

MORE TOWN

ST KATHARINE DOCKS – THE GLORY YEARS

A WALK AROUND WAPPING
AND ST KATHARINE DOCKS



A historical map of the London docks area, showing various streets and buildings. The map is oriented with the River Thames at the top. Key features include 'ST MARINE DOCKS (East)', 'BUER ST. Hoare & Co's', 'Red Lion Brewery', and 'HERMITAGE BASIN'. The map is detailed with street names and building footprints.

AN INTRODUCTION TO LONDON WALKS

Moreland lies between two of many sets of protected docks built from the beginning of the 19th century to relieve theft and delays in unloading at the riverside wharves and Pool of London.

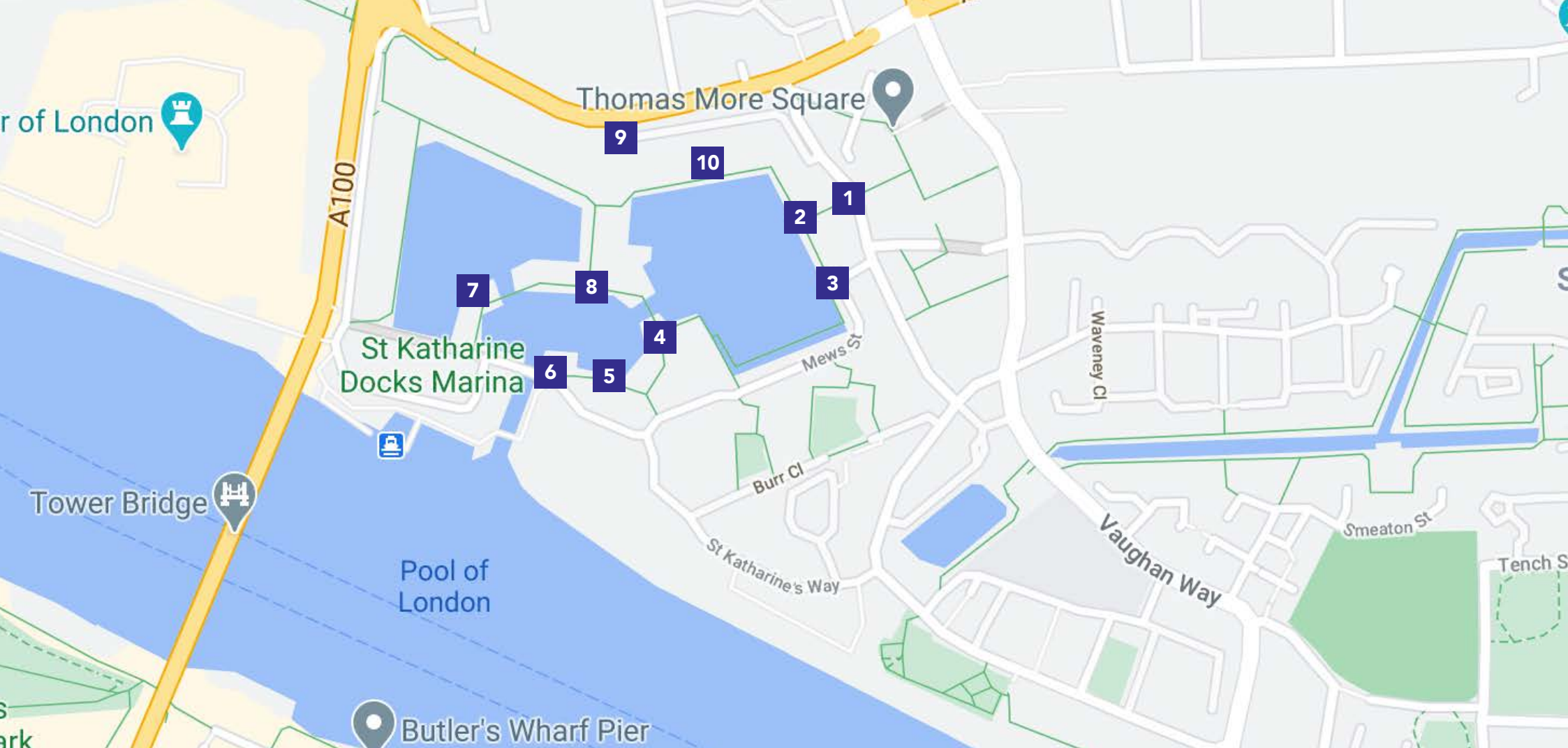
The building of St Katharine Dock and the London Docks transformed these areas, which were to be transformed again when the docks closed down in the late 1960s.

On this walk we'll see how both areas developed very differently following closure, but how vestiges and traces of their previous lives still remain from centuries ago.



2 miles (6,000 steps) round trip to Moretown / 30 mins

Please adhere to current government guidelines for COVID-19 when exploring the different locations of the tour. Participants use this guide at their own risk and Moretown is not liable for any injury, loss or damage.



WALKING TOUR MAP

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>1. Starting point:
Junction of Mersham Street and Thomas More Street</p> <p>2. Edge of the Eastern Basin</p> | <p>3. Wooden Duck House</p> <p>4. The Dickens Inn</p> <p>5. Ivory House</p> <p>6. Entrance Lock</p> | <p>7. Western Dock</p> <p>8. Information Board</p> <p>9. Main entrance to St Katharine Docks</p> | <p>10. End point:
Flamant Rose Vessel</p> |
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1

STARTING POINT:

JUNCTION OF MERSHAM STREET AND THOMAS MORE STREET (EXIT OF THOMAS MORE SQUARE)

We immediately see reminders of the docks in the high brick walls along the street. Cross over Thomas More Street to approach St Katharine Docks.



2

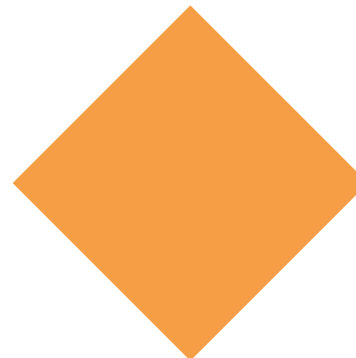
EDGE OF THE
EASTERN BASIN

You are looking at the eastern basin of the docks, now flourishing as a non-residential marina, surrounded by modern housing developments. Ahead of you note the Dickens Inn which we shall see more closely later on the walk. Beyond that the Shard rises up and to its left you can see part of Tower Bridge. Over to the right on the horizon loom skyscrapers of the Square Mile.

But immediately to the right of you in the ironwork of Pontoon A-B is a reminder of St Katharine herself.

St Katharine, a 4th century aristocrat, refused the Emperor Maximilian and was punished by being tortured on a spiked wheel before being beheaded. Her emblem, **St Katharine's wheel**, can be seen throughout the docks. And, of course, she gives her name to the Katharine Wheel firework.

Turn to the left and walk down to the corner of the dock. Here is a chance to sit down!



3

WOODEN DUCK HOUSE

You will note here the little **wooden duck house** right in front of you on the water and the wide channel to allow boats access into and out of the docks.

This area just east of the City has transformed itself several times over the centuries.

In the 10th century, this area was granted by King Edgar to a guild of knights (the Knightenguild) with the right to trade in foreign goods. Their name lives on in the original name of Thomas More Street which was Nightingale Lane, nightingale simply being a corruption of 'knightenguild'.

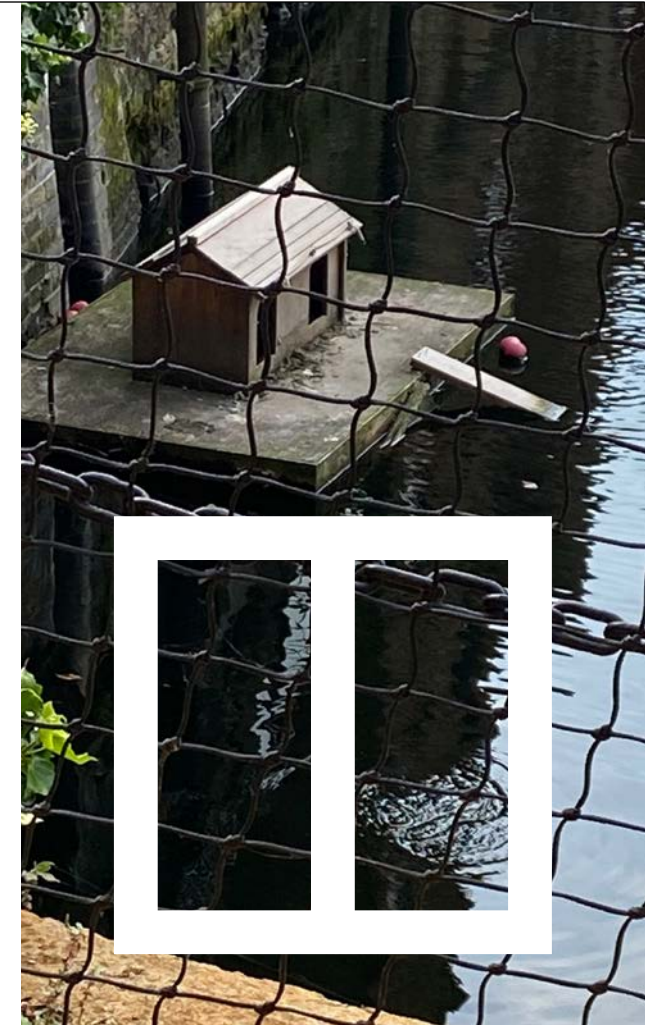
In 1125 it passed to their successors, Augustinian Priory of the Holy Trinity who set up the Foundation of St Katharine, which included a church and hospital (hospice) for travellers and the poor.

Under royal patronage this continued to exist with school, court and almshouses as the population swelled to over 3,000 by the 18th century.

At the same time, the Pool of London was becoming overwhelmed by the increasing number of cargo vessels entering the port and the need was recognised for purpose-built, secure docks. Eventually, the site of St Katharine's Foundation was selected for a dock near to the City and over 11, 000 homes and inhabitants were swept away without compensation. In 1829, the 23-acre site St Katharine Dock was opened.

You will see it is impossible to continue walking immediately alongside the water, so we will turn right behind the housing along Mews Street until we see an information board ahead of us, where we turn right along a passage skirting the back of the Dickens Inn. Follow the walls of the Inn until you turn left and come to an open area in front of the inn called Marble Quay.

Walk towards the water, then turn so that you are facing the Dickens Inn. There are some very interesting things to see at this point.



4

THE DICKENS INN



The very attractive **Dickens Inn** is in fact a fantasy and never looked like this! It dates back to the late 18th century (and possibly before) and, as a warehouse, was probably used to store beans! Moved from 70 metres away, its facing brickwork was stripped away and the building was reconstructed using salvaged timber and ironwork, with added weatherboarding and external galleries. It was opened by Charles Dickens' grandson, Cedric Charles Dickens, in May 1976.

To the left of the inn, you will see a footbridge separating this central basin from the eastern basin, but alongside it lies the original footbridge by Thomas Telford (Scottish civil engineer, architect, stonemason and road, bridge and canal builder), of 1829, which remained in use till 1994.



Immediately to your left you will see an anchor salvaged from the merchantman **AMSTERDAM**, which foundered in 1749.

Continue walking forward with the central dock on your right until you come to a circular wooden seat.

5

IVORY HOUSE (1853)



You are looking at the central basin of the docks into which all incoming ships entered. The basins were surrounded by warehouses designed by Philip Hardwick (an English architect, particularly associated with railway stations and warehouses in London) and were built alongside the quayside so that cargo could be unloaded directly from ships into the warehouse.

Ivory House, designed by George Aitchison & Son, and currently under scaffolding, is the only original warehouse still standing in St Katharine Docks today.

Why is it called Ivory House? Because of the vast amount of ivory that passed through it. At its

peak in the 1870s, nearly 200 tons of ivory was stored annually. Apart from the ivory, other luxury imports such as perfume, shells, marble, carpets, spices and wine: the world's greatest concentration of portable wealth.

St Katharine Docks construction was one of the biggest tasks ever undertaken in London but took just 2 years to complete.

The engineer was Thomas Telford and by his decision to have two docks linked by a single entrance basin he increased the amount of wharfage in what was a very restricted space.

Ironically, the excavated soil and debris that arose from an institution devoted to helping the poor and needy, was used as the foundation material for constructing the large houses in what would be wealthy and fashionable Belgravia.

But its restricted space and ultimate inability to accommodate the larger modern ships meant that, although initially profitable, it never reached the success hoped for.

In 1864 St Katharine Docks merged with the London Docks and during the second world war it was badly bombed. The warehouses around the

eastern basin – which is now the main residential area of the Docks – were destroyed. Ivory House managed to escape the brunt of the bombing.

St Katharine Docks became the first docks to close down and in 1968, handed over for redevelopment. The decision was made to retain the water basins and create a marina, housing and leisure facilities.

Four years later, Ivory House had been restored, its walls, cleaned by bombarding them with nutshells; the clock replaced, and the bell chiming on the hour. But a sinister find was reported below ground: sets of manacles allegedly used to confine convicts bound for transportation to Australia.

Today, the renovated building contains a mix of business, retail outlets, restaurants and residential units.

As we continue the walk, on the left you will see the Haven Building which deals with visitor moorings in the marina.

When you reach the next stop. at the lock, pause and look to your left at the lock itself and across the river to Butler's Wharf.



6

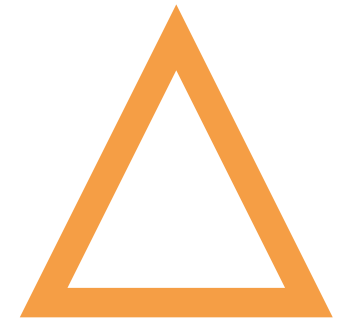
ENTRANCE
LOCK

Built in 1828, with original cast-iron bollards and an elegant double-leaf cast-iron swing bridge. A plaque on the eastern wall describes the mechanism of the outer and inner gates to allow vessels to enter and leave the docks.

Note the elevated dockmaster's house on the east side.

Across the river is Butlers Wharf, once used to store vast quantities of tea which was also stored in substantial quantities in St Katharine Docks.

Having crossed the bridge walk forward until you reach the underpass, but instead turn right in the direction of the white columned Coronarium, which currently houses a noodles restaurant business.



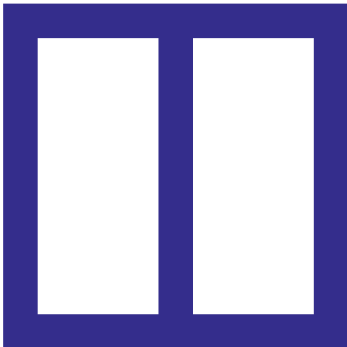
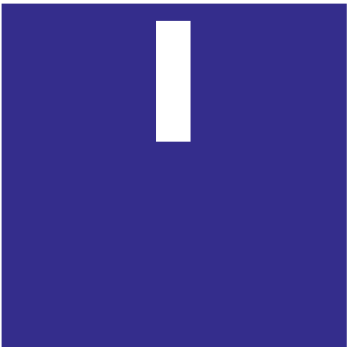
7

WESTERN DOCK



Look left at the dock and moored on the far side you will see at least one old Thames Barge with distinctive dark red sails. Originally used to convey cargo (building material, grain, timber, bricks and hay) between the docks and along the coast and even abroad. Their flat bottoms were well adapted navigating the shallow coastland creeks. Today, you will see them on the Thames.

Passing to the right of the Coronarium, cross over the blue footbridge on to the quay, in front of Ivory House with its many restaurants.



8

INFORMATION BOARD

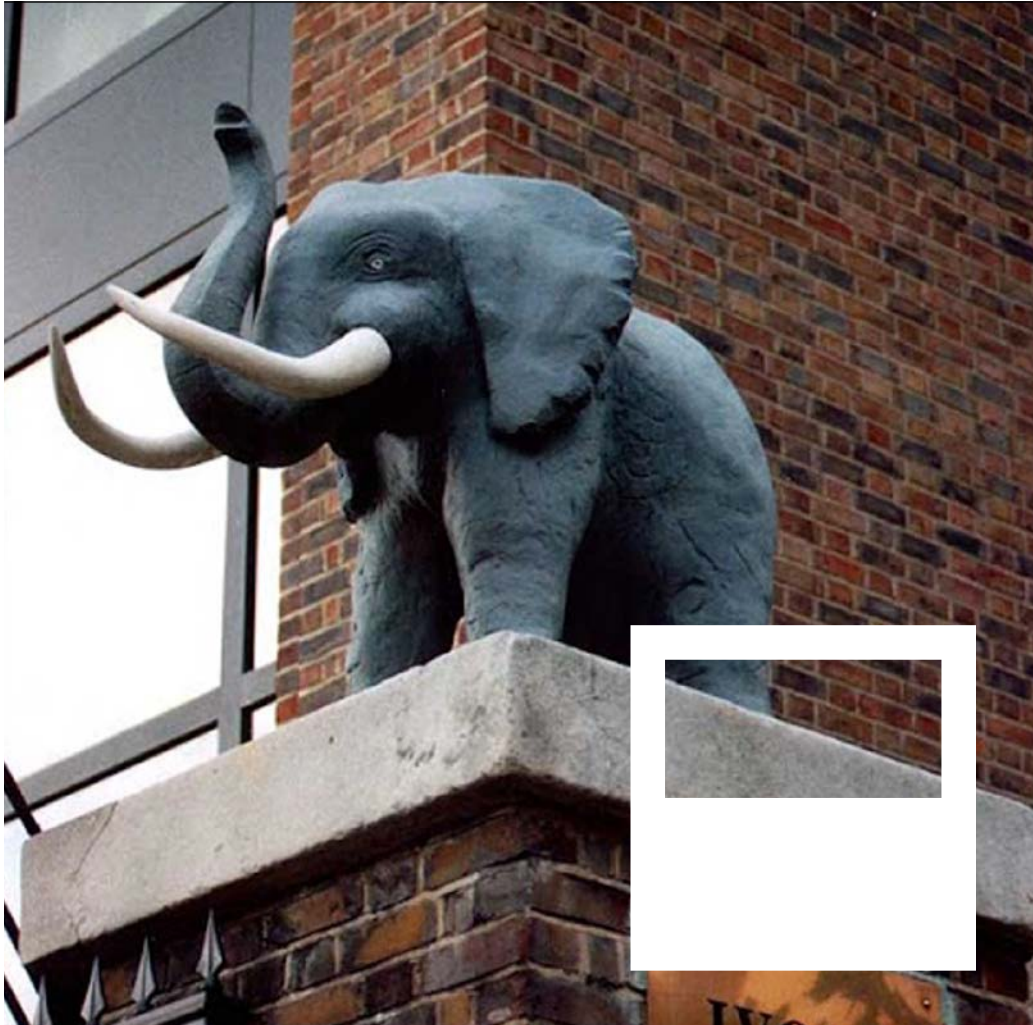
You will come to an **information board** which directs you to a passage between Kilikaya's and Traders restaurants. Follow this and once outside again, continue walking, noting the Medieval Banquet restaurant on your right.

On your left is **Commodity Quay** and a plaque on the wall tells you that tea from China and India was the second largest imported commodity after wool. At its peak, the tea warehouses were receiving 120,000 tea chests a year.



9

MAIN ENTRANCE TO ST KATHARINE DOCK



Walk forward to join a short road which leads through the original main entrance gate to the docks.

You will see on the gateposts **two stone elephants** referring to the ivory that was stored in the docks.

Most of the work was done by unskilled casual labour with crowds of men turning up each day at the gates hoping for work. Eventually men at the London Docks went on strike – for a minimum of sixpence an hour (the so-called Dockers' tanner) and half a day's work.

Turning around you will get a view of Ivory House as yet unscaffolded.

Now turn to your left so that you join the quayside path along the north side of the eastern dock basin.

10

END POINT: FLAMANT ROSE VESSEL

As you walk, note the cast iron modern bollards with their painted white heads depicting St Katharine and her wheel.

You will come to a boat with a golden funnel called the **Flamant Rose**.

This was originally owned by Edith Piaf (French singer- songwriter, cabaret performer and film actress) who lived in it on the River Seine in Paris, and where she conducted an affair with a boxer. Whenever she was on tour or singing elsewhere, the barge would follow her to be moored nearby so that she could continue the affair.

Owned by a pair of hypnotists, the barge has just been put on the market for £2 million.

Sadly, two other vessels which are often moored here are temporarily elsewhere. These are:

The Gloriana, which was made for Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee and conveyed the royal party downstream amidst a flotilla of historical boats to celebrate that event.

The Havengore, which conveyed the body of Winston Churchill from Tower Pier to Festival Pier as dock cranes were bowed as she passed.

From here if you are returning to Thomas More Square, simply follow the path round the dock until you can turn left towards Thomas More Street and the Mersham Street entry to the square.

