FILE NAME: Asbestos Sacks and Bags (ASB)

DATE: мфффф

DOC#: ASB0yp

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STATEMENT ON THE HANDLING OF ASBESTOS IN THE PORT OF LONDON IN THE 1950s AND 1960s

I write the following statement in my capacity as the Librarian of the Museum of London's Docklands Library & Archive, where are stored a considerable amount of general material about the history and development of the Port of London from 1770 to date. Please note that the Museum of London has no organisational links with the Port of London Authority, or any other institution save its parent body the Corporation of London. What follows, therefore, is not a statement on behalf of the PLA or any other organisation - it is a statement of fact.

"Asbestos, both raw and manufactured, was handled in the Port of London in the 1950s and 1960s. Imported raw and manufactured asbestos was unloaded from ships in the docks and loaded on to road vehicles. Manufactured asbestos for export was discharged from vehicles and loaded onto ships. All handling of asbestos in the docks, whether loading or unloading, had to be performed by registered dock workers operating under the aegis of the National Dock Labour Scheme. Such registered dock workers would have included stevedores, who did the bulk of the loading work, and dockers, who did the bulk of the discharging work. The principal enclosed docks handling raw and manufactured asbestos were Surrey Commercial Docks, West India Docks and the Royal Group of docks. Vessels carrying raw and finished asbestos came from many countries, particularly from USA, Canada and Africa.

There were scores of independent Port employers operating in the docks during the 1950s and 1960s, to whom dock workers were referred for work by the London Dock Labour Board, acting for the National Dock Labour Board. All of these employers have now closed and their records have not survived. The NDLB itself was wound up in 1988 when the Government abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme."

R. R. Aspinall/1999