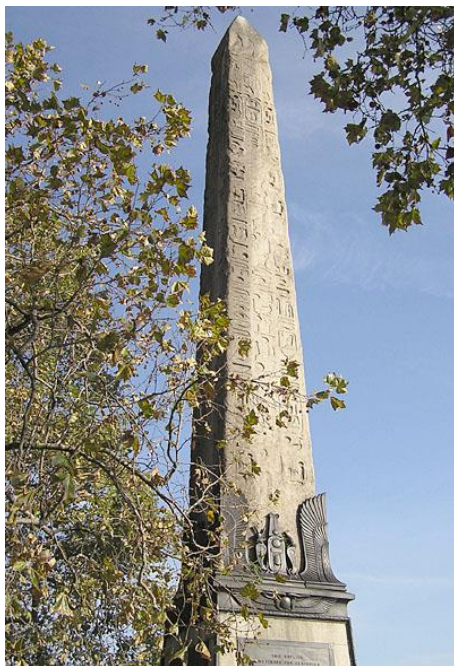
Launched Devonport, 1934, is a Grimsby class sloop, formerly of the Royal Navy. During World War II she served as a convoy escort ship in the North Atlantic. She is now moored alongside the Victoria Embankment on the River Thames in London as the headquarters ship of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners where she is known as HQS Wellington





## Cleopatra's Needle

Cleopatra's Needles are a trio of obelisks in London, Paris, and New York City. Each is made of red granite, stands about 21 metres (68 feet) high, weighs about 180 tons and is inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphs. Although the needles are genuine Ancient Egyptian obelisks, none has any connection with queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt. They were originally erected in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis around 1450 BC. The inscriptions were added about 200 years later by Ramses II to commemorate his military victories. The obelisks were moved to Alexandria by the Romans in 12 BC, during the reign of Augustus Caesar, but were toppled some time later. This had the fortuitous effect of burying their faces and so preserving most of the hieroglyphs from the effects of weathering



The London needle was presented to the United Kingdom in 1819 by Mehemet Ali, the Albanian-born viceroy of Egypt, in commemoration of the victories of Lord Nelson at the Battle of the Nile and Sir Ralph Abercromby at the Battle of Alexandria in 1801. Although the British government welcomed the gesture, it declined to fund the expense of transporting it to London.

The obelisk remained in Alexandria until 1877 when Sir William Wilson sponsored its transportation to London at a cost of some £10,000 (a very considerable sum in those days). It was dug out of the sand in which it had been buried for nearly 2,000 years and was encased in a great iron cylinder, with a rudder, two bilge keels, a mast for balancing sails, and a deck house designed by the engineer John Dixon. This floating pontoon was towed to London by the ship Olga.

The 'Cleopatra' pontoon capsized in a storm in the Bay of Biscay on 14 October 1877, with the loss of six lives. The Cleopatra did not sink but instead drifted in the Bay until it was rescued and taken to Spain for repairs. It finally arrived in Gravesend on 21 January 1878. The obelisk was erected on the Victoria Embankment the following August.



Cleopatra's Needle is flanked by two faux-Egyptian sphinxes cast from bronze. These Sphinxes appear to be looking at the Needle rather than guarding it. This is due to the Sphinx's improper or backwards installation. The Embankment has other Egyptian flourishes, such as buxom winged sphinxes on the armrests of benches. On 4 September 1917, during World War I, bombs from the first German air raid on London by German aeroplanes landed near the needle. In

commemoration of this event, the damage remains unrepaired to this day and is clearly visible in the form of shrapnel holes and gouges on the right-hand sphinx.

The other needles are in the Place de la Concorde in Paris, and Central Park, New York

## Cleopatra's Kiosk



The Cleopatra's Kiosk is a small building and shop, which lies on the Victoria Embankment in London right under the Hungerford Bridge, originally built in late '40s the old kiosk has recently been replaced by a new very futuristic structure.

### History

In May 1940 Commander Coakley took his two Thames 'little ships' to rescue men stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk. One little ship was lost and the other badly damaged. To enable Commander Coakley to earn a living after the war the Port of London Authority (PLA) rented him a small piece of land on the Victoria Embankment. It was here that Coakley erected a kiosk from which to sell tickets for riverboats.

Following an international architectural competition held in 2003 by the Royal Institute of British Architects, in 2007 the old kiosk was replaced by a new highly modernistic one designed by the Italian firm Bianchini e Lusiardi associati

# Royal Air Force Memorial

The Royal Air Force Memorial objects is a memorial to airmen who died in the First World War. The memorial was completed in 1923. A simple monument in Portland stone, is surmounted by a gilded eagle.



## History

The original intention was for Mr W. Reid Dick's sculpted eagle to face inwards to the embankment road traffic, but Sir Reginald Blomfield, the consultant architect, altered his design to allow the eagle to face across the river, symbolically to France.

In the summer of 1923 the memorial was unveiled by a youthful Prince of Wales.

The Thames embankment was not the first choice of the Royal Air Force Memorial Fund; it was originally intended to erect a Cross on the ground between Westminster Abbey and St Margaret's Church, but this was disallowed by the Dean of Westminster.

Years on, and showing honourable scars from bombs in the Second World War, mere accident has placed this discreet monument neatly in view of the Air Force Board at the Ministry of Defence. It is tidy, too, that, as a result in 1956 of the placing of Lord Trenchard's statue in Whitehall Gardens below the windows of the present Ministry of Defence, the Royal Air Force Memorial stands in line of sight from the martial figure who conceived both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Air Force Memorial Fund. Here by the Thames, the man who started it all has, since May 1975, been joined by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Portal, Chief of the Air Staff in the Second World War and Deputy Chairman of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund from December 1947 until his death on 22 April 1971.

## Battle of Britain Monument

The monument is a 25 metre long granite structure, built as part of the Victoria Embankment in the late 1860's. Standing between the RAF Memorial and Westminster Bridge, it lies at the end of the long steps that divide the pavements of the Embankment riverside walk and the bridge approaching the road.

The monument is a memorial to the fighter pilots, known as "the few", who won the crucial victory in the Battle of Britain 65 years ago. Seventy surviving pilots, and delegates from 14 countries whose citizens flew alongside British airmen, attended the opening ceremony



A walkway cuts through the structure obliquely, in the direction of the gardens in front of the Ministry of Defence (opposite side of the road), and in particular the memorials of the Fleet Air Arm and Viscount Portal of Hungerford, who is looks into the eastern sky, towards the London docks.

The memorial is made up of two bronze friezes, by the sculptor Paul Day, set in an 82ft-long granite structure, originally designed as a smoke outlet for underground trains when they were powered by steam engines. One frieze depicts all the achievements of Fighter Command, while the other focuses on the people of London, featuring St Paul's Cathedral and an Anderson air-raid shelter. The central figure facing the road represents pilots scrambling for their

aircraft, bursting through the inscription "The Battle of Britain". Accompanying them is a plaque inscribed with the names of the 2,936 pilots and ground crew from Britain and 14 other countries. On the base of the bronze relief facing the river, Winston Churchill's words "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few" is inscribed. The sculpture cost £1.65m

In June 1940 France had surrendered to the Germans, while Russia and the US had not yet joined the war against Germany. Britain led the fight against Hitler's Germany.

On 15 September 1940, RAF Fighter Command claimed victory over the Luftwaffe after a day of bombing raids ended in heavy losses for Germany. It is widely believed that had the RAF - outnumbered four-to-one - failed to beat them off, the Germans would easily have been able to invade the UK.

Of the RAF fighter pilots, 515 were killed.

Shortly after the RAF claimed victory, Hitler postponed and then cancelled plans to invade the UK, turning his attention to the invasion of Russia.

