



War to Windrush

Introduction

Founded in 1981, Black Cultural Archives mission is to promote the teaching, learning and understanding of the contribution and experience of people of African and Caribbean descent within Britain.

Our unparalleled and growing archive collection offers insight into the history of African and Caribbean descent within Britain and includes personal papers, organisational records, rare books, ephemera, photographs, and a small object collection. The bulk of the material is drawn from the twentieth century to the present day, while some material dates as far back as the second century.

This subject guide is intended to be an introduction to the contribution and presence of African/Caribbean communities to both the First and Second World Wars as well as the migratory Windrush era highlighting the presence of African and Caribbean people in Britain from 1945 up to and including the 1960s.

Background

Prior to the First World War, Black workers were mostly poverty-stricken, employed in casual labour, and subject to discrimination and low pay. The outbreak of the First World War brought changes in their employment prospects. Black workers were welcomed in order to support the war effort and many were given better paid work in munitions factories. Black seafarers replaced those white seamen who had enrolled to serve in the Navy and many enrolled in the Armed forces within the Kings African Rifles or the British West Indies Regiment.

From 1914 many Black British enrolled at recruitment centres, whilst others were recruited from Britain's colonies such as Nigeria, Sierra Leon, Uganda, Kenya and the Gold Coast [now Ghana]. Many saw service in their own countries.

According to Stephen Bourne's book *'Black Poppies'* the first shot that was fired in the First World War was *'by an African Alhaji Grunshi, of the Gold Coast regiment on 12th August 1914'*. This was part of the first conflict in German held Togoland as the British and French sought to gain this strategic point along the Gold coast in Africa. According to the Black presence website *'By the end of the WW1 over 15,500 West Indians had joined the BWIR and had experienced military service in England, Italy, Egypt, India, France, Belgium, Palestine, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and East Africa'*.² It is difficult to ascertain how many Black British men and women served in the British army, but there is substantial evidence that many served within the Navy.

In the wake of the First World War, competition for jobs led to dissatisfaction across many of Britain's seaports. White seaman quickly came to resent the presence of Black labour. This was the key factor that led to the outbreak of race rioting in Britain's major seaports during January to August 1919. Another significant factor, highlighted by contemporary media and modern day historians, is the perceived threat to white masculinity posed by the increasing number of relationships between Black men and white women. During the race riots Charles Wootton was killed in Liverpool. Race riots continued throughout 1919 in other port towns such as Cardiff and London.

Felix Eugene Michael Hercules³ wrote to the government about these riots and called for an investigation into the death of Charles Wootton. The Government's eventual response, instigated by Lord Milner *'promised that Black British seamen and Black men from the colonies who had served in the forces during the war, would be granted a resettlement allowance of £5 and a voyage allowance, provided that they applied within two months'* ⁴.

Many African and Caribbean's took up this offer to return because of the repeated racist attacks and being unable to find work. Some remained however and continued to fight for people's rights particularly against the injustices of *'the colour bar'*⁵. During this interwar period of the 1920s and 30s, many African and Caribbean men and women, continued to highlight and tackle the discriminatory issues faced, through conferences and congress⁶, through the creation of student unions ⁷ and organisations such as the League of Coloured people⁸.

When the Second World War broke out, the inhabitants of Britain's colonies were called upon again to take up arms. Many men and women responded for a variety of reasons; to show their loyalty to 'the mother country', but for others it was a chance for adventure.

According to the BBC Radio 2 documentary *'The Forgotten Volunteers'*, Trevor McDonald stated that:

'Altogether over three and a half million Black and Asian service personnel helped to win the fight for freedom'.⁹

¹ Bourne, Stephen *Black Poppies* pg 40.

² Quoted from Black Presence website <http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/remembrance-day-black-asian-soldiers-in-ww1/> [accessed 16 June 2017]

³ General Secretary of the People of African Origin

⁴ Colonial secretary to F.E.M. Hercules, draft 11 July 1919 reference PRO/CO/323/813/127-8

⁵ A social system in which Black people are denied access to the same rights, opportunities, and facilities as white people.

⁶ Pan African congress held 19-21 February 1919 in Paris organised by W.E.B. Debois

⁷ West African Students Union 1925

⁸ This organisation began in March 1931 lead by Dr Harold Moody and Stella Thompson aiming to *'promote and protect the social, educational, economic and political interests of its members'*.

⁹ *This is an approximate no, exact statistics are unknown because ethnicity was not automatically recorded.* The Forgotten volunteers, BBC Radio 2, 11 November 2000

It is difficult to know the exact figures of Black British, Caribbean and African men and women that were involved, as ethnicity was not automatically recorded during the Second World War. Stephen Bourne in his book *'The Motherland Calls'* provides some estimates below:

*'Several thousand West Indians were recruited into the British War Effort. Nearly 6,000 served with the Royal Air Force.'*¹⁰

*'The total number of Africans who fought for Britain is approximately 372,000'*¹¹

Many Caribbean men served with the Royal Air Force, with the majority of Caribbean Women enrolling with the Auxiliary Territorial Service. The two main African forces were the King's African Rifles and the Royal West African Frontier Force. Many fought overseas in Abyssinia and Somalia over the defeat of the Italians, in Madagascar and Burma campaigns. It is estimated that between 1942 and 1945 around 13% (130,000) American personnel that were stationed in Britain were Black.

Inflation and unemployment in the Caribbean in the main, drove British West Indians to seek better prospects in their *'mother country'*. They were guaranteed UK citizenship by the Nationality Act of 1948¹². The arrival of the ship MV Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948 with around 492 Caribbean men in the main, is widely considered the landmark of post-war mass migration to Britain. Recent additional research has brought to light that there were two other boats that arrived earlier; firstly the SS Ormonde in March 1947 at Liverpool carrying up to 100 Caribbean passengers.¹³ There was also the SS Almanzora, which docked in Southampton on 21st December 1947, six months before the Empire Windrush arrived.

Passengers on the MV Empire Windrush paid £28.10s each, and were armed with affidavits signed by Justices of the Peace, testifying to their good character. Upon arrival 234 men who had no housing arrangements were accommodated in the Clapham Underground deep shelter.¹⁴ The Women's Voluntary Service provided refreshments in the tent on Clapham Common at the head of the entrance shaft. The conditions were very basic and so many were keen to move out as quickly as possible. It was reported that all of the individuals had left by Monday 12th of July 1948, with the majority of them finding private lodgings and employment.¹⁵ Most of the men gained employment in the field of transport, mechanical engineering, or agriculture. Up to five men went back into the Royal Air Force, including Sam King.¹⁶

The arrival of the Empire Windrush passengers were the beginnings of a large migration flow. By the mid-1950s the annual flow was exceeding 20,000 a year. By 1958 some 125,000 Caribbean had settled in Britain since the war.

Many of them (87% of the men and 95% of the women) had skills to offer; indeed a quarter of men and half the women were non-manual workers. Yet in general they found work that was beneath their abilities, doing tasks that included cleaning and hospital work for women, street sweeping, shift work and general labouring for men.

¹⁰ Bourne, Stephen; *The Motherland Calls*, 2012 page 11

¹¹ As above, page 12

¹² *In the aftermath of World War Two, definitions of British nationality were re-defined, often to encourage colonial residents to come to Britain to help with post-war reconstruction.*

¹³ For more information look at Hannah Lowe's blog <https://hannahlowe.org/blog/>

¹⁴ Empire Windrush Interim Progress report Colonial office, 30 June 1948 see reference Colonial Office CO 537/2583

¹⁵ *About 12 men in the London area remain unemployed.* Empire Windrush West Indian workers final report, [undated] CO 537/2583

¹⁶ Statement of West Indian workers place in employment from the Clapham Shelter up to 30.6.48 CO 537/2583

By 1958 some 125,000 West Indians had settled in Britain since the war. Many of them (87% of the men and 95% of the women) had skills to offer; indeed a quarter of men and half the women were non-manual workers. Yet in general they found work that was beneath their abilities, doing tasks that white employees preferred to avoid, including cleaning and hospital work for the women, street sweeping, shift work and general labouring for the men.

London Transport deliberately sought staff from the West Indies, recruiting 3,787 Barbadians between 1956 and 1968, but in the Midlands members of the Transport Workers' Union objected to employment of all but a few non-whites on the buses.¹⁷ In many industries, white Trade Unionists resisted the employment of Black workers, which meant that only a handful were generally employed.

During this first 10 year period the Government did very little to ease the plight of Black workers. During 1958 there were a series of race riots during August in Nottingham and London. These were sensationalised by the press in the main, causing for renewed calls of deportation by local and national Government members.

By 1961 there was an estimated 200,000 Caribbean people who had migrated to Britain, which continued to rise to a peak of approx. 548,000 by 1971.¹⁸ With increased disturbances and racial abuse, the Government grew fearful about the increasing number of Black people in Britain. A series of legislations began to be passed from 1962, which intended to restrict entry again. The first of these was the Commonwealth Immigrants Act passed in 1962. This required that all immigrants seeking to gain entrance to Britain required a job voucher. This effectively barred entry to a number of citizens from Commonwealth countries unless they had a specific job already in place.

In Britain, the birth of the Black Power movement, along the same lines of the American Black Power movement, is said to have begun by the founding of the Universal Coloured People's Association (UCPA) in June 1967. Their newspaper was called the *Black Power Newsletter*. There was widespread press coverage surrounding the London visit of charismatic Stokely Carmichael, the American activist in July 1967 that transformed the fledgling Black Power movement into a national phenomenon. This was just the beginning of a series of anti-racist movements created by members of the African and Caribbean communities. For further details please look at the protest and movements subject guide.

¹⁷ Edward Royle, *Modern Britain Third Edition: A Social History 1750-2011*, 90

¹⁸https://web.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CRER_RC/publications/pdfs/Research%20Papers%20in%20Ethnic%20Relations/RP%20No.15.pdf page 3 Table 1

Timeline of War and Windrush: Key Events

4 August 1914	Britain declares war on Germany. The Kings African Rifles, which was formed in 1902, began the First World War with 21 small companies in three battalions. By the end of the Great War the Kings African Rifles comprised of 1,193 British officers, 1,497 British NCOs and 30,658 Africans (33,348 total) over 22 battalions.
1915	The British West Indies Regiment (BWIR), was formed which served in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The formation of the BWIR did not provide the opportunity to fight as equals alongside white soldiers. Instead, the War Office largely limited their participation to 'labour' duties.
5 June 1919	Liverpool, like other port towns, had become home to a well- established and large Black population. In the wake of the First World War competition for jobs led to dissatisfaction among Britain's white workers, who quickly came to resent the presence of Black labour. Race riots occurred in Liverpool and other seaports over a number of months, which resulted in many wounded. However on 5 th of June 1919, Charles Wootton, a sailor who had served in the Royal Navy during the Great War was chased by a crowd to the Queens Dock, where he either jumped or was thrown into the water, which resulted in him hitting his head on a stone and drowning. Other race riots also occurred in Cardiff and London.
9 September 1939	Second World War is declared.
October 1945	The Fifth Pan-African Congress is held in Manchester, convened by British-based Pan African Federation. All previous ones had been held in America. This was attended by future independent African leaders including Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta.
2nd March 1947	SS Ormonde docks at Liverpool
21st December 1947	SS Almanzora docks in Southampton
1st January 1948	The Nationality Act is passed; this granted members of the Commonwealth to apply for British citizenship
22nd June 1948	MV Empire Windrush docks at Tilbury with around 492 passengers, having previously set sail from Kingston on Empire day in May.
August 1948	After the war about 8,000 Black people are living in Liverpool. Because of an employment boycott a growing number of attacks take place between Black and white groups.
August 1958	Uprisings occur in Nottingham and the North Kensington area of London over the summer.
1962	The Commonwealth Immigration Act is passed; this required that all immigrants seeking to gain entrance to Britain now required a job voucher. The Act was amended by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968, before being superseded by the Immigration Act 1971.
28 August 1963	Paul Stephenson achieves the end of an employment colour bar ban, against a Bristol bus company.

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1965	The Race Relations Act is passed; this act prohibited racial discrimination in various public places such as restaurants, theatres and public transport.
June 1967	The Universal Coloured People's Association is established by a small group of Black British activists who had been regularly meeting at Speaker's Corner.
18 July 1967	Stokely Carmichael arrives in London from America, for an 11 day visit. During this time he popularises the slogan 'Black power'.
20 April 1968	Member of Parliament Enoch Powell addressed a meeting of the Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham. His speech strongly criticised Commonwealth immigration to the United Kingdom and the then-proposed Race Relations Bill, and became known as the "Rivers of Blood" speech.
1968	The Race Relations Act 1968 extends the legislation's racial discrimination remit to cover against discrimination within employment and housing.

Black Cultural Archives – Collections

Please find below a list of selected sources held by the Black Cultural Archives which relate directly to Black British dance, including both **archive** material and also books from the **reference library**.

What is archive material?

An archive can mean a single record, or it can be an entire collection containing thousands of records. Everyone creates their own individual archive which includes letters, photographs and diaries. In the heritage sector, archives refer to unique records which are kept for their historic or social value. The archive collections at Black Cultural Archives include mostly paper records, including personal papers, periodicals, ephemera, and photographs. Black Cultural Archives, however, are increasingly receiving more and more digital material.

What is the reference library?

The reference library at Black Cultural Archives is accessible to all visitors to the reading room and currently holds 8,000 catalogued book titles. The library collection spans the majority of the later twentieth century and covers a variety of subject areas surrounding art, anthropology, education, history, and racism, as well as sociology.

Archive

1. Black Cultural Archives collection and Objects

The Black Cultural Archives collection has an amount of World Wars and Windrush related material that was generated when the organisation was researching, developing and when particularly involved in the 1998 Windrush Project.

BCA/5/1/14, BCA/5/1/17 and BCA/5/1/28 Windrush Project 1998

Files include questionnaires, flyers to the launch, correspondence and a cassette tape "Moving Away: a collection of poems inspired by the Windrush generation"

BCA/5/1/28 Kathleen Wrsama transcript of an interview with Kathleen Wrsama who was taken from Ethiopia as a child to York by missionaries before the outbreak of the First World War. This was recorded as part of the Myth of the Motherland recordings [see ORAL recordings]

BCA/5/1/59 Cecil Baugh Extracts from the book Jamaica's Master Potter by Cecil Baugh and Laura Tanna. Cecil Baugh was a Jamaican born potter who travelled around the world during the Second World War as part of the engineering corps.

BCA/5/1/78 The Colonies and World War II Document about the use of colonial subjects in Britain's wars.

BCA/5/1/161 Oral history transcripts, many related to the Myth of the Motherland recordings including Connie Mark.

BCA-151 Brass military shell component and Metal stand with a commemorative plaque "Fort Salif June 12 1917".

BCA-170 Kings African rifles collar pin and **BCA-171** West Indies Regiment collar pin

2. Sean Creighton collection

CREIGHTON/2/4 500 Jamaicans. One 3 page typescript report by Sam King, a passenger of the MV Empire Windrush ship.

3. Mike Phillips collection

Mike Phillips was born in Guyana. His family migrated to Islington in 1956 when he was about 14. He was educated at the University of London (English), the University of Essex (Politics), and received a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from Goldsmiths College, London. Mike Phillips worked for the BBC as a journalist and broadcaster between 1972 and 1983, then became a lecturer in media studies at the University of Westminster. In 1992 he became a full-time writer, being most well-known for his crime fiction including four novels featuring black journalist Sam Dean. Mike Phillips researched the history of Windrush for the BBC documentary as well as publishing an accompanying book to commemorate the 30 year anniversary in 1998. His collection is currently being catalogued but can be accessed under accession no AC2011/09.

4. Photograph collection

PHOTOS/2 Photographs of Black armed forces personnel from the 1939-9145 war

1. Connie Mark, 19 colour photographs - several of these are Connie giving talks at the Association of Caribbean Family and Friends Education Centre during Black History Month [October 1994]
2. Winston Millington, 5 colour photographs, 11 black and white photographs
3. George Powe military, 1 negative 7 black and white photographs. George Powe left Jamaica aged 19 and spent four years serving with the RAF during the Second World War. He settled in Nottingham after the war and was instrumental in the founding of the Afro-Caribbean National Artistic (ACNA) Centre in St Ann's, having been inspired to act following the St Ann's race riots in August 1958.
4. Eric Irons military, black and white photograph. Eric Irons joined the Royal Air Force in 1944. After settling in Nottingham he became the first Black Magistrate in Nottingham in 1962.

PHOTOS/43/3. Two photographs of a photographic reproduction of the R.M.S "Almanzora" from the personal photograph collection of Anthony Simmons who came on the ship

PHOTOS/45 Black and white photograph portraying a framed photograph of Clifford Augustus Fullerton. Jamaican-born Fullerton came to London in 1948 on the SS Empire Windrush in search of a job as a tailor.

PHOTOS/92 Photographs of Connie Mark two Black and white photographs of community activist Connie Mark (1923-2007). Copyright Colin Patterson

PHOTOS/106 Black and white photographic reproduction of a photograph of the Empire Windrush and passengers, showing the ship's bow and name, with crowds on deck.

PHOTOS/108

1. Black and white silver gelatin photographic reprint of an image of men in front of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, Mens Department.
4. Black and white silver gelatin photographic reprint of an image of a crowded train station, possibly in the luggage collection area; a woman in the foreground is turned toward the camera.
5. Black and white silver gelatin print of a woman carrying a little girl, possibly in Southampton.

PHOTOS/143 Air Commodore David Case and Major Ezenwa Ugwuzor

Photograph of Air Commodore David Case and Major Ezenwa Ugwuzor, senior officers in the Royal Air Force and Army. Air Commodore David Case became the highest ranking Black officer to serve in Britain's Armed forces in 2000 at the age of 47.

PHOTOS/148 Photographs of 'Jamaica's part in the Great War'. 27 Photographic reproductions from the book by Frank Cundall published in 1925.

5 Oral collection

ORAL/7/10 One Audio Cassette of Connie Mark, who was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, as part of the Myth of the Motherland – arrival and settlement project.

ORAL/7/20 One Audio Cassette of Kathleen Wrsama. Kathleen Wrsama was taken from Ethiopia as a child before the First World War by missionaries to Yorkshire. She worked as a labourer and later moved to London. She initially worked as an extra in film studios, and ran a Black seaman's mission in Stepney. Kathleen Wrsama was a member of the 'Stepney Coloured Peoples Association'.

ORAL/16 One Audio cassette of Richie Riley, dance choreographer and leader of the ballet Negres, as part of the Myth of the Motherland – arrival and settlement project

ORAL 19 AND ORAL/20 Interviews Windrush Day 20 June 1998Vox pop interviews with members of the public during the 30th anniversary of the arrival of the MV Empire Windrush

ORAL/21 Interview Sun a Shine, Rain a Fall 1997 vox pop interviews with members of the public during the opening of the Sun-a shine, rain-a-fall exhibition in collaboration with London Transport Museum at Black Cultural Archives.

5. Record collection

RECORD/1/1-6 Six audio recordings of songs and documentaries including RECORD/1/3 'BBC radio programme on West Indian involvement in WWII'. All produced as part of the Ethnic communities Oral history project.

RECORD/12 The Londoners. A drama featuring Sonya Saul and Dan Roland of the book by Sam Selvon 4 November 1994

RECORD/14 Windrush commemorative event: VHS Recording of speeches for the Windrush commemorative event held in Brixton Tate Library. 20 June 1998.

RECORD/23 Motherland March 1983 1 75 minute audio recording The play is based on twenty-three women's testimonies about their experience of migrating to Britain from the Caribbean in the 1950s. It was first performed at Oval House Theatre on 9 July 1982

RECORD/48 Edward Braithwaite: rites of passage recording of poetry c1960s

RECORD/81 London is the place for me and Festival of Britain Calypso c1990s

RECORD/106 Malcolm X Oxford Union Debate channel 4 Bandung production about the significance of Malcolm X visiting the Oxford Union VHS c1990s

RECORD/156 Stokeley Carmichael in London July 1967 One 60 minute recording on DVD of Stokely Carmichael speaking at the Roundhouse in Camden, London in 1967. Stokely Carmichael shares a platform with Allen Ginsburg, Emmet Grogan of the Diggers movement, R D Laing and Michael X.

RECORD/160 Windrush elders: Five audio video recordings and one audio file of individuals who came to Britain post 1945. The individuals featured include Alex Eldon and Alan Charles Wilmott [4 June 1998] both interviewed by Linda Bellos. There is also one tape of individual vox pops around Brixton [5 June 1998].

Reference Library

First and Second World War

- 940.3 BOU Black Poppies: Britain's Black Community and the Great War
- 940.3 COS Black Tommies: British soldiers of African Descent in the First World War
- 940.3 DYD The Empty sleeve: the story of the West India regiments of the British Army
- 940.5404 BOU The Motherland Calls: Britain's Black Servicemen and Women 1939-45
- 940.5404 MUR Lest we forget: the experience of World War II West Indian Ex-Service Personnel
- 940.5055 KIL Fighting for Britain: African soldiers in the Second World War
- 940.5404 SHE Many struggles: West Indian workers and service personnel in Britain (1939-1945)
- 940.5404 SHE World War II: Colonies and colonials
- 940.9 BOU Mother country: Britain's Black community on the Home Front 1939-45
- 940.9 BOU Keep Smiling Through: Black Londoners on the Home Front 1939 – 1945

Windrush history

- 1.10A EMP Empire Windrush
- 941 FRY The Politics of Windrush
- 941 LOW Ormonde: Windrush's forgotten forerunners
- 941 PHI Windrush: The Irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain
- 941 SWE Keep on moving: the Windrush legacy
- 941 WAM Empire Windrush
- 941 WIN Windrush Pioneers

Oral history

- 907.2 WAL The Windrush Legacy [copies of this book are available to purchase in the shop]
- 305.488 DOD Motherland: West Indian women to Britain in the 1950s
- 907.2 KYR The Motherland Calls: African-Caribbean Experiences
- 907.2 REY When I came to England: an oral history of life in 1950s and 1960s Britain
- 907.2 BAU Jamaican hands across the Atlantic

Subject Guide



Other Sources

Black Presence

<http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/remembrance-day-black-asian-soldiers-in-ww1/>

Black Poppy Rose <http://www.blackpoppyrose.org/>

Caribbean Aircrew in the Royal Air Force during WW2 <http://www.caribbeanaircrew-ww2.com/>

Caribbean roll of Honour <http://caribbeanrollofhonour-ww1-ww2.yolasite.com/>

Colonial film database <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/>

Imperial War Museum, learning resources, *The Empire called to Arms*

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/the-empire-called-to-arms>

King's African rifles <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXnZ8n26d2g>

National Army Museum collections <https://www.nam.ac.uk/collections>

National Archives Black British History <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/black-history/>

National Archives Bound for Britain

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/bound-for-britain/>

National Maritime Museum Crew lists of the British Merchant Navy 1915

<http://1915crewlists.rmg.co.uk/>

Royal Air Force Museum collections <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/default.aspx>

Royal Museums Greenwich Research guide The Merchant Navy

<http://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/researchers/research-guides/research-guide-c1-merchant-navy-tracing-people-crew-lists>

Royal Navy collections and research <https://www.nmrn.org.uk/research>

Second World War digital living memorial <http://livingmemorial.org.uk/the-veterans/>

The story of the British West Indies regiment in the First World War Imperial War Museums

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-story-of-the-british-west-indies-regiment-in-the-first-world-war>

West Indian Association of service personnel

<http://armedforcescharities.org.uk/index.php/faqs/item/436-the-west-indian-association-of-service-personnel-wasp>

Windrush Foundation <http://www.windrushfoundation.org/>

If you have any queries regarding this subject guide or would like to book an appointment to view archive material then please contact the Collections at archives@bcaheritage.org.uk. Alternatively, you can call **0203 757 8511**.