

# ***BASA***

(Black & Asian Studies Association)

# ***NEWSLETTER***



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# BASA News

This year BASA celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. The AGM was held at Stewart House at the University of London on 25 June 2011, chaired by George Watley. It presented an opportunity to consider its future. In the last twenty years, there have been great changes in both society and technology. All small societies have, like BASA, been facing the problems of a shrinking membership as people focus more and more on their own niche interests, instead of seeing themselves as part of a wider group with similar interests. The greater use of the internet has reduced the number of people attending face-to-face meetings. For a long time it has been difficult to get people to serve on the management committee and attendance at these meetings has also fallen because of the time constraints on members. One of BASA's aims to campaign for the inclusion of Black and Asian British history in the school curriculum and other areas of public life, such as museums and archives, has largely been achieved, even if the results have not always been totally satisfactory and there is still much to do.

Kathleen Chater, the current editor of the Newsletter, presented a paper outlining the problems facing BASA and potential solutions. She also noted that the title *Newsletter* is somewhat misleading because the articles and other material, such as the Historic Document and Historic Figure features, take it beyond simply reporting what members are doing. Some time ago Hakim Adi suggested that BASA focus on producing the newsletter because most subscribers to BASA seem to want simply to receive the Newsletter and not to become involved in other activities. As he said, BASA's campaigning function can now be carried out more effectively through its jiscmail site, which is not confined to members of the Association. Initially this suggestion was not enthusiastically received - most people's immediate reaction to change is to resist it. However, on reflection his views have gained ground and the paper developed his idea. Hakim also proposed that BASA keep the Education Committee, which is doing good work liaising with university departments and schools.



*The Management Committee debates proposed changes.*

The Management Committee will need to oversee the changes. This will initially look both at ways of re-launching the Newsletter to reflect the changes in its content and at ways of disseminating it, for example through the internet, and thereafter work on the content and production of the Newsletter. As the switch of focus to production of the Newsletter will mean changes to committee members in ways which have to be determined, there was therefore no need to elect new officers and the meeting closed.

The conference held alongside the AGM had the theme of political activism by Black people in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to recognise this aspect of BASA's first twenty years. It was well attended. Hakim Adi spoke on the WASU (West African Students Union) and West African activists

in Britain. He has already published on this subject, so instead of an article, contributed an Historic Figure on p. 39. As Donald Hinds, one of the planned speakers, was unable to attend, Devon Thomas nobly stepped in to talk about activism in Brixton. He and the other speakers, Christian Høgsbjerg, Lazare K-Zerbo, Marika Sherwood and Jeffrey Green have all contributed summaries of their contributions, which appear as articles in this special 60<sup>th</sup> edition of the Newsletter.

In addition, there was the showing of part of a DVD, containing a section on the life of Amy Ashwood Garvey, less well-known than her husband Marcus Garvey, but a significant figure in her own right. The DVD is reviewed on p. 35.



Hakim Adi.....



.....and his audience

### News from BASA members

The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* has 33 articles by Jeff Green, the five latest (September 2011) being John Hochee and Ping Lun (Chinese); American singers Thomas Rutling and Isaac Dickerson, and Dr Robert Wellesley Cole, the Sierra Leonean doctor/author of Newcastle and London.

ODNB is available on line [www.oxforddnb.com/](http://www.oxforddnb.com/)

Stephen Bourne published his first feature in the *Guardian* in the Family section on 9 July 2011. Entitled 'My Inspirational Aunt Esther' it told the story of the dual heritage girl taken into his white working class family. Stephen also had an article in the *Independent* on 14 November 2011, saying 'It shouldn't be only whites who reach the heights: a black Heathcliff is a too rare example of imaginative casting'. Full article on [www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/it-shouldnt-be-only-whites-who-reach-the-heights-6261726.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/it-shouldnt-be-only-whites-who-reach-the-heights-6261726.html)

Hakim Adi, Marika Sherwood, Onyeka and Kathleen Chater have recorded podcasts on aspects of Black British history for the Historical Association. They should go live on 2 February. Kathleen Chater gave a talk as part of Diversity Week at the National Archives in November and this is now also available as a podcast.

Miranda Kauffman has now submitted her thesis and it has been accepted. She says her study *Africans in Britain 1500-1640* employs

evidence from a wide range of primary sources including parish registers, tax returns, household accounts, wills and court records to challenge the dominant account, which has been overly influenced by the language of Shakespeare's *Othello* and other contemporary literature. She explains the international context of growing trade and increased diplomatic relations with Africa and a concomitant increased level of contact with Africans in the Atlantic world and explores the ways in which Africans might come to Britain. Once in Britain, they were to be found in every kind of household from those of kings to seamstresses. Some were entirely independent, some poor, though few resorted to crime. They performed a wide range of skilled roles and were remunerated with the same mix of wages, rewards and gifts in kind as others. They were accepted into society, into which they were baptized, married and buried. They inter-married with the local population and had children. They were punished in the same way and for the same transgressions as the native-born. The legacy of villeinage coupled with the strong rhetoric of freedom in legal and popular discourse ensured that Africans in Britain were not viewed as slaves in the eyes of the law. Neither were they treated as such. They were paid wages, married, and allowed to testify in court. She concludes that those scholars who have sought to place the origins of racial slavery in Elizabethan and early Stuart England must now look elsewhere.

## Chris Braithwaite, the Colonial Seamen's Association and the politics of 'class struggle Pan-Africanism' in inter-war Britain

by Christian Høgsbjerg

The Barbadian agitator Chris Braithwaite was one of the leading Black political radicals in 1930s Britain. Better known under his adopted pseudonym 'Chris Jones', Braithwaite was an outstanding organiser of colonial seamen and the critical lynchpin of a maritime subaltern network in and around the imperial metropolis of inter-war London.

Born in the materially impoverished British Caribbean colony of Barbados, Braithwaite encountered 'the problem of the colour line' early in life, having found work as a seaman in the British merchant navy when still a teenager. Braithwaite's self-education and awakening consciousness of race took place while he 'sailed the seven seas', and as he later put it in a speech in 1941, while for 'forty years he has been a rolling stone in every part of the world...he had yet to find a spot where under white domination elementary freedom is granted to the subject races'. Braithwaite served with the merchant navy during the Great War, then moved to the 'Black metropolis' of New York and found work for a period in a bar.

Many Black Caribbean mariners settled in America, and some became leading politically radical militants in the American working class movement. However, Braithwaite soon undertook the 'voyage in' to imperial Britain, where he settled in 1920s London, working for the employers' Shipping Federation. Braithwaite's work, based in London's Docklands, home to many Black seamen, was a highly responsible job, one usually reserved for whites only. As a Shipping Federation agent in 'the Pool', part of the River Thames where many ships come to dock, Braithwaite was responsible for finding and supplying colonial seamen, engineers, stokers and others, often at a few hours' notice. Quite remarkably given the relatively privileged job he had acquired, he was soon politically radicalised and immersed himself in the British working-class movement, becoming an activist in what became the National Union of Seamen (NUS).

The NUS's collaboration with employers and the state meant Black seamen required an identification card and had to join the union – despite its racism – in order to have any chance of employment. Braithwaite seems to have been better positioned to survive the dangers resulting from widespread racist practices in shipping, including the threat of deportation under targeting of 'aliens', through his job and marriage

to a white woman in Stepney, in the East End of London near the West India docks. Braithwaite seems to have settled in Stepney and would ultimately father six children.

In 1930, Chris Braithwaite would come around the newly launched Seamen's Minority Movement (SMM), a rank-and-file grouping of militant seamen organised by the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) to lead a fightback against an attempt by shipowners to make seamen pay for perhaps the greatest economic crisis in the history of capitalism. Adopting a pseudonym, 'Chris Jones', to avoid victimisation by his employer, Braithwaite's experience as a NUS militant and the nature of his work made him an incredibly important recruit for the SMM, and he was soon elected on to its central committee. Indeed, as early as April 1930 'Chris Jones' was chairing the second meeting of the SMM 'Committee of Coloured Seamen', and by 1931 he had joined the CPGB itself. As well as organising the distribution of such 'seditious' publications as the *Negro Worker*, he played an important role in launching the Negro Welfare Association (NWA) alongside his comrade and compatriot Arnold Ward and rallying solidarity with the Scottsboro Boys, nine Black teenage boys accused of rape in Alabama in 1931. By 1933, through his association with the NWA and his tireless campaigning, Braithwaite had also struck up a remarkable friendship with the radical Nancy Cunard, then editing her monumental 800-page fusion of Pan-Africanism and Communism, *Negro Anthology*, for publication in London. They would both serve together for a period on the NWA committee, and there is a famous picture taken of Braithwaite on a May Day demonstration in London in 1933 – just one of several photographs of 'Comrade Chris Jones' published in the *Negro Worker*, now edited by the Trinidadian

Christian Høgsbjerg has completed a PhD on 'C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain, 1932-38', in the Department of History at the University of York (UK). He is editor of a forthcoming special edition of C.L.R. James's 1934 play on the Haitian Revolution, *Toussaint Louverture: The story of the only successful slave revolt in history* and a member of the editorial board of *International Socialism*.



revolutionary George Padmore - and reprinted in Cunard's *Negro Anthology*. However, the great 'zig zag' from ultra-left to right which characterised the Stalinised Communist International as it shifted from the catastrophist perspectives of 'Class against class' to an attempt to build a deeply respectable 'Popular Front' against fascism and war in the hope of enabling a diplomatic alliance of Britain, France and the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany, was to spell the end for organisations like the SMM and ultimately end the involvement in international Communism of many Black radical activists.

In 1933, as anti-imperialist agitation against the 'democracies' of Britain and France was increasingly sidelined, Braithwaite followed George Padmore's lead, and resigned in protest from the Communist Party, though he remained supportive of organisations such as the NWA.

However, despite his relative political isolation, in July 1935 'Chris Jones' would emerge as the foremost tribune of Black and Asian seamen opposing the new British Shipping Subsidy Act, which as Laura Tabili notes 'effectively excluded undocumented Black British subjects from state-subsidized ships'. Braithwaite took the initiative, with support from the League Against Imperialism and the NWA, to form a new organisation, the Colonial Seamen's Association (CSA). Impressively, from the very start the CSA embraced not only Black colonial seamen, but also other Asian seamen, such as the Indian 'Lascars' as well. As the Indian Communist seamen's organiser and future secretary of the group, Surat Alley, recalled, the CSA 'started at the time when Italian Fascism threat[ened to] attack Abyssinia. The Association was the expression of the discontent existing among the colonial seamen and its aim was to redress their grievances'.

Chris Braithwaite threw himself into building solidarity with the people of Ethiopia in the face of Mussolini's war plans. By August 1935, George Padmore had arrived in London from France, and was soon helping his friend and compatriot C.L.R. James organise the new International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA). Braithwaite was a leading activist in this new Pan-African organisation, speaking out alongside the likes of Amy Ashwood Garvey, the Jamaican Pan-Africanist and first wife of Marcus Garvey, and the Kenyan nationalist Jomo Kenyatta of the Kikuyu Central Association. Matthew Quest has suggested that Braithwaite was also involved in mobilising his networks of colonial seamen, which attempted to organise 'direct action to undermine the economy and trade of Italy and smuggled weapons to Ethiopia through the maritime

industry'. Late November 1936 saw the first annual conference of the CSA in London. Braithwaite, who was elected Chair, 'stressed the need of organisation as the one salvation of the colonial peoples'. The range of support for the organisation was unprecedented and historic, given the ethnic divisions and hierarchical racial stratifications of British shipping encompassing not only Black seamen but also Indians, Arabs and Chinese seamen - testament in part to the respect for Braithwaite's tireless work and dedication. The CSA demanded removal of 'disabilities' imposed on colonial seamen by the 1935 Shipping Subsidy Act, which gave preference to white seamen, and also demanded that 'the seamen of the British Empire be given full democratic rights - the right to trade union organisation, freedom of speech and assembly'. As Marika Sherwood notes, 'this was a great advance on the 1920s, when there had been no solidarity articulated between the various colonial seamen, and there had been no demands particular to their conditions'. Sherwood notes that 'initially the CSA concentrated its efforts on the effects of the Shipping Subsidy Act: by late 1937 "the stringency of the application of the provisions of the Act was slackened"', so 'some success' could be recorded.

One CSA activist from early 1937 onwards, the West Indian Ras Makonnen, has perhaps left historians the most vivid description of the work of the CSA. Makonnen described it as 'a welfare and propaganda grouping', and recalled that since 'we did not want a separate Black union' for colonial seamen, part of CSA work involved trying to persuade West African seamen resident in Britain to join the NUS, despite all its appalling failings. He remembers 'Chris's role...was to act as a mouthpiece if there was any injustice that needed taking up...he was looked on as a leader in the same way as some of the outstanding Irish dock leaders in New York'.



*Images of Chris Jones are rare.*

Braithwaite's 'class struggle Pan-Africanism' found expression and flourished not simply in his leadership of the multi-ethnic CSA but in his key

role as organising secretary for the new 'International African Service Bureau for the Defence of Africans and People of African Descent' (IASB), formed in May 1937. In solidarity with the heroic arc of labour revolts which swept the colonial British Caribbean - including his native Barbados - during the late 1930s, Braithwaite repeatedly again took to the podium of Trafalgar Square alongside the likes of James and Padmore. Ever since the turn to the 'Popular Front', Braithwaite together with James and Padmore also used to go to CPGB meetings to heckle and expose the Communists 'pretensions at being revolutionists' by raising awkward questions about British imperialism. As James remembered, they would speak about the struggles of French and British colonial subjects who now had been forgotten as Britain and France were declared grand 'peace-loving democracies' and bulwarks against fascism. 'While I would ask a question, and Padmore might say a word or two, it was Chris Jones who made a hell of a row'. 'Chris would get himself into a temper and explode and make a revolution at the back of the hall...at the shortest notice, he could generate indignation at the crimes of imperialism and the betrayals of Stalinism as to shock into awed silence hundreds of British people in the audience'.

From the mid-1930s, Chris Braithwaite, like Padmore, worked closely with the socialist Independent Labour Party (ILP). Both developed close links with ILP supporting intellectuals around it, such as the writers Reginald Reynolds and Ethel Mannin. Critically, the IASB attempted to help ideologically arm, build solidarity with, and develop networks with the colonial liberation struggles across the African diaspora. Braithwaite wrote a monthly column for the IASB journal, *International African Opinion*, entitled 'Seamen's Notes', and organised the distribution of this illegal 'seditious' publication into colonial Africa through his network of radical seamen. The contacts Braithwaite and others made in turn fed information and reports back to the IASB in London. Despite the poverty and hardships of Blitz-hit London, Braithwaite kept up his political work for African emancipation throughout the Second World War until his sudden death from pneumonia on 9 September 1944, just over a year before the historic Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester.

Padmore must have felt particularly moved by the passing of this older, dedicated militant who must have in many ways represented his very ideal of a Black 'organic intellectual' of the international working class movement, and his obituary of his friend and comrade serves in many

ways as a worthy tribute. 'His death is a great loss to the cause of the colonial peoples as well as International Socialism, the finest ideals and traditions of which he upheld to the very end...He never spared himself in rendering aid to the cause of the oppressed. Many were the working-class battles and campaigns in which he gave his best...his memory will long remain as a symbol of the hopes and aspirations of his race'.

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## The 1981 Brixton Uprising and a history of activism by Devon Thomas

Brixton was the primary area of settlement for the post-Windrush generation. The *Empire Windrush* (to give it its full name) was a returning troopship that had carried servicemen who had served in World War II home to the Caribbean for demob. Some then returned when they found no prospects there and were accommodated in the deep air raid shelters on Clapham Common, just adjacent to Brixton, and ordered to register with the Labour Exchange on Coldharbour Lane in the middle of the town. Across the road from there, some Victorian villas on Geneva and Somerleyton Roads, mainly owned by the Church Commissioners and a Nigerian of princely heritage, provided accommodation for these pioneering settlers.

Brixton and its environs provided many of the ingredients that these new settlers needed. A large commercial hub that included an indoor market and a street market, which rapidly adapted to demands for new foods and supplies from home. It was an area accustomed to previous waves of settlement from people such as the Jews and the Irish and other cosmopolitan types, such as actors and variety performers.

A labour exchange connected the newly arrived to a burgeoning job market in the construction industry, transport and the new National Health Service. The civic authorities also appeared welcoming, organising a monthly social evening at the Town Hall, hosted by the Mayor, to welcome the new residents and help them to feel at home. Not all districts were this welcoming and the local papers were soon reporting 'race riots' in New Cross in 1949, where newly arrived men were set upon and beaten and where court cases ensued.

Brixton seemed quickly to develop a radical edge. Claudia Jones arrived in London in 1955 and two years later established her new venture, the *West Indian Gazette*, in a building owned by a local entrepreneur, Theo Campbell. He operated a travel agency and shipping business from the ground floor on Brixton Road.

A plethora of grass roots organisations sprang up to cater of the needs of this new population. Fraternal organisations, lodges, churches, social and cultural groups, overseas branches of political parties from home soon started. Initially held in peoples' lounges, they grew and moved into buildings acquired with people's hard-earned money.

Brixton responded when racists started to organise in their community and physically repulsed them from Brixton. Groups of men also travelled over to Notting Hill to help organise defences when things escalated there. The predominately Jamaican demographic in Brixton

gave the area a militant character, as many of the settling population had been active back home during the 1930s during the labour and social unrest there.

The Caribbean character of Brixton developed rapidly and soon the local schools were filled with the offspring of the initial settlers and a large proportion of the terraced housing began to be bought up by these people as they were not eligible to be housed in the small amount of council housing that existed at the time. These twin social needs, housing and education, became the major issues around which tensions arose as the 1970s and 1980s arrived. The council increasingly tried to deal with the housing shortage by compulsory purchase of larger and larger parts of the area. This re-impooverishing those who had initially purchasing their properties by hard work.

This competition for space increased conflict with the local authority and the first wave of 'Black' councillors was elected in the 1970s because of these issues. Other well known characters served on the council, such as Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone, Peter Mandelson, Rudy Narayan, John Major and Janet Boateng. The robustness and aggressiveness of local politics was always in evidence and the local community were not averse to marching on the Town Hall and interrupting council meetings if the issues were hot.

There was a long lead-up to the troubles in 1981. A long list of campaigns such as the Brockwell 3 in 1973, the Oval 4 and 6 all punctuated community life in the 1970s. This was augmented by big confrontations at the Notting Hill Carnival in the mid-1970s; the battle with the National Front in New Cross in 1977; racist fire bombings of houses, bookshops and business premises, culminating in the death of Blair Peach in Southall in 1979.

A large number of radical groups established their headquarters in Brixton after the demise of the *West Indian Gazette*. The Dark and Light

Devon Thomas's family were among the first Black people to move into Brixton in the 1950s. He has spent his life living and working in the area, is Chair of the Brixton Business Forum, the Black Heritage Group and co-ordinates the work of the Brixton '81 Retrospective Group, organising events that commemorate and celebrate 30 years of development in the area.



Theatre followed by the Black Theatre of Brixton was established in a local community hall.

The Black Panther Movement, which included characters such as Darcus Howe (who had migrated across town from Westbourne Grove) and Farouk and Mala Dhondy, established itself on Shakespeare Road. When this splintered, it was replaced by the Black Workers Movement, the Brixton and Croydon Collective and other formations such as the Black Liberator and the Black Unity and Freedom Party and the Brixton Black Women's Centre. Large numbers of white radical groups also availed themselves of the privilege of establishing themselves in and around Railton Road, known as the 'Frontline', and in the large number of squatted council properties in Villa Road and St Agnes Place, headquarters of the Rasta movement and Bob Marley, when he was in town.

It was against this backdrop of a ferment of grass roots political activity, such as the anti-sus laws campaign and those against ESN (Educationally Subnormal) schools that the infamous Swamp '81 operation was established by the police, ostensibly to stamp out 'street crime'. The youth of the time, without work and prospects, reacted accordingly and the rest is well-recorded history.

The well-appointed inner south London district is still a volatile place. With four murders between April and June 2011, the new generation seem to have identified the wrong enemies, but that is the next chapter of the story!

### BASA on Jiscmail

The National Academic Mailing List Service, known as Jiscmail, is a way for people primarily (but not exclusively) in the academic field to communicate, to share information, to ask questions or to seek help with a research topic and to comment on current events. There are a number of areas, and BASA is one of them. To subscribe to this on-line community, go to

<<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/BASA>>.

You will be asked to enter your e-mail address and a password.

### Henry Sylvester Williams and his 'descendant' George Padmore by Marika Sherwood



Henry Sylvester Williams was born in Trinidad, the son of an immigrant carpenter from Barbados. He left for the USA in 1891 to attempt to obtain further education. We know virtually nothing about Williams' years in the USA, or at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, where he obtained qualifications roughly the equivalent of A-levels. He then left for England to qualify as a barrister.

In 1897 Williams formed the African Association, which immediately embarked on political activities. Supported by resident Africans, Caribbeans, African-Americans and Black Britons, in 1900 the Association called the world's first Pan-African Conference. With speakers from all these areas, including two African-American women, and support from some Whites and Indians, the Conference dealt with issues ranging across history, culture, racial discrimination and lack of power to the demand for equal treatment and opportunities, and for full representation in government.

The Association's report of the conference has not survived; but it was well reported in newspapers. Close to sixty people are named as attending, including thirteen Whites. Of course, there must have been people there who were not known or recognised by the reporters. Many of those of African origins or descent who attended were already, or became, involved in political activism. Some of the Africans who attended went on to form the National Congress of British West Africa, while W.E.B. Du Bois organised four subsequent Pan-African Congresses. The sixth Conference, held in Manchester in 1945, was organised by George Padmore, who had imbibed his pan-Africanism from his father Alphonse Nurse, who had joined the Trinidad branch of the Pan-African Association in 1901.



George Padmore

After visiting the Caribbean to set up local Pan-African organisations, Williams completed his legal training in London and was admitted to the British Bar. For reasons unknown, perhaps because of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient work as a Black barrister to support his English wife and their children, or perhaps because he had been much involved in the controversies regarding the Boer War and its consequences, Williams left for South Africa in 1903.

Though the South African Bar was very resistant to admitting a Black barrister, in the end Williams was admitted. Seemingly getting little legal work, Williams became much involved in local 'Coloured' (as 'mixed race' people called themselves) and African politics. He returned to Britain after less than a year, but continued his work with these organisations, representing them in London.

Back in the unwelcoming 'Mother Country', Williams tried again to build up a legal practice and joined or worked with many organisations, but could not resuscitate the Pan-African Association or its journal, *Pan-African*. He hoped to become a Parliamentary candidate for the Liberal Party, in order to represent and advocate the rights of 'his people'. He was elected as a Liberal borough councillor, briefly visited Liberia, and then returned to Trinidad. Why he chose to return we do not know: could the situation in Britain for Blacks – especially a Black barrister – have looked too hopeless to him? Was he disappointed in the new Liberal government and its policies towards African colonies? We have to presume that Williams believed that in Trinidad he would be able to earn enough as a barrister to support his growing family.

In Port-of-Spain Williams set up a law practice, and had begun to get involved in local political activities when he collapsed with chronic nephritis, which is the slow, gradual destruction of the kidneys. He had been home a little over two years. Within a few weeks Henry Sylvester Williams was dead, aged 44.

As noted above, Alphonse Nurse had joined the Trinidad Pan-African Association. And when the widowed Mrs Williams was looking for tenants, he

rented a room from her. Thus his son, Malcolm Ivan Nurse, who took the name of George Padmore in order to protect his family from persecution when he joined the Communist Party while studying in the USA, learned about Pan-Africanism from early in his life. As there is an introduction to Padmore in *Newsletter #57* July 2010, pp.13-15), I just want to add that Kwame Nkrumah was among those attending the 1945 Pan-African Congress organised by Padmore in Manchester. On his return to the Gold Coast Nkrumah was in constant touch with Padmore, consulting him on all that he faced in trying to attain independence and African unity. When Ghana achieved independence Nkrumah invited him to become his Advisor on African Affairs. So, with his partner Dorothy Pizer, Padmore moved to Accra and organised two very important conferences both held in 1958: that of the Independent African States and then the All-African Peoples' Conference. Tragically he died in September 1959 while beginning to work on the implementation of the AAPC's resolutions. Dorothy remained in Ghana doing research work for Nkrumah and writing articles for the ruling party's newspaper.

### **References and Further Reading**

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Marika Sherwood, *The Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams and the African Diaspora* (Routledge, 2010) is currently only available as an expensive hardback. (See review on p. 39 ).

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Marika Sherwood is a founder member of BASA and an honorary Fellow of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.



Joseph Ki-Zerbo (1922-2006) was one of the leading pan-Africanist thinkers and political leaders in Francophone Africa. He was born in the village of Toma in a western region of Burkina Faso (then-Upper Volta), which was at that time part of the French Sudan (Mali) territory.

His father, Diban Ki-Zerbo (1875-1980) had been captured and enslaved in Timbuktu; he managed to escape and was rescued by French Catholic missionaries, who baptized him Alfred Simon. Diban is important as a model for the future Catholic freedom fighter and as the source of the Catholic social leftism of his son Joseph. One can underline that, despite his conservatism, Bishop Lavigerie, who founded and headed the Catholic mission in Upper Volta, took some liberal initiatives, for instance the campaign against forced marriage. Globally the struggle of the Catholic Church against slave trade controlled by Moslem merchants is a reality that cannot be ignored.

Alfred Diban had fourteen children: the first with Louise Coulibaly (who died in 1913) and his second spouse Thérèse Folo Ki. Joseph was the seventh son. He studied in French Sudan and in Senegal. He reached Dakar in 1940 and worked for the railway company.

### **Senegal in the twentieth century**

Senegal has the longest history in francophone Africa. As early as 1916, French citizenship was given to people who lived in the Quatre Communes [Four Districts]: Dakar, Gorée, Rufisque and Saint-Louis. In the Dakar of the 1940s it is possible that the writings of African activists such as Lamine Senghor, Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté or even Marcus Garvey circulated; there are, however, no traces of such an influence in the works of Joseph Ki-Zerbo. He was earning his living as a railway worker and so frequented the Senegalese working class.

After the religious resistance of Amadu Bamba, founder of the Muridiyya (an Islamic movement) who died in 1927, Aline Sitoé Diatta, a young girl from Casamance (a southern region), who lived in Dakar in the 1940s launched a cultural resistance against French colonialism. She was arrested on 8 May 1943.

It is certain that the young Joseph (then 23 years old) heard about this bold contemporary female figure. He also witnessed the resistance of France and her allies (notably the UK) against Germany. After de Gaulle's call in London on 18 June 1940, an attack was launched against Dakar in September of the same year but failed.

In June 1947 *Afrique nouvelle* [New Africa], a progressive Catholic magazine created by the Catholic West African episcopate, was launched. Whereas pan-African newspapers had existed for a long time in Gold Coast [present-day Ghana] for instance, *Afrique nouvelle* was the first political publication for the emerging political leadership. Meanwhile the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* (RDA) was created in Bamako in 1946 and was very close to the French communist party until the early 1950s. One year later the Madagascar upheaval took place.

It is worthy of mention that another journal, *Présence africaine*, was also created by a Senegalese man, Alioune Diop, with the support of Richard Wright, and French progressive intellectuals such as André Gide and Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1947 a famous strike was launched in Senegal in the railway company and related in Sembène Ousmane's *Bouts de bois de Dieu* [Ends of the Wood of God].

As for intellectual influences, it was the works of French *personnaliste* philosopher Emmanuel Mounier (*L'éveil de l'Afrique noire* [Awakening of Black Africa]); the négritude poet from Martinique Aimé Césaire, and the Haitian poet René Depestre which were explicit in his work. Another important Senegalese factor is that it was the first French colony in West Africa with a political tradition that can be traced to a period much earlier than other African countries.

### **1950's: the golden age of African nationalism**

The francophone political generation which would lead the nationalist movement in Africa was born with the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* (RDA) [Democratic African Gathering], which was allied to the French communist party. However, after the Second World War the major relevant event for the African was the indigenization of pan-Africanism through Gold Coast, the independence of India in 1947 and the communist revolution in China, also in 1947.

Dr Lazare Ki-Zerbo is based in Paris. He is a pan-Africanist philosopher and executive secretary of the International Joseph Ki-Zerbo Committee. He works in the human rights department of an international organisation based in Paris, on economic and social rights, prevention of torture and corporate social responsibility in Africa, website: [www.fondationki-zerbo.org](http://www.fondationki-zerbo.org)



In 1950 Joseph Ki-Zerbo arrived in France, but due to his Catholic faith he did not join the communist study groups attended by many Marxist African scholars. He created in 1952 the review of African catholic students *Tam tam*, which had a nationalist orientation but rejected proletarian internationalism because, according to him of the resounding article “*On demande des nationalistes*” [We need nationalists] it relies on hate and not love, which much later also had the political support of Kwame Nkrumah, who became the first Prime Minister of Ghana after Independence in 1957.



Joseph Ki-Zerbo

In the early 1950s Nkrumah had not totally abolished his Christian identity (his Catholic first name was Francis) and addressed this small Christian pan-Africanist circle on one occasion: that was at the African workshop of *Pax Romana*, probably held in Accra University in December 1958. A French version of his speech was published in *Afrique nouvelle* and *Tam Tam* under the title “Le Président Nkrumah et les étudiants catholiques” [President Nkrumah and the Catholic students]. This speech is quite disturbing as Nkrumah really appears as a Christian propagandist, in a version which recalls but also contrasts with the pan-African evangelism described by Tony Martin.

In effect Nkrumah affirms that Christian missionaries are the true authors of the awakening of Africa. He also says that Christian faith can unite the two antagonistic blocs of the Cold War: East and West. He then praises the Reverend Father Georges Fisher for having Christianized his province which, he says, is the most Christianized in the country. Nkrumah also mentions Bishop Porter and Father R. Streibler (at

that time based in Lomé, Togo) and confesses he wanted to become a Jesuit.

Nkrumah mentioned Joseph Ki-Zerbo’s works on the “Moshi” (Mossi people) in his opening speech of the first Congress of the Africanists in Accra in December 1962. As he would recall later, Ki-Zerbo met him at Christianborg Castle with the help of George Padmore. Ki-Zerbo created the National Liberation Movement and attended the *All African peoples’ Conference* in Accra in December 1958, also as a member of *Présence africaine*.

When Sekou Touré’s Guinea chose immediate independence and political union with Ghana, Ki-Zerbo left his position as a teacher in the French administration in Dakar and in Conakry joined with many other Pan-africanists and radical intellectuals such as the French Marxist historian Jean Suret-Canale (whose works insisted more on the colonial role of Christian missions in African).

#### ***Political and intellectual activism in Burkina Faso***

Ki-Zerbo is well known in the French-speaking African countries for having edited the first volume of the *General History of Africa*, published by UNESCO in 1980. He was the first African to hold the prestigious title of *agrégé* (*aggregation* is a very competitive public examination for teachers at secondary school) in history and collaborated with the socialist leader of Senegal, Mamadou Dia, who was jailed between 1962 and 1974 and launched, again with Ki-Zerbo, the International African Forces for Development (IAFD). One can underline that here again a progressive Catholic influence can be mentioned as Dia relied much on the theory and action of the French economist François Perroux, a friend of Emmanuel Mounier, and also the Dominican Priest father Louis-Joseph Lebret.

As the leader of the clandestine *Mouvement de Libération nationale* (MLN) [National Liberation Movement], who controlled the teachers’ trade union and played a key role in the 1966 social protest in then Upper Volta, which put an end to the autocratic and neocolonial first president Maurice Yameogo, Ki-Zerbo was always an opponent of the various regimes in Burkina Faso. He led a party that was and still is part of the International Socialist movement and participated in the activities of this organization in the struggle of the front line countries with Julius Nyerere. In tribute to his activities Mozambican authorities have given his name to a street in Maputo. He created the Center for Studies on African Development (CSAD) in 1980 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and advocated endogenous development.

Under the Thomas Sankara regime he lived in exile in Senegal and his CSAD library was destroyed though, according to Joseph Ki-Zerbo's own testimony, the young progressive African president asked him to come back.

He returned to Burkina Faso in 1992 and was the oldest member of parliament there. He died on 4 December 2006 in Ouagadougou, as the international community celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration for the Right to Development. Since then an international Joseph Ki-Zerbo Committee and a Foundation have been created to support studies on pan-Africanism, African development and history in accordance with his ideas and interests.

### **Further Reading**

Joseph Ki-Zerbo *Le Monde africain noir* (Paris, Hatier, 1972); *Histoire de l'Afrique noire* (Paris, Hatier, 1991); *Histoire générale de l'Afrique* (2003); *A quand l'Afrique*, (with René Holenstein), (Editions de l'Aube, 2004); *Afrique Noire* (with Didier Ruef), (Infolio éditions, 2005). "African Intellectuals, Nationalism and Pan-Africanism: A Testimony" in Thandika Mkandawire (ed.), *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development* (Zed Books, London, 2007). He contributed to *General history of Africa* (UNESCO/Jeune Afrique, Paris, 1980). Also R. Holenstein, *A quand l'Afrique*, (Ed. D'En Bas, 2006) contains a long interview with Ki-Zerbo.

Mamadou Dia, *Afrique, le Prix de la liberté*, (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2001).

Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913*, (Ohio University Press, 2007)

Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique noire, l'ère coloniale. 1900-1945* (Editions sociales, Paris, 1971) p. 443 sq.

CODESRIA's Bulletin, numbers 3 & 4, 2007, Dakar, Senegal (special issue).

Tony Martin, "Some reflections on evangelical pan-Africanism, or, black missionaries, white missionaries and the struggle for African souls, 1890-1930" in *The Pan-African Connection*, (TM Press, 1983). It must be specified that Alfred Simon Diban sided with the white missionaries because they rescued him when he fled from his Timbuktu "masters". Evangelical pan-Africanism is mentioned here more for the son Joseph.

## **Slow March – Left, Right by Jeffrey Green**

This paper examines some of the relationships between Black people in London 1918-1938 who were unified by their colour and their wish to speak out for 'the race'. In the slow march from slavery and colonialism to political independence, they presented positive images and facts about people who were either African-born or of African descent to varied audiences in England.

Between 1918 and the 1940s two Black-led groups stood out. The African Progress Union, founded in 1918, had three presidents: John Archer, born in Liverpool of a Barbados father, Dr John Alcindor, born in Trinidad, a medical graduate of Edinburgh who worked in London from 1899, and Ghanaian merchant Kwamina Tandoh, who settled in London in 1906. The second group, the League of Coloured Peoples was founded in 1931 by Dr Harold Moody, a Jamaican who had been in Britain for twenty years. Less well-known was an individual who knew and worked with all four of them.

In the 1850s numerous escaped slaves told British audiences of the realities of life in the USA. They influenced British attitudes to America and affected government opinion during the build-up to the Civil War. These Black political activists gave talks, attended meetings, published books, spoke with Britons at every level of society, and educated the British to the realities of Black American life. The individual I am about to describe did almost the same in the 1920s and 1930s, but not about Americans: he dealt with Africa, the Caribbean and Britain.

An informed public is valuable in politics – and activists know that. This political activist and his associates lived in London between the two World Wars – he was an individual whose efforts to educate and inform the British public were widespread.

In *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, Peter Fryer mentions A. S. Cann, part of a group led by John Archer, the president of the African Progress Union, which met with Liverpool's deputy mayor in mid-June 1919 following the riots in Liverpool. Ghanaian businessman Cann was to be the best man at a wedding, in Acton, West London, in late 1920. The bride was Barbados-born Edith Goring, and the groom was John Barbour-James.

John Barbour-James was a Black political activist in England between 1918 and 1938. He was born in Guyana (then British Guiana) where he received a basic education and worked as a

clerk in the postal service, rising to be in charge of the post office in rural Victoria-Belfield. In 1902 at the age of 35 he transferred within the colonial service to Ghana (then the Gold Coast) where he rose to be a post office inspector and travelled widely in the southern region of that colony.

My first problem in researching him was that I was unaware that Afro-Caribbeans served in the British colonial service in Africa. Barbour-James was far from unique in this – indeed, Edith Goring (from 1920 Mrs Barbour-James) had been a teacher there for fourteen years.

Barbour-James retired aged 50 in 1917. By 1905 he had settled in Acton, London, where he had relocated his first wife Caroline and their five children. They had three London-born children. Amy, born in 1906, was a major informant in my quest.

My second problem was that most Black political activists of the 1920s and 1930s had very high if not to say elitist educations and many of the Africans came from families of traditional status within African society, whereas John Barbour-James was the son of a farmer and had been a clerk.

Thirdly, although there was a considerable exchange of information between students from Africa and the Black diaspora, I had not come across any Pan-Africanist in Britain or Europe who had lengthy first-hand knowledge of two quite different tropical colonies in the inter-war period: Guyana, built on slave sugar and with a significant Asian migrant population and imperial gold Ghana. Barbour-James therefore really knew much more than many.

Two more aspects were – and are – outside conventional wisdom. John Barbour-James had no need to seek a living, for he had a colonial service pension. And finally, the two Mrs Barbour-Jameses were Black – unlike so many of the male activists, he was not involved with white women. So, financially independent, living in London, knowing a lot about two of Britain's colonies, what did John Barbour-James do in England between 1918 and 1938 that might be of interest today?

He was an active member and official of the African Progress Union from the time it was formed in London in late 1918. He served under its three presidents (John Archer, Dr Alcindor,



John Barbour James

Kwamina Tandoh). He founded the African Patriotic Intelligence Bureau in 1918. It proclaimed its programme was to 'advocate the reasonable claims for opportunity for all men and women'. He was a stimulus to the founding, in 1931, of Dr Moody's League of Coloured Peoples and became its vice-president in 1937. He was also the president of the Association of Coloured Peoples.

We can see him, smartly dressed and probably wearing spats, paying his respects and those of the Association of Coloured Peoples at Marlborough House shortly after King George V's mother Queen Alexandra died in 1922. Not a Lady Di-type lengthy queue, by the way – his name is one of a handful, including the ambassadors of the USA and of Spain, listed in *The Times* of 28 February 1922. He would have been dressed in a similar manner when in November 1919 he went with a South African delegation (the future ANC) to meet Lloyd George in the House of Commons. The British prime minister reacted to their accounts of life in South Africa – against all protocol and to the amazement of his civil servants – by writing at length to South Africa's prime minister General Smuts.

I am pretty sure that as Barbour-James knew that Edward Nelson, son of a Guyana builder had triumphed at Oxford and worked as a barrister in Lancashire from 1905, because it was Barbour-James who recommended to Archer and African Progress Union colleagues to fund Nelson's defence of fifteen Blacks accused of rioting in mid-1919. The cases were dismissed in November 1919.

Amy Barbour-James told me that her father was always out and about, generally with his friend Robert Broadhurst (see Marika Sherwood's contribution in the *Oxford DNB*). So we could say

Jeffrey Green has written and broadcast on Black British history since 1982. *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, a Musical Life* will soon be published by Pickering & Chatto of London.



that one contribution to Black political activity by Barbour-James was effective networking.

His major contribution, however, was his insistence on presenting positive images of African people. In a lengthy letter in *United Empire*, the publication of the Royal Colonial Society, London, in 1922 he commented on a London talk by a future Colonial Secretary that his delegation to the West Indies had not had time to meet 'a large and representative number of their leading full-blooded African citizens', perhaps by design.

Barbour-James may have been linked to the West India Committee. One of its leaders was Lord Harewood, and when his son married King George V's daughter in 1922 Barbour-James was there. He was an active member of the Royal Colonial Society, which had very few Black members. These very imperial connections threw me at first, as did Barbour-James's involvement in the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley in the summer of 1924 where he worked at the Gold Coast exhibit. There he met thousands of people who could hear his knowledgeable stories about the Gold Coast and the enterprise of its people.

He presented positive images to the Boy Scouts and the Adult School in Acton, to the Brotherhood Movement (once known as the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon group) whose Epsom branch financed the coach trips by 'London coloured children' to Epsom in the late 1930s. This was organised by the League of Coloured People but paid for by the Brotherhood. Barbour-James would have known Dr Cecil Gun-Munro, a London graduate (1927) whose medical practice was at 330 Kingston Road in Ewell near Epsom in 1938. He was born in Grenada in 1903 (his doctor brother born 1916 died in 2007, Sir Sydney Gun-Munro later was active in St Vincent).

Barbour-James was an officer of the Acton branch of the Brotherhood Movement, and introduced them to Bahamian lawyer W. E. S. Callender in 1922. Callender was a fellow African Progress Union committee member. His daughter Dorothy was a concert pianist, son Ernest established a very reputable law practice in the Bahamas after, it seems, being an announcer for BBC radio in the early 1930s. In 1931 when Milton Hollinswick the secretary of the Brotherhood Movement in British Guiana was in London, Barbour-James had yet another 'all Black' gathering which the local newspaper detailed under the headline "Black" uplifts "white".

He met children of the Primrose League – young imperialists whose vow began 'I being a child of the British Empire'. His talks in West London, where he lived, included one entitled 'Trust the Black man' and another 'Colour and

Culture'. The phraseology seems odd today, but this was the 1920s. He had written a book in 1911 on the development of Ghana, and planned one entitled *The Burden and Obligations of Empire*.

Barbour-James participated in the Pan-African Congresses in London in 1921 and 1923. He worked with African Progress Union chair Kwamina Tandoh in almost-successful plans to have African cocoa growers cutting out middle men and shipping direct to buyers in America, and when I spoke with Tandoh's daughter some weeks ago (she was born in London in 1919) she recalled the name Barbour-James from her childhood.

He hosted individuals from the colonies and assisted them make useful contacts in Whitehall and the colonial service, liberal groups, the Quakers, and others including contacts made when at the Wembley exhibition.

On 26 March 1926 the *Acton Gazette and West London Post* reported there had been an 'all Black concert' at the Quaker Meeting House in Acton. With John Barbour-James and his daughter Amy were J. B. Danquah and Ladipo Solanke (two prominent West Africa political activists), Hugh Wooding from Trinidad, Griffith Motsiela from South Africa, and Anne Coussey whose lawyer father was to have an impact on Ghanaian history. Miss Coussey had fallen in love with Langston Hughes, the American poet, in Paris in 1924. They were separated by Dr Alcindor at her father's insistence. Miss Coussey married lawyer Hugh Wooding in due course.

That love interest helps to offset the tragedies that saw four of Barbour-James's children die in 1915, his first wife in 1917, and the youngest child in 1919. His son John Victor Barbour-James, who sang on BBC radio in 1937, died in a film studio fire in 1938. The sole Guyana-born survivor was Muriel, and she went to Trinidad to work with Audrey Jeffers, a London-trained social worker (and aunt of Garvey historian Tony Martin).

After Paul Robeson was humiliated at the Savoy Grill in London in 1929 London Quakers set up a group to investigate the realities of life for Black people in Britain, and John Barbour-James was a regular member. He seems to have spoken to his friend Dr Harold Moody, and Moody established the League of Coloured Peoples in 1931. Barbour-James was a stout supporter of Moody's league, as was Edward Nelson. He became vice president in 1937.

When Hull celebrated the centenary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, at the house which is now a museum dedicated to William Wilberforce, Barbour-James was there.

I was fortunate enough to meet an elderly officer of the Epsom Brotherhood, and I also examined the 1929-1931 files at the Quakers' London head office but most of the details of today's paper result from Barbour-James's publicity efforts in the press. Plus some fragments including two letterheads and that Hull programme.

Amy Barbour-James was supportive and informative, and she told me that her father had taken his papers to the Caribbean in 1938 when he and Edith went on an extended holiday there. He planned to write a book. The war kept them there; she went to Guiana in the late 1940s to help her elderly father, and returned to London. John Barbour-James died in Georgetown, Guiana in 1954. I think the papers were lost and the book was never written. The two family plots in Acton cemetery have no headstones. Amy Barbour-James died in Harrow in the 1980s. The family is now extinct.

In the light of what has been recovered, I hope you will agree that the efforts made by John Barbour-James, a Black political activist in London, were sustained and – at the same time – often outside what conventional wisdom has suggested. The evidence is scattered, fragmented – elusive. The National Archives, left-wing publications and newspapers have yielded treasures that have enabled scholars to detail Black political activists of the left. But the march needed both left and right. Barbour-James was a Conservative, a Freemason, and a church warden of the Church of England. He told his daughter that when his ship arrived at Cape Coast in 1902 he was expecting to see 'savages', and the first thing he saw was choir boys in surplices on their way to the cathedral. Correcting misunderstandings and explaining the achievements and ambitions of people of African descent or birth to the British, John Barbour-James was a Black political activist in London 1918-1938, and deserves our attention.

The slow march from slavery, economic penury and racism to social justice required and requires pressure on decision makers and the development of an informed public – the wider that public the better. Both left-wing and right-wing men and women had roles to play.

### **References and Further Reading**

Jeffrey Green's entries on Alcindor, Barbour-James and Tandoh appear in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. There are also entries on Archer, Broadhurst, Moody and Nelson. His articles on Nelson and Barbour-James appeared in *New Community* (the journal of the Commission for Racial Equality, London) Vol 12, No 1 (Winter

1984-5) pp 149-154 and Vol 13, No 3 (Autumn 1986) pp 250-256 and both men are detailed in Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998). *Acton Gazette and Express* (London), 11 April 1922, p 3; 15 June 1923, p 5; 13 February 1931, p 1; 28 March 1919; 12 August 1921; 26 March 1926, p 9.

Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol 1* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986), pp 86-87 and p. 89.

John Victor Barbour-James died when his costume caught fire. The studio was making *Old Bones of the River*, a colonial spoof comedy featuring the then very popular Will Hay. This film can be seen on the web without charge but it is not comfortable viewing.

### Diary Dates

Marika Sherwood organises a series of monthly seminars in Senate House, University of London, Russell Square, London WC1. The next two dates are:

**Monday, 20 Feb 2012** (room S261, Senate House 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

#### **David Neita, *Invisibility: The Art Of Being Black***

How do 'established' art historians see the Black figures in British paintings? Is there an alternative interpretation? Neita will be looking mainly at 18th century paintings, including the works of Hogarth.

**Tuesday, March 13 2012** (room S349 Senate House 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)

#### **Tessa Hosking, *Medieval Perceptions***

The 12th and 13th centuries were imbued with religious prejudice. Yet Europeans who were travelling to Africa or Asia then betrayed little or no sense of racial prejudice in their writings. What can we learn from this?

On 6 February 2012 Toby Green will be discussing his book *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa 1300-1589*. José Lingna Nafafe and Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias will be responding. This is part of the Institute of Historical Research's seminar series *Imperial and World History*. Venue: ST274/5, 2nd floor, Stewart House (next to Senate House), University of London, Russell Square, London WC1.

## **Black British history in Australia and the convicts of Van Diemen's Land** *by Caroline Bressey*

It is regularly argued by BASA members especially Hakim Adi, that to understand British history and the history of Black peoples in Britain you must study world history. This is because Britain's history is one of exploration, slavery, imperial expansion and Empire on every Continent. The black presence in Tasmania, Australia is an interesting example of how the 'black presence' was enveloped into the 'White Dominions' of the British Empire. Examining a black presence in Australia speaks firstly to the Aboriginal peoples who were so violently displaced and affected by British settlement. Aboriginal communities have lived in Tasmania for at least 30 000 years, but within seventy-five years of the British military expedition arriving in 1804 the majority had been killed, murdered or ravaged by disease, or forcibly moved from their homelands and confined to reservations. This painful history is occasionally present in the Tasmanian landscape, but how surviving Aboriginal communities continue to be intertwined with Tasmania life is not so clear.

Over 65 000 convicts transported to Australia were sent to Tasmania. The Aboriginal communities' numerous conflicts with these people and their jailors was not only a conflict with whiteness. Black men and women also came to Australia as colonial convicts and also as settlers. The origins of these early settlers include Africans from the Cape Colony, former slaves from the Caribbean and Black Britons such as the political prisoner William Cuffay. Pioneering research of convict records in New South Wales by Ian Duffield in the 1980s revealed not only the multi-cultural origins of Australia, but also something of the lives of these black men and women 'back home'. This work has been continued by Cassandra Pybus whose book *Black Founders* (2006) traces some of the black men who were chained up on the first convict transports that sailed to Australia from Britain in 1787.

Pybus has traced a number of them from enslavement in the United States to freedom within the British armed forces during the

Between December 2011 and February 2012 Dr Caroline Bressey will be researching the histories of the Black British presence in Australia as a Visiting Scholar at Monash University, Melbourne. As part of this trip she visited Tasmania in December 2011.

American War of Independence. As the British retreated from the former colony many of these formerly enslaved men joined them. Some resettled in Nova Scotia, but thousands are thought to have arrived in London destitute and cut off from the kinship ties they had managed to sustain during their enslavement. It is not surprising that for some of them freedom ended in the capital's courts. Not so well known is that some of these men ended up on the First Fleet to Australia. Among those who have their stories pieced together in *Black Founders* is Caesar (1764-1834) probably a formerly enslaved man brought to England during the final evacuation of America in 1783. He was sentenced to transportation for seven years in March 1786 and upon arrival in New South Wales sought to free himself from penal bondage as a serial absconder. He had two children in Australia with the convict Ann Poore before bounty hunters killed him in February 1796. Pybus also tells the story of John Martin (1747-1837) a seaman who she believes probably came to England during the American Revolution. Caught stealing clothes he was sentenced at the Old Bailey in 1782 landing at Sydney Cove. In 1792 he was free and with a foundation grant of 50 acres became a successful farmer. Following the death of his first wife, he married Mary Randall, the daughter of another black 'First Fleeter' with whom he had eleven children. Martin died in December 1837 leaving a large extended family. Throughout the deportation era black men and women found themselves on the distant shores of Australia including the island of Tasmania, known to them as Van Diemen's Land.



*Port Arthur*

Eleven properties now form the Australian Convicts Sites added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage in 2010. Five of these are in Tasmania. Among the most extensive is Port Arthur, a site of

more than 30 buildings, ruins, gardens, and Point Puer Boy's Prison. Established in 1830 to utilise convict labour in the production of timber for government projects, in 1833 Port Arthur became a secondary punishment station for repeat offenders from all of the Australian colonies. On arrival at the Port Arthur Heritage Site visitors are given a playing card. You follow your character through the lottery of convict life displayed in the visitor centre. During my visit in December 2011 I was given the Nine of Diamonds, Ebenezer Brittlebank. A sixty-three year old man Sheffield, Brittlebank was transported for stealing clothes and arrived in Van Diemen's Land in September 1825.

Although I felt for the drunkard Brittlebank I traded him in for the Queen of Clubs, Thomas Day. Born enslaved in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Day managed to get a passage to England where he worked as a cook and servant before being arrested and sentenced to seven years transportation at Maidstone Assizes in 1820. Day was transferred to Port Arthur when the notorious Macquarie Harbour penal station at Sarah Island on Tasmania's west coast was closed in 1833. During the introductory tour of the Port Arthur buildings another Black convict was mentioned. The African inmate 'Samuel' given 75 lashes from stealing from the officers' allotment, now a soft carpet of lawn.

A short boat ride from the main site allows you to visit two islands off the main site. The Point Puer Boys prison, where very little physical history remains, but our excellent guide Rob brought to life the difficulties and, albeit limited, opportunities the discarded youth of Britain encountered there. On the nearby Isle of the Dead the British class system remained engrained. Civil servants, regardless of their religious practice, and their wives and children were buried on the north side of the Isle of the Dead, their headstones placed upon higher ground. The convicts' graves lie unmarked on lower ground at the southern part of the island.

The site's Museum housed in the prison's asylum, a tour of the separate isolation cells and a database search of the prisoners quickly reminds you of the grim life and injustice experienced by many of the prisoners. Punching 'Africa' into the database gave a few results including Samuel, mentioned earlier by the guide. The record shows Samuel (no other given names) from the Cape of Good Hope, was sentenced to life for theft. He arrived at Port Arthur on 1 November 1831. With him would have been 'Scipio Africanus' the name given to a man, also from the Cape of Good Hope, who was sentenced to seven years transportation. He arrived on the

*Marion Watson* on 30 October 1837. There is no detail on the database of what happened to either man before, during or after their confinement at Port Arthur. *A Pack of Thieves* reveals the stories behind the men (they are all men) who inspired 52 characters who can be followed in the visitors' centre. The pages on Thomas Day reveal that after receiving his third certificate of freedom he left Van Diemen's Land and sailed for South Australia, but in 1846 he was sentenced to another ten years transportation for taking a pair of trousers from Zibulin Balt in Adelaide. He served his sentence at Port Arthur and left the penal colony once again. He appears to have died in the Tasmanian city of Launceston in July 1860, alone and without family or close friends.

Three years after Thomas Day's final sentence was passed, William Cuffay arrived on the shores of Australia. The son of a formerly enslaved man from St Kitts, Cuffay is one of Britain's better-known Black Victorians. Brought up with his sister Juliana by their mother in Chatham, Kent, Cuffay trained as a tailor. In 1839 he joined the Chartist movement in support of the People's Charter, which demanded among other things, universal male suffrage and secret ballots. Although not the only Black man to be involved in the Chartist movement in London, Cuffay was to become one of the most prominent leaders in the city. Two leaders of a Chartist demonstration held in Camberwell in March 1848 were also 'men of colour' but Cuffay received the brunt of negative press and as a direct result his wife Mary Ann (who would later join him in Australia) was sacked from her job. Eventually expelled from Britain for his political activism with the movement Cuffay did not allow his forced migration to break his commitment to the struggle of working people.

Cuffay's arrival in Van Diemen's Land in 1849 was reported in five newspapers, and as Mark Gregory points out he was the only convict mentioned by name. Using nineteenth-century Australian newspapers (now freely available online), Gregory has established that just after a year in the colony Cuffay became involved in local worker politics. In February 1851 he attended a meeting of the Free Trades Union called to discuss transportation and the use of convict labour for public projects. He later acted as an advisor on changes to the law in the colony's Masters and Servants' Act and organised a meeting in Hobart in 1857 to discuss newspaper reporting. Gregory has identified two of Cuffay's speeches that were published at some length in newspapers including one delivered at the Theatre Royal, Hobart in 1863 when Cuffay was in his mid-seventies. Mary Ann died in 1869 in Hobart, and now poor and ill Cuffay passed the following year. The Tasmanian

*Mercury* published an extensive obituary including the note that his remains had been interred in the Trinity burying-ground, and that by a special request his remains had been marked in case friendly sympathisers should later desire to mark the places with a memorial stone. That graveyard no longer exists. In 1923 the bones were moved to a pauper's gravesite at Cornelian Bay Cemetery, Hobart, and as Gregory reflects there is now no memorial stone for Cuffay and probably no grave.



The graveyard at Hobart, which probably contains William Cuffay's remains.

Fleshing out the stories of convicts from Van Diemen's Land beyond their entry lines in a register is difficult. A register of the first convict settlement on Maria Island contains at least one 'man of colour' known as James Dodds. A native of Dominica, Dodds worked as a servant before his trial and sentencing of seven years deportation in London in 1820. But what of his life before he left England and what happened to him after his discharge on 25 May 1826? Thomas Day and William Cuffay are rare examples. A 'man of colour, a maroon from Liverpool' and a former publican known to fellow convicts as Capois Death (perhaps inspired by Thomas Day?) is a major character in Richard Flanagan's novel *Gould's Book of Fish*. The book relays the lives led by the Liverpool born William Gould, convicted of theft in 1826 and transported to Australia for seven years. This fictionalised account of his time on Sarah Island, a penal colony on the west coast of Van Diemen's land, documents the cruelty, violence and isolation experienced on a penal settlement. Gould's tale asks the reader to question the historical imagination both Britons and Australians have developed in order to manage, or ignore, the horrific memories, unknown truths and mythic origins of Tasmania. The Black presence in Australia and Britain makes up part of these memories and unknown histories. Bringing their

presence in Tasmania to light enriches the histories of both islands.

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<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/fh/convicts>

## Runaways by Audrey Dewjee

For the last year I have been transcribing advertisements from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century British newspapers for Black and Asian runaways and entering the details on a database. The earliest notice dates from 1659 and the most recent from 1795. In the hundred years from 1685-1784, the average number of runaways per year is six; however that covers a wide variation from none in the two years 1736 and 1738, to 32 in 1760.

Although I have by no means transcribed all the notices in the surviving newspapers, I have decided to stop searching for the time being and examine the information which is emerging from those already discovered. At present the database consists of 627 records, made up of 603 notices (some are for more than one person) and 591 individual runaways (some ran more than once). Of these 541 are male and 50 female. As the ratio of men to women across the country was about 3:1 (it was higher in ports), this suggests that women were less likely to run away.

From the descriptions given, it is difficult to be completely certain of the ethnic origins of all the runaways, but by the best guess I can make, people of Asian ancestry make up about 13% of the total and people of mixed African and European ancestry about 9.5%. Origins were given for 68 people as follows: England 1; Wales 1; India 11; around the Caribbean 34; North America 12; Africa 7 - and a further 18 had either tribal markings or filed teeth indicating an African birthplace; Madagascar 1 and St. Helena 1.

Approximate ages are given in 453 of the advertisements: there were 302 runaways aged 20 and under and 151 aged between 21 and 45. While the majority of these were indeed young, Peter Fryer's assertion that such advertisements 'rarely speak of runaways over 20' is not quite correct.

Advertisements describing people as 'Mulattoes' or of 'yellow' or 'tawny' skin, illustrate the presence of individuals of dual-heritage. Whether they came from the plantations or were from inter-racial relationships were established here in Britain - e.g. the parents of Elias Blake [see BASA # 59, p. 25] - is not known.

Two of the advertisements are for runaway wives. Sarah Casey, wife of Anthony Casey, Mariner of Bett's Street, near Radcliff-Highway, 'being of a Mulatto complexion [sic], aged about 18 Years' ran away on 8 January, 1729. Her

husband offered no reward for her return, only wanting to 'forewarn any Persons...not to trust her upon her Husband's Account, for that he will not pay any Debts'. (At this time husbands were responsible for their wives' debts and vengeful women sometimes took advantage of the law). However, the husband of the unnamed 'Tawney Woman in a yellow Silk Gown, with long black Hair...and speaks broken English', who ran away in February, 1744 from her home in King-Street, St. Ann's in Westminster, offered five shillings reward and threatened to punish 'according as the Law directs' anyone who harboured or entertained her.

The word 'slave' appears in only 21 cases, though many are described as the 'property of' their owner or master. Sixteen of the runaways (including three women) had been branded, one had an iron fastened to his left leg, and one poor soul was burdened with 'a steel Collar...a steel Cuff about his Wrist, and an Iron Chain from the Collar to the Cuff on the outside of his Clothes'. A further 19 had collars of iron, steel, silver or brass, some of which were engraved with the name of their 'owners', but this practice seems to have died out by about 1730.

A third of the advertisements remark on the freedom-seekers' command of English and other languages. Of those described, a majority could speak English, even if it was 'broken,' one spoke broad Lancashire dialect and two spoke 'a little broad Scotch'. Several escapees were bilingual and a few were clearly linguists. For example one 'talks French, Italian, Spanish and Arabick,' whilst another could speak some English, Dutch and 'Blacks'. It was also noted that five could read and write.

Sunderland, aged 13, was said to be 'very remarkably sharp and saucy', whilst Jack Butler (aka John Lesley) could 'do many things handily'. Quite a number could play musical instruments, some several, for example Caesar, who 'beats very well upon a Drum; Plays the Recorder & Flagelet'. Alexander was 'master of the trade of Baker'; Caelia Edlyne 'Washes, Irons, Clear-starches, and remarkably Darns well', whilst an unnamed man, by trade a Cooper, was also 'a tolerable Carpenter...a good Seaman [and] can attend well at Table'.

Almost 15% (92) had run away from ships. Some of these people may have been intended for sale. None of the adverts specifically mention "for sale", but there is one for "a new negro boy, no particular name about 20 years old" who ran away on 10 October 1761 from the Brig *Madeira Merchant*. He had come from Africa, via Guadeloupe. He must have been recaptured because he ran away again on 26 December.

Others would have been part of the crew. Mingo, who absconded from Captain Thomas Eaton of the *Prince William* had been 'in and out of this City [Bristol] about 8 Years,' whilst Cato had served as cook on the *Heart of Oak* for the same length of time. One man 'work'd at the ship carpenters business', Joseph Cinnamon was a steward and Tom had 'always been used to the sea'.

Of course, there is no way of knowing how many of the runaways were caught and how many succeeded in their flight, but some who had been recaptured were determined to be free and made off for a second or even a third time. Kingston, who ran away on Christmas Day 1710 'and enter'd himself on board her Majesty's Ship Essex at Chatham, was upon due Application discharg'd and brought to London on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> [January] but went away again the same Night.'

Some of the advertisements contain a surprising amount of detail.

Whereas a Negro Boy, named John Haynes, an Indentur'd Servant to Capt. James Rogers, of the Ship Live Oak, lying at the Key of Bristol, having lately absconded from the said Ship, and in Consequence of a former Advertisement was taken up in London, did, on the 7th Instant, in his Journey to Bristol, escape from the Bristol Waggoner and it's apprehended proceeded either for Portsmouth or Liverpool.

Lewis, who had run away from Dormer Sheppard, Esq., and was sought in the *Post Man* of 11

December, 1701, had been already advertis'd of in this Paper of the 27th and 29th of November and the Gazette of the 4th instant; and on the 5th was brought home from Her Majesties Ship the Roebuck at Sheerness, aboard of which he had continued several Days, attempting to enter himself, having chang'd his name to Scipio. He is now supposed to be aboard some Man of War.

Despite the fact that the attorney-general, Sir Philip Yorke and the solicitor-general Charles Talbot stated in their infamous 'Opinion' of 1729 that 'a slave, by coming from the West Indies...to Great Britain or Ireland, doth not become free...and baptism doth not bestow freedom on him' runaways, both before and after this time, clearly believed that it did. There is evidence that several ran away shortly after being baptised. Kingston, mentioned above, was said to carry 'about him a Certificate of his being Baptiz'd by Mr. Yates, Reader of St. Martin's in the Fields'. There is an adult baptism there of a Thomas George Kingston aged 18 on 25 November 1709, a month before he absconded. Tom, who ran away on 21 February 1765, 'was a few Days ago christened at All Hallows Church in Bread-street, by the name of Will. Johnson'. (IGI - Adult baptism William Johnson, 16 February 1765.)

Where names are particularly distinctive, it is sometimes possible to trace other records for those involved, such as baptisms and marriages. For example, George Ganges, an East-Indian Boy about twelve Years old, who absented himself from his master in St. John's Street, Smithfield, in September 1744, appears to have been baptised on 5 January 1773 at St. Sepulchre-without-Newgate.

Much more work still needs to be done, for example in comparing Black and Asian runaways with white British runaways (of whom there were thousands) but information gleaned from these advertisements adds further detail to the body of knowledge which is slowly emerging about ordinary Black Britons in the years before 1800. It is hoped that many more such notices will be unearthed and any information which BASA members are willing to share - especially from provincial newspapers - would be very gratefully received.

## Sources

I mainly used the on-line London Gazette and the Burney collection

London Gazette

<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/search>

The Burney Collection of early English newspapers is widely available for free through libraries <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/.../17th-18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers.aspx>

## Ada Wright's Visit to Glasgow by Irene Brown

The tragic case of the Scottsboro Boys is a well known part of Black American history. They were nine black teenage boys accused of rape in Alabama in 1931. The conduct of their trial and three subsequent re-trials led to international outrage. In spite of its international interest at the time, it is a story that seems now to be generally less 'weel kent'now. Had it not been for the chance finding of an old photo, I would have counted myself among those who hadn't heard of the case.



After my parents' deaths, I came across a press photo of my Dad's from an old Glasgow newspaper, *The Bulletin*, which I must have seen before but whose significance had failed to register. It shows a crowd that looks like a demonstration, fronted by three figures - two men, both carrying valises, and one solemn, dignified black woman. Two young men near the front of the crowd are playing flutes and one of these young men was my father, Duncan Brown. This photo looks as if it was taken the 1930s when women had only recently gained suffrage so who was this important Black woman who had such a prominent place at a big rally? Some years after my Dad's death, I decided to find out. After a few unsuccessful searches in the archives of Glasgow's Mitchell Library, I brainstormed every possible source I could - links to the Left, academics with an Afro-

Caribbean or Afro-American interest, Glasgow Left Wing organisations, dedicated Left libraries, even a television programme, and got in touch with the query. Folk were curious, and though they could not always shed light, were interested. Then, a series of connections and links took me to the Black and Asian Studies Association where, thanks to Marika Sherwood's asking on my behalf, Sean Creighton made the connection, having seen a similar photo on the front of Susan D. Pennybacker's book, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain*. This was how I learned that the woman in question was Ada Wright, the mother of two of the Scottsboro Boys, Roy and Andy Wright. This 42 year old widow, who'd been a domestic servant in her home town of Chattanooga, Tennessee and who may have travelled little, undertook a punishing schedule of touring Europe and speaking publicly to appeal for the lives of her sons as they languished in jail with a death sentence looming.

My father was made redundant in March 1931, the same month that the Scottsboro boys were arrested and I find it touching that a poor woman from a railway town in Tennessee was so warmly welcomed by the poor people in a Scottish railway town - Springburn, Glasgow.

A full version of Irene's essay, entitled 'Distant Whistles; Muted Flutes Ada Wright in Glasgow' was been published in the magazine *History Scotland* Vol. 11 (July/August 2011). A copy of the essay was displayed in the Scottsboro Museum in March 2011 during the commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragic event.

Irene Brown is an OU honours graduate and now retired from public service work. She started writing late in life. She has published and performed her poetry on the Edinburgh Fringe several times. A pamphlet, *Glass Slippers*, was published in 2008 by Calder Wood Press. She lives in Edinburgh, has two sons and five grandchildren and currently writes reviews for *Edinburgh Guide*.  
irenerbrown@yahoo.co.uk



## Plaque commemorates George Padmore

On 28 June 2011 George Padmore, one of the influential political thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see *Newsletter #57*) was commemorated when a heritage plaque was unveiled at 22 Cranleigh Street in Camden, North London. This was where George Padmore (born Malcolm Nurse in Trinidad on 28 June 1909) lived from 1941 to 1957 with his partner and collaborator, Dorothy Pizer. The address was a big part of the political landscape of pre- and post-war London, becoming a focal point for anti-colonial activists from around the world.

The plaque was organized by the Nubian Jak Community Trust and unveiled 98 years to the day when Padmore was born. The unveiling was performed by His Excellency Garvin Nicholas, High Commissioner of Trinidad & Tobago in the presence of His Excellency Professor Kwaku Danso-Boafo, High Commissioner of Ghana; His Worship Councillor Abdul Quadir, Mayor of Camden, and Jak Beula, of Nubian Jak. Speakers included Marika Sherwood from BASA, the actress Nina Baden-Semper, Padmore's niece by marriage, and Selma James, the widow of C.L.R. James, who regretted that the plaque did not also commemorate Dorothy Pizer. It was her work in an office that enabled Padmore to devote time to writing. A torrential downpour broke out as the plaque was unveiled – were the spirits of Padmore and Pizer annoyed that her efforts were not recognised?

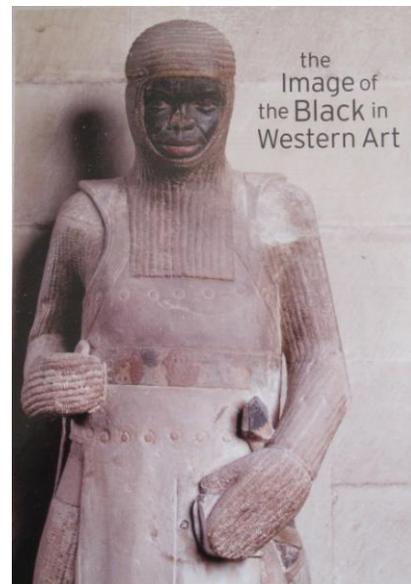
### History Detectives

SCAWDI's *History Detectives* project (see *Newsletter #58* and review on p. 37), which involved local volunteers to research and tell the stories of some of the Black people who lived in

the West Midlands before 1918, was nominated in the 'Best Heritage Project' category at the National Lottery's 'Good Causes' awards. This is an annual search to find the UK's favourite Lottery-funded projects. Unfortunately, it did not go through to the semi-finals but since the project officially finished, SCAWDI has been approached by local youth groups and schools asking for help to develop lesson plans based on their findings. To keep momentum going, SCAWDI are also developing an online history trail.

### Historical images of Black people

In the 1976 a small project to find images of Black people in Western art was set up. It was thought that six months would be long enough to find them all. Twenty-five years later, they are still surfacing and the publishing schedule has been extended to the present century. At the British Museum on 25 February 2011 the current editors, David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jnr, came to present the first four volumes of *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, originally published in the 1970s in black and white, and now reissued in colour. They were joined by Bonnie Greer, Aminatta Forna and Isaac Julien to talk about what the images have meant to them as writers and filmmakers.

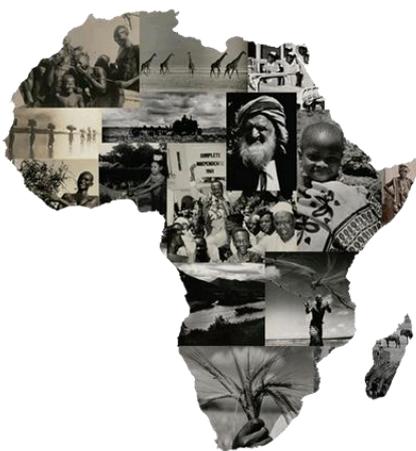


These first four publications cover the period from the Pharaohs to the Age of Abolition. The next are *From the 'Age of Discovery' to the Age of Abolition* Part II and Parts I and II of *From the American Revolution to World War I*, all due in Autumn 2011. In Autumn 2014 *The Twentieth Century and Beyond: From the Artistic Discovery of Africa to the Jazz Age* is scheduled to appear. Finally, in Spring 2015, *The Twentieth Century and Beyond:*

*From the Harlem Renaissance to the Age of Obama* will complete the series. Each volume is £69.95 and published by Harvard University Press/John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Further information from <[www.hup.harvard.edu](http://www.hup.harvard.edu)>

The Photographic Collection of the Warburg Institute in Woburn Square, London, hosts the core of the photographic archive of this project. There are some 30,000 photographs and over 6,000 books and off-prints, donated in 1998 under the will of Mme de Ménil. She and her husband John were the project's instigators. The Collection is open to consultation every day, except Sunday. Further information about accessing it can be obtained by e-mailing <[Photographic.Collect@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Photographic.Collect@sas.ac.uk)>.

### Africa Through a Lens



In February the National Archives launched **Africa Through A Lens**, an on-line collection of thousands of Colonial Office/Foreign & Commonwealth Office images of Africa, starting with early photographs in the 1860s and going through to the 1960s. The images are as rich and varied as the continent itself, charting more than 100 years of African history. TNA needs help to identify many of the people, places and events captured on film. The collection can be browsed and comments added. It is even possible for members of the public to attach their pictures to show how places have changed over time. See <[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/africa/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/africa/)>.

### British Museum exhibition

The final exhibition in the British Museum's series on spiritual journeys, **Hajj: Journey to the heart of Islam**, opened on 26 January and runs until 15 April 2012 in the Reading Room. The Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Everyone who is able must make this once in their life. The exhibition has brought together a wealth of objects from different collections

including loans from Saudi Arabia, the Khalili collection and the British Library in order to explore its importance for Muslims and to look at how this spiritual journey has evolved throughout history. These are supplemented by both archive and modern films. As non-Muslims cannot enter either of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina (which most pilgrims also visit) this exhibition is extremely important.



*Ivory sundial and Qibla pointer, made by Bayram b. Ilyas. Turkey, 1582-3 © The Trustees of the British Museum*

Historic pieces as well as new contemporary art works reveal the enduring impact of Hajj across the globe and across the centuries. The exhibition has three major themes: the pilgrim's journey; Mecca itself, the destination of Hajj and the associated rituals there and what the experience means to the pilgrim. Those who have completed the Hajj can add Hajji (men) or Hajja (women) to their names, which may indicate to researchers working on ethnic groups in the past who had fulfilled this obligation.



*Hajj certificate (detail). 17th–18th century AD. © Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art (Khalili Family Trust)*

There is an emphasis on the major routes used across time from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Although there were no organised pilgrimages from Britain until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Thomas Cook was asked to organise ships from the Indian subcontinent to the Red Sea in order to prevent as far as possible the spread of cholera to Britain and the USA. This suggests that visitors to Britain, or possibly the lascars who served on merchant ships, took the opportunity to visit the holy cities on their travels.

There are some surprising exhibits: a toy theatre, made in Austria and sold in London in the 1800s includes the figure of a clearly sub-Saharan African servant as well as Arabs. It is surprising that educating children about Islam through this kind of toy was regarded as important then.

For more information on admission charges and a number of associated events and talks, see <[www.britishmuseum.org/hajj](http://www.britishmuseum.org/hajj)>

### Samuel Coleridge Taylor Centenary



Samuel Coleridge Taylor, the African-British composer, died in 1912 and the centenary of his death is being commemorated in a number of events all over the country. He lived in Croydon and the celebrations there were formally opened on 6 January 2012 by the Mayor. On 18 January, Jeffrey Green gave a talk followed by a recital of some of his songs at the Braithwaite Hall in Croydon. Surrey Opera will be performing an opera by Coleridge Taylor that was long thought to be lost. *Thelma* is a poetical setting of a Norse legend, a thrilling saga of deceit, magic, retribution and the triumph of love over evil. Performances are on 9, 10, and 11 February 2012 at the Ashcroft Theatre, Fairfield Halls, in Croydon. More details and the full programme of events are on [www.surreyopera.org/](http://www.surreyopera.org/)

The Samuel Taylor Coleridge Network is a group of people interested in and promoting his work. The editor of their newsletter is Sean Creighton who can be contacted at

<[sean.creighton@btopenworld.com](mailto:sean.creighton@btopenworld.com)> .

The Network is separate from another initiative, the SC-T100PM Collective. BBM/BMC (British Black Music) and other partners will create the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor 100 PM Collective, which aims to raise his profile as an African British classical composer of international repute; to lobby for a music industry-backed bursary for African British composers to create works that fuse contemporary with classical styles; to work with partners to programme Coleridge-Taylor's repertoire; and to signpost events in 2012-13 related to his centenary and work. To join the Collective or find out more about events, e-mail <[editor@BritishBlackMusic.com](mailto:editor@BritishBlackMusic.com)>

### African history

Dr. Gus Casely-Hayford returns to host the second series of a factual series on Africa and its cultural legacy. The first series entitled, *Lost Kingdoms of Africa* first aired on BBC Four in January 2010. In this new four-part series he travels across the continent from Morocco in the north to South Africa as well as to Ghana and Uganda.

The series starts with an exploration of the Asante Kingdom (located in modern day Ghana) and its unlikely beginnings in dense tropical forest to become one of Africa's complex and sophisticated civilisations. Next he explores South Africa's Zulu Kingdom focusing on its 17<sup>th</sup> century leader King Shaka and brutal encounters he and his people would have with the Boers and the British.

Next, he turns the spotlight on Berber Kingdom of Morocco, which over centuries would cover an area from Spain to West Africa. Its rulers would commission fabulous architecture and promote sophisticated ideas. Finally there's a look at Uganda's two great kingdoms, Bunyoro and Buganda. Casely-Hayford goes in search of reasons behind their dramatic reversal of fortunes, and how one kingdom used the arrival of Europeans to its own advantage. The new series started on Monday 30 January on BBC-4 at 9pm. If you missed the first programme you can catch it on the i-player.

### Slave owners of Bloomsbury

An exhibition at UCL detailing the residences of slave owners compensated after the 1834 abolition of slavery in British colonies closed on 18 January 2012. The panels are now stored in the project's office. It is hoped that the panels will be mounted later this year at both a local library (during BHM 2012) and a museum, though these are still to be confirmed. They would also welcome other proposals or suggestions. See the website <[www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs)>

## Conference Report

### Community Archives and Heritage Group Conference and AGM

It is not enough for individuals to collect material on the historic Black and Asian presence, they must be made available to the wider public and archives and record repositories have a significant role to play. In June 2010 the world of archiving in the UK and Ireland was significantly transformed with the creation of the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland). ARA is composed of the Society of Archivists, the National Council on Archives (NCA) and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government. The Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) had previously been affiliated to the NCA and has now constituted itself as a Special Interest Group within ARA. With a budget of less than £10,000, CAHG focuses its attention on maintaining a website and organising a free annual conference, which incorporates the CAHG AGM. It was the fifth such conference which took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011. Membership of CAHG is free. Also, Affiliate Membership of ARA is available for non-professionals for £35 per annum.

The conference attracted delegates from a broad range of community archives as well as from Local Authority libraries and records offices, the Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives. Some concern was expressed about the prospect of cuts and even closures. An example is the Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre which the local council tried to close. A local consultative group was formed involving the Fulham Society, Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society, the Hammersmith Society, The Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group, Archives for London (AfL), as well as the Borough Archivist. An interim arrangement has been set up whereby the Centre will be open on the first and third Wednesday of each month, from 10am to 4pm by appointment only. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) is supporting this along with volunteers drawn from the local groups. The Borough Archivist has been made redundant, but the consultative group now has representation from LMA and The National Archives with the Council represented by the Library Service Manager.

This illustrates the shift in emphasis that is going on in archives: professional archivists can no longer hide amongst their treasures, but need to have an active relationship with their public if they are to survive the current financial climate.

Active community groups with suitable organisational skills can have a political impact, certainly at a local level. The power balance between the professionals and astute community groups has changed as the former realise they may well need the latter to survive. Interesting times!

The conference had a number of brief presentations in the *Show and Tell* Session: this was an opportunity for five groups to give a five-minute presentation of themselves – a very effective way of involving more groups and creating an informative way of telling delegates a bit of what is out there. Of particular interest to BASA is the 'African Heritage Initiatives: Contributions of African migrants in Birmingham' run by the Cameroon Advice and Support Services UK.

Another item of particular interest to BASA members was a presentation from English Heritage's Jane Golding dealing with local Historic Environment Records (HER) which have replaced the Sites and Monuments Records. She demonstrated the *Know Your Place* website which uses information from the Bristol section of HER. She also explained the role of the National Heritage List for England which is an on-line resource bringing together Listed buildings, scheduled monuments, Protected Wreck Sites and registered battlefields, parks and gardens. There is provision for additions to be made to the list. An increasing amount of work is being done on the links between, for example, stately homes and country houses, and profits from trade in Africa, the Caribbean and India, so it is to be hoped that the list will be able to reflect properly both these links and the Black and Asian presence.

Fabian Tompsett

#### Websites

Archives & Records Association (ARA) membership  
<[www.archives.org.uk/membership/categories.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/membership/categories.html)>

Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG)  
<[www.communityarchives.org.uk](http://www.communityarchives.org.uk)>

Historic Environment Records (HER)  
<<http://maps.bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace/?maptype=js>>

Cameroon Advice and Support Service UK  
<[www.caassuk.org/heritage](http://www.caassuk.org/heritage)>

## Magazine Round-up

**BBC History Magazine, March 2011.** In 'The Battle of the Atlantic', G.H. Bennett recognises that 25% of the merchant seamen 'hailed from India and China, while a further 5% came from the Caribbean, the Middle East and Africa.

**April 2011** has an interesting article on 'Lincoln's British Enemies' which notes that, despite official neutrality, 'thousands of Britons' supported the slave-holding South during the American Civil War. In the article by David Edgerton, 'A colossus at war', which summarizes how Britain acquired food and raw materials and produced armaments, the contributions from the colonies and by colonial seamen are barely mentioned. The important article by Chris Evans, 'Britain's slaves in Latin America', explores the 'bitter battle between British entrepreneurs and abolitionists over the use of African slaves in Cuban and Brazilian mines'.

**May 2011** Bob Marley's death on 15 May 1981 is noted in the 'Milestones' feature.

**July 2011** The cover of this issue has a painting of a battle scene between Crusaders and Muslims, and contains an obviously African man. As he is without a turban he is likely to have been a Muslim. There also appear to be Africans in another illustration of a Muslim merchant vessel from a 1237 Arabic manuscript. In interesting article 'Images of Empire' by David Tomkins and Ashley Jackson interprets eight images which 'demonstrate the late 19<sup>th</sup> century ignorance of Africa and its peoples, and the glorification of acts of imperialism'. Their book *Illustrating Empire* was published earlier this year. In 'Cavaliers of the Caribbean' Matthew Parker looks at the role of Royalist fleeing the English Civil War in Barbados.

**October 2011** An article by Robert J. Gemmett 'The Two Faces of William Beckford' looks at the lifestyle of a man whose fortune was built on slavery. There is also a letter from Marika Sherwood regarding the omission of the Indian Vapour Parlour from an article on the early 19<sup>th</sup> century popularity of Brighton.

**History Today July 2011** carries 'The Unanswered Question', a re-assessment by James Walvin of Arnold Whitridge's essay on the Atlantic slave trade, first published in *History Today* in 1958. Tom Holland's recommended summertime reading is Matthew Parker's *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire and War*, published this year by Hutchinson. There is also an article by Matthew Parker himself on 'Cavaliers of the Caribbean' about the effects of the English Civil

War on the colonists in the Caribbean. Some of the people he mentions continued to be major figures in the colonies for generations afterwards.

**January 2012** 'The Media Made Malcolm' by Peter Ling analyses the role the media played in the political career of Malcolm X. (see also the review of Manning Marable's biography on p.38)

**Wiltshire Local History Forum** (75), January 2010 carries an article by Nigel Pocock, 'Black history in North Wiltshire: some new discoveries', which recounts what has been discovered of the lives of Leonora Casey Carr and Ann and Sarah Briggs, three girls from Antigua, all 'manumitted slaves' buried in a Moravian burial ground near Chippenham. Another article by Nigel Pocock, 'Edward Colston Carr: a Manumitted Slave' is published in UWE's *Regional Historian* (20), Autumn 2009. Edward Colston was the son of George Carr, plantation owner in Antigua and his slave Frances 'Fanny' Loving. Pocock traces the relationship between the Carr and Colston families, but could not discover what manumitted Edward, whose sister's headstone is in the East Tytherton Moravian graveyard, was doing in England. There is more information on Ann, Sarah Briggs and their sister Alicia, and also on Leonora Casey Carr, Edward's sister, including photocopies of purchase and manumission documents, diary entries, death notices and contemporary maps, in Pocock's pamphlet, *Saved From Slavery: Four Young Antiguan Girls in East Tytherton Moravian Settlement*, 2010. The 23-pp pamphlet (actually draft notes for a more comprehensive monograph for 2012) is available from the author, email: <Pococks@rockuk.net> See also Pocock's articles in *Moravian Messenger*, March 2010, and *Wiltshire Local History Forum* (74), September 2009.

**British Museum Magazine Spring/Summer 2011** has a piece by Niall Fitzgerald, the Chairman of the Trustees of the British Museum, addressing some of the issues facing the organisation. This is illustrated with a plaque depicting Europeans made by from the Edo people of Nigeria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Genealogists' Magazine** (30) No. 6 June 2011 has an article 'Vital Records for British India: the more complete story' in which Peter Bailey writes about the digitization of christenings, marriages and burials in British India, which are to be made available on-line. The descriptions of these, and other records, will be useful for those researching Anglo-Indian ancestry, or indeed any Anglo-Indian or Eurasian person. The Library Section notes that a roster of Eurasians in the Singapore Volunteer Corps compiled by Terry Foenander has been donated by Cliff Webb.

## Parish and other records

### From Audrey Dewjee

*Public Advertiser*, Tuesday 26 February, 1782. On Saturday Morning last the Negro Servant of a Gentleman at Marybone [sic] ran off with his Master's Niece, a very fine young Lady about 17. As soon as the Elopement was known, several Persons were dispatched in Pursuit of them. The Lady will be worth £11,000 when of Age.

*Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post*, 11-13 February, 1773

### DEATHS

At his house in Bennet-street, \_\_\_\_\_ Kojou [or Kejou - print very bad to read], Esq., a black, State Trumpeter to the Kingdom of Ireland.

### From Dr Joan Kemp

The latest issue of *Lincolnshire Past & Present* (83) Spring 2011 contains a notice from the *Stamford Mercury* of 19 February 1836 in the Marriages column. 'Lately, at Boston, Mr Ledda, a dancing master of Pinchbeck [near Spalding] and the neighbourhood, (a man of colour) aged about 60, to Miss Shaw, aged about 19. He is a native of one of the West India [sic] islands, and well known in the neighbourhood of Peterborough by the name of Lau'. The sender, Neil Wright, thinks that Miss Shaw was living in Boston as the marriage took place there.

Boynton, Yorkshire: baptism 19 January 1761  
John Pomfret a grown up person, to which 'a Negro servant of Mr Knowsley' was later added in a different hand. John Knowsley was curate of Boynton from c. 1751-1776.

Boynton, Yorkshire: marriage 25 March 1780  
Peter Holsfield or Peter Horsfield of this parish, footman to Sir G. Strickland Bart, of the age of 26 years a Negro and Elizabeth Lawson Spinster of the parish of Boynton of the age of twenty two years were married in this church by license.

### From Kathleen Chater

*Late Extra! Hackney in the News* by David Mander includes a news item from an (unnamed) newspaper of 27 June 1783. 'Early this morning a black servant belonging to a gentleman near Kingsland met two of the patrol on the Kingsland-road and mistaking them for suspected persons rashly fired a blunderbus, which severely wounded one of the patrol. The black was immediately pursued and the same day committed to Clerkenwell-prison.'

The same book contains mention of addresses in 1876 at the Mildmay Park Conference Hall and Trinity Congregational Church by the Black American preacher Revd Josiah Henson, said to be the character on whom Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom was based.

In addition, on 3 July 1801 the local magistrate heard a case when residents protested about 'idle and dissolute girls' going into the East India Company barracks for lascars in Hackney Road, resulting in some of the men becoming diseased and even dying. Despite pleas 'with great gallantry' from their customers, the girls were committed as idle, disorderly persons of ill-fame. Mr Mander notes there was another EIC barracks in Kingsland Road.

There are also photographs of the Radical candidate at the 1906 General Election with an actor costumed as a travesty of a Chinese man to support his fears of immigrant labour coming to Britain (the Conservatives were pro-immigration); of Black women among guests at a dance at St Leonards Hospital in 1963 and a West Indian variety concert at Brooke House School in 1965.

### From Nigel Pocock

In the burial ground of St Martin's on the Isles of Scilly is a memorial to an unknown African boy, dedicated on 16 May 2010.

In Memory of  
A young West African boy,  
buried here after the  
*HOPE* was wrecked on  
St Martin's Head due to  
mistaking the white  
Day-mark for  
St Agnes Light-house,  
19<sup>th</sup> January, 1830.

I will set your captives free-  
*Zech. 9.11*

### From Sean Creighton

*Ipswich Journal* 8 February 1752. Run away from Joshua Steel of Hall Place, Berkshire, a handsome black slave-5ft 4 inches high-the property of Mrs Sarah Steel of Barbadoes, his plantation name is "Sambo" but he has assumed the name of William Gardener anyone who harbours him will be prosecuted under the law, or anyone giving information shall receive one guinea reward.

**A Penny Board School in Deptford**

Someone kindly sent an article from *Good Words* (1873, pp.469-472). [If the kind donor contacts the *Newsletter* we will include their name in a future issue. *Editor*]

‘The School Board...agreed that special schools should be established in poor neighbourhoods... No district in the metropolis probably took in greater need than did Deptford... researches had shown Deptford to be sadly lacking in school accommodation... A mission hall, a dilapidated old building was secured... a thorough cleansing and a little expenditure on paint and such like brightened the interior... Furnished with educational means and appliances sufficient for the hundred and fourteen boys it was certified to accommodate... It was opened for scholars on November 25, 1872. Handbills were distributed... However, on the opening morning only some ten or a dozen pupils showed.... Most of them had never been inside a school before... There were gutter children of seven or eight years of age, young roughs and loafers from ten to thirteen while others were neither of the rough nor the “Arab” class [i.e. ‘street Arabs’, homeless children] being simply poor little fellows...many were barefooted...unkempt heads and unwashed faces...

A first rate master was selected for the school... At the end of a short period of four months, the school had been got into a fair working order... Ninety boys are present...there is a considerable degree of absenteeism... Some have experienced days of total foodlessness, the half or under-fed being their normal condition... A number of them still work during a part of the day... they were over ten years of age, and were “necessarily and beneficially employed”.

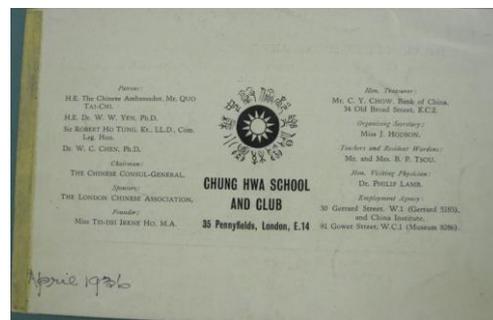
There were three black-haired, black-eyed, tawny skinned little fellows, brothers aged ten, eight and seven. They are, as their complexion indicates, half-castes. Their mother is an Indian, and, according to her own account, of royal blood... She is now a licensed hawker... Her husband...had been a travelling showman and bandsman; but evil days falling upon the family, they had been reduced to seeking a precarious livelihood as street and public house acrobats and musicians... The Darkies, as their schoolmates call them, have not taken to their learning as kindly as would have been desired....’

*Marika Sherwood*

**A Chinese School in Limehouse**

The Tower Hamlets Local Studies Library has a file of material, mainly from the 1930s, collected by a previous archivist on the Chinese in Poplar and in neighbouring Limehouse. The Chinese community here began in the 1880s. Those from Shanghai lived in and around Pennyfields, a street that gave its name to the whole area, while those from Canton and the south preferred Limehouse Causeway on the other side of the West India Dock Road. There was always a transient population of seamen because of the proximity of the docks but the numbers of resident Chinese was never very high. In 1918, there were 182, all men. Nine of them were married to English women but after World War I there was a growth in the population which seems to have reached about 500 in the 1930s.

The newspaper clippings show a stark contrast between the national newspapers’ perception of Limehouse as a den of opium-smoking iniquity, the headquarters of evil Chinese criminal masterminds (often aiming to seduce innocent English girls) and the local newspapers’ reports. These cover the mundane details of school activities; the adoption of a local man, Fung Saw, as the Labour candidate for Holborn; the funerals of well-respected members of the community; occasional breaches of the law. Yes, there were opium dens, but it was mainly illegal gambling at a game called Puck-a-Pu that brought miscreants to the local magistrates court. Between the 1890s and the 1920s, well-to-do hoorays regularly went slumming at night, hoping to see degeneracy and evil. Instead they found the reality was a lot drabber than their fevered imaginations, fuelled by Sax Rohmer’s best-selling novels about the doings of Dr Fu Manchu, had created.



Two documents give a particular insight into the community. They are both appeals for funds to support the Chung Hwa School and Club in Pennyfields.

Chung Hwa is a transliteration of one of the names of China, and carries cultural and ethnic connotations. It is part of the name of both the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China. Like many migrant communities, people did not initially see their stay as permanent. But, married to English wives (there were no Chinese women here), the restaurateurs, laundry owners and other businessmen wanted their children to understand and be educated in their language and background. On the other hand, the children had British mothers and the men did not want to alienate the local people with whom they had to co-exist, so the club had Scout and Guide troops. There were also first aid classes, discussion groups, tennis and swimming, a drama group and an employment bureau. In addition, as the appeal notes, the boys did gymnastics and boxing while the girls did needlework and cookery. In 1936 there were plans to introduce Chinese basket making and Chinese embroidery.

The list of patrons and those associated with the Club displays the social range of the Chinese community in Britain. The founder, Tsi-Dsi Irene Ho, was born in Hong Kong in 1904 to one of the most influential families there. Her parents, Sir Robert Ho and Lady Clara Ho Tung, were of British and Chinese descent. Her father (who was one of the school's patrons) was knighted in 1915 and later made a KBE (Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1955. Irene Ho was the first woman to attend Hong Kong University. She then trained as a teacher in London and divided her time between China and England. In 1936 she gained a PhD from the University of London. After World War II Dr Irene Cheng (she married in 1940, but her husband died just over a year after their marriage) worked in education, attaining the highest post for a woman in the Hong Kong education system. In 1961 she retired and came back to London, where she studied educational psychology and mental health and in the same year was awarded the OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire).

The teachers and resident wardens, Mr and Mrs B.P. Tsou, were Chinese in origin, and had worked as Christian missionaries so they had the kind of bi-cultural background that would enable them to understand the children in their charge.

The club and school's Hon. Visiting Physician, Dr Philip Lamb, was actually Chinese. Originally Lam, he became Philip Lamb. He was a local doctor who practised both Western and Chinese medicine.

The appeals say that there were several hundred children of Anglo-Chinese origin in the area and in the second appeal (to rebuild the clubhouse) included this photograph.



The community has now largely disappeared. A combination of damage in World War II and post-War redevelopment means that little remains of the original shops and buildings. Street names - Mandarin, Peking, Amoy, Nanking and Ming - commemorate the origins of one-time inhabitants and a statute of a dragon stands between Pennyfields and Limehouse Causeway. There is, however, one survival on the corner of Birchfield Street and the East India Dock Road. The Chun Yee Society was established in 1906 as a shelter for Chinese seamen. Today, it has a club for elderly Chinese people and holds a Chinese school on Sundays.



*Dr Yat Ming Loo (second right) leads a walk round Limehouse. Dr Loo is Project Manager of Legacy of Limehouse Chinatown, recording the community in this area.*

*Kathleen Chater*

#### **Further reading**

Tower Hamlets Local History and Archives Library, 277 Bancroft Road, London E1 4DQ.

email: <localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk>

Thanks to the Library for allowing the reproduction of the images of documents in this article. It also holds a collection of photographs of the area.

Legacy of Limehouse Chinatown

[www.wix.com/limehouse/chinatown](http://www.wix.com/limehouse/chinatown)



General History

**Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain. The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam*, Kube Publishing, £16.99 pbk.** William Quilliam (1856-1932) was a Liverpool-born solicitor raised as a Nonconformist Christian, active in the temperance (anti-alcohol) movement, supportive of trade union groups (he was solicitor to several), president of the 8,000 strong Mersey Railway Quay and Carters Union from 1897 to 1908, and wanting to be elected to the city council. A successful Victorian male, Quilliam had a wife (four children, the last in 1885) and a mistress (five children).

Following a trip to Morocco in 1887 Quilliam became a Muslim, modifying his name to Abdullah Quilliam. With other converts and with funds from the Amir of Afghanistan, and Muslims in Burma and Sierra Leone, he opened a mosque in Liverpool in 1895. Quilliam officiated at weddings (generally between British converts and foreign-born Muslims). The mosque was attacked because of that and because the leading power in the Muslim world was Turkey which, in the view of many Britons, persecuted Armenian and other Christians in the Turkish-run Ottoman Empire. That empire was a power in decline. Unfortunately, as well as being the custodian of Islamic (and Christian) holy places, the Sultan's lands included two geographical pinch points: the Dardanelles which separated the Black Sea and kept imperial Russia's navy from the Mediterranean; and Egypt and the Suez canal linked British India to Britain.

In 1890 Quilliam's Liverpool mosque received a supportive letter from Abdul Hamid Khan II, Sultan of Turkey, (known as Abdul the Damned in Britain after thousands of Armenians were slaughtered between 1892-1894). Quilliam was appointed the Sheikh al-Islam of Britain, the leader of all Muslims in Britain. He and his son Robert Ahmed were invited to the Ottoman capital, Constantinople (now Istanbul) by the Sultan in 1891 and in 1894 Quilliam went to Nigeria when a new mosque was being opened.

Geaves details Liverpool's Muslim community, with sailors from Yemen, Cape Town, Somalia, West Africa and the 'lascars' of the Indian Ocean. Quilliam knew Arabic and the prospectus for his proposed school listed Turkish, Arabic and Persian [Farsi]). Geaves mentions British converts and I would have liked an appendix listing them. The number was small - 125 by 1895 - but they included women and even the titled Lord Hadley (1855-1935).

Quilliam was banned as a solicitor for fraud in 1908 and he went to Turkey. Liverpool's mosque closed soon after Quilliam left Liverpool: it seems to have been his personal property. By 1910 he was back in England, where he married his long-term mistress and assumed the name Henri Mustapha de Leon, living under that identity until his death in 1932. De Leon worked with Muslims of the Woking mosque (founded 1889). Its founder, the Hungarian Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner died in the same year, but it was revived in 1912 by Khwaja Kamaluddin from Lahore.

During World War I Turkey was an ally of Germany so Muslims of Britain and its Empire faced dual loyalties. De Leon was kept under surveillance by the British government. Geaves does not mention a file at the National Archives (CO 323/640/81) of 1914 when Quilliam's son, formerly Turkish consul in Liverpool, offered to raise a volunteer force of 'Armenians, Turks and Syrians'. Khwaja Kamaluddin and de Leon were joint vice-presidents of the British Muslim Society 1928-1929, (founded by ??? Headley in late 1914) by which time Turkey was a secular republic. In April 1932 was buried in the Muslim plot at Brookwood cemetery near Woking. Quilliam/de Leon and his final female partner, Edith Spray, lived on the Sussex coast at Newhaven and had a home in London. The Newhaven home was burned out and Quilliam's papers were destroyed. The police investigated. The insurance company refused to compensate Ms Spray.

As a professor of the Comparative Study of Religion, alert to dilemmas within Britain's Muslim world today, Geaves spends much time on Quilliam's achievements, assessing them largely as the presentation of a faith that encouraged education and literacy and appealed to people of all backgrounds and colours. He uses Quilliam's publications, notably *The Crescent*, a weekly started in 1893, but nowhere in this study is there mention of the *African Times and Orient Review*, published in London from 1912. It was edited by Duse Mohammed Ali, who claimed to have been born of Egyptian-Nubian parents in Egypt in 1882. We can doubt that (his features were Black African and his knowledge of Arabic nil) but his

publication was known to Blacks and Asians in Britain and abroad and continued into the early 1920s. Geaves also seems to have missed file RG 48/310 of 1905 in the National Archives regarding marriages at the mosque and his work is restricted by the absence of any history of London's mosque.

What makes *Islam in Victorian Britain* interesting is its focus is on how Islam might fit into a society where it is a minority faith and its followers are physically different to the larger society. It is worthy of close study. But we do not yet know much about those who used Quilliam's mosque.

Jeffrey Green

**Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's 'Agitators'. Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939.* Hurst and Co., £17.99, pbk.**

This book's aim is to tell the history of African opposition to colonial rule at its peak in the 1920s and 1930s and the Westerners who supported them. His 'Africa' is the entire continent. Derrick admits that his book is mainly derived from abundant books and other secondary sources. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the industrial powers found resistance everywhere as they scrambled for land in Africa, and after 1918 dissent was led by 'people influenced by Western education, Western-style employment, urban and industrial life, and mission teaching'.

Derrick's studies at SOAS were in the 1970s and he has failed to keep up with scholarly activity since then, ignoring for example Du Bois's biography (1993, 2000) by David Levering Lewis. Nor has Derrick used the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and so misses entries including Marika Sherwood on Robert Broadhurst and Ras Makonnen, and Stephen Howe on George, David Killingray on Harold Moody and my entry on John Alcindor. These would have led Derrick into new discoveries. In his examination of Marcus Garvey's influences, space is given to matters non-African, probably due to failing to study the *Marcus Garvey Papers* (initiated in 1983) or Tony Martin's *Race First* (1976).

The index lists five pages mentioning Clements Kadalie, the trade union pioneer in South Africa, and five that mention Rosa Luxemburg (who probably never met an African). This suggests that, as with the single mention of Harold Laski 'a very influential figure', Derrick has traditional views on the importance of white left-wingers. Space given over to Nancy Cunard and her book *Negro* and so on would have been better spent on clarifying what differences there were for Africans in white settler regions in Africa and in others.

He notes that other white critics of colonialism called for reform but does not use the famously robust, African-edited press of West Africa and also ignores the importance, to many Africans and supporters of African freedom, of Christianity. Derrick names several Christian leaders but not why they took a public stance against colonialism. He misses how Christian groups in churches and chapels were stirred by Black visitors, just as they had been in the anti-slavery movement and activities to support American fugitive slaves. Groups with contacts in positions of influence included the Brotherhood (and Sisterhood) Movement, missionary organisations, and Quakers, as well as left-wing and black-led groups.

Uganda is scarcely mentioned: were there no anti-colonial Africans there? If not, why not? Tanganyika [Tanzania], Guinea, Angola and Mozambique are equally ignored, Somalia is noted when Italian troops were there and given less space than James Connolly, the Irish socialist who died in 1916.

Caribbean people other than C. L. R. James, Makonnen, Padmore and Garvey deserve attention, with Félix Éboué's declaration for Free France (de Gaulle, not the German-occupied Vichy regime) was crucial to the North African campaigns of the early 1940s – how did this Black man get to be a colonial governor? Caribbean lawyers such as Agard in Kenya, and Oxford-educated Pixley Seme in South Africa (one mention) deserve investigation. There were Caribbeans in British West Africa too.

Publishing small-run booklets, holding conferences, making speeches and having letters published in newspapers may leave a documentary trail and fill files of the security forces, but the impact is difficult to assess. Derrick concludes it is hard to say what impact the agitators had on the general public in Britain. In Africa the agitation influenced later generations of Africans, and Derrick names Wallace Johnson, Padmore on Nkrumah, and Kenyatta. If you did not know that you would be unlikely to read his book..

Derrick's book deserves attention but much is stale and third-hand. Although he uses many French language sources; publications that resulted from the opening of the Soviet archives and the British National Archives at Kew (including KV2 files – the British security service's files on people, 1913-1979). The French details are interesting but, given his approach to British accounts, may not be up to date either.

Jeffrey Green

**James Walvin, *The Slave Trade*, (Thames & Hudson 2011), £12.95 pbk.** This is a condensed account of the Atlantic slave trade, with profuse illustrations – at least two per page and with quotations from slave traders, abolitionists, et al. It also includes facsimile documents, which are also transcribed, and range widely, from slaves wanting to purchase themselves to meetings of Anti-Slavery societies. This is a very useful book indeed. It is about as comprehensive as it could be, attempting to cover many aspects of the ‘nefarious’ trade and slavery for over three hundred years, and even endeavouring to set it all in the context of activities by/in other European nations and North America.

Walvin even briefly mentions the earlier periods of slavery in Europe, and also the trade in enslaved Africans by the Arabs to North Africa, the Middle East and India. He traces Europeans’ enslavement and transport of Africans from the early Portuguese shipments onwards, and discusses why the trade to the Americas grew and the initial reasons for British involvement. Walvin recognises that the enslaved reproduced themselves in North America, but not in the Caribbean. He largely attributes this to gender inequalities among those imported and to disease.

The wealth accrued by European ports and then plantation owners, who sometimes became bankers and insurers of slavery/slave trade is well covered. However, Walvin does not mention the manufacturers of guns, chains, ships, docks. Nor does he examine those who profited from the raw products of slavery, sugar and cotton. And where are the banks which grew benefited from these profits?

The conditions on board the slave ships and on the plantations, including the rape of enslaved women is well documented. The coverage of the revolt by slaves on board ship and the fear of the crew is well told.

Walvin also discusses the abolition movement, spearheaded by Quakers. That women participated in the abolition movement is only just mentioned, but there is discussion on why and how abolition of the trade was achieved.

*Marika Sherwood*

**Neil MacGregor *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, Allen Lane, London, £30 hbk.**

How often it is that you get a book as a Christmas present, and it really is not what you would read, but what the gift bearer thinks you would like to read, usually because it is what they like? Well, this is one Christmas present that I just could not put down. Based on the BBC Radio 4 series, this book is by Neil MacGregor, Director of the British

Museum since August 2002, and opens up the collection of the British Museum to new visions of interpretation. MacGregor’s assemblage of objects is eclectic and balanced in terms of the geography and periods of world history and many parts of the British heritage sector need to take notice of this trend. What MacGregor does is to look at individual objects in a manner that connects them on a social and contemporary level with the public. The narrative is three-dimensional and the social relevance is highlighted. For BASA readers there are numerous objects including the Mummy of Hornedjitef (No.1), Indus Seal (No. 13) Sphinx of Taharqo (No. 22), The Statue of Tara (No. 54) Kilwa Pot Sherds (No. 60) and Sudanese Slit Drum (No. 94). But to get the full impact of MacGregor’s view of the world’s interconnected history, you really have read this hefty 667 page (in hardback) book. However, the book is great for those who like a daily read: you can just do the objects in a hundred days.

*Cliff Pereira*



**Education**

**Claire Alexander/ Joya Chatterji/ Shahzad Firoz/ Annu Jalais, *Bangla Stories* website [www.banglastories.org](http://www.banglastories.org) and teaching pack from The Runnymede Trust, 7 Plough Yard, Shoreditch, London EC2A 3LP.** This wonderful resource can be immediately accessed by going to the website and I recommend this unreservedly. The rewards are rich for teachers, researchers, oral historians and anyone interested in how people experience migration and what it means to them.

At the heart of the site are the life stories of eight Bangladeshis of different generations living in Britain and Bangladesh, all of whom have experienced migration. Mohammed Shamsul Haq was a *lascar* seaman on British ships (*‘I used to be able to speak the Lascari language; it’s a mixture of many languages.’*) and remembers being under attack during the Second World War (*‘When our ship was blown up these little boats were lowered into the sea... For days we did not see any land and our boat just bobbed up and down over the waves. I was sick and I swore to myself that I would never go to sea again. I thought we would all die.’*) He was forced to leave India at the time of partition. A click to ‘Ayahs,

Lascars and Princes' and 'Independence and Partition' provides the historical context while another page looks in detail at current social, economic and environmental issues in Dinajpur where Shamsul Haq now lives.

The breathtaking design presents many layers with exemplary clarity that allows the exploration of any number of avenues from a range of starting points. A fascinating page on 'Voucher migration' presents the memories of men working in Bradford and Oldham in the 1960s, while a single click to the page on Oldham takes us from first arrivals to the 'riots' of 2001, seen through the eyes of young Bangladeshis. 'Generation' looks at how older and younger Bangladeshis see each other while a key theme running through the site is the relationship between 'home' and 'away'. Husna Ara Begum Matin in Tower Hamlets, *'I communicate regularly with my family and in-laws (in Bangladesh). ..We are not planning to go home permanently. I am very much settled here. My daughters have jobs here, so they can't go. And I cannot live without them...As time goes on the relationships are dying. People have less feeling for each other. My children don't know their relatives that much. If I die, they will probably have contact only with their nieces and nephews, but beyond that, I don't know if there will be any relationship or not.*

Meanwhile primary age children in East London discuss 'home' and away and the Bengali words *desh* and *bidesh*:

MAX: *My home is England ... that's my bidesh (So, your desh is Bangladesh?) Yeah ... Bidesh means home and desh means away. (Home is England?) And away is Bangladesh.*

TED: *My 'away' is here.*

The education pack is available in book form from the Runnymede Trust but far better to download it from the site with its live links. It contains intelligent, imaginative lesson plans geared more to English and Citizenship but with useful ideas for discussion in a History classroom. The site is easily accessible for young people and a gift for creative, thoughtful work on family history, diversity and migration. With sections on politics, economics and geography as well as an interactive timeline, excellent links and a bibliography together with detailed practical and technical information on how to carry out oral history research, this site – growing as it did from a joint LSE/University of Cambridge project - is an object lesson in how to share oral histories widely so that interviewees' lives and perspectives are respected, wider contexts are explored and academic rigour is maintained.

It is invaluable as a history both of the recent past and – for future historians – of our present,

equally valuable to young people of Bangladeshi origin and to everyone interested in diaspora histories. The creators describe the content as *'a rich and complex history of movement and change, of separations and reunions, incredible journeys, tales of the past and present, and hopes for the future.'* In sharing their research with the world at large and showing what can be done online, they have succeeded magnificently.

*Martin Spafford*

**Ansar Ahmed Ullah & John Eversley *Bengalis in London's East End*, (Swadhinata Trust) £14.99 + £1.50 p & p. For stockists, see <[www.swadhinatatrust.org.uk](http://www.swadhinatatrust.org.uk) >**

Another useful resource for teachers, although it is also of general interest, is this history of migrants from Bengali beginning with a baptism in the City of London in 1616 to the present-day community around Brick Lane in Whitechapel. It is extensively and superbly illustrated. The chapters are arranged by topic, covering where they lived, how they earned their livings, their political activities, education, their role in the supply of food and culture showing how long they have been part of London life and the range of contributions they made. Who would have thought that in 1771 a Bengali was advertising for pupils to learn Persian and Arabic? Or that so many lascars would be commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial to merchant seamen who died in the First and Second World Wars? There's something to surprise, interest and inform on every page.

*Kathleen Chater*

**David Dalgleish, *Where Does Racism Come From?: an educational guide*, PHULL Ltd. [www.phull-uk.com/wdrf](http://www.phull-uk.com/wdrf)** The title of this guide is a question so often asked in classrooms and David Dalgleish here provides a comprehensive historical survey of racist ideas from the second century AD to the twenty-first, rooted in Peter Fryer's concepts of 'demonology, plantocracy and pseudo-science'. We are shown the words of theologians, poets, anatomists, explorers, anthropologists, biologists, philosophers and politicians, going from St Jerome on sin to the apartheid laws of South Africa to show *'how the ideas that began in the Demonology stage, and became more popular and accepted with the Plantocracy stage, were supported by efforts to 'prove' that these theories were scientific facts.'* Dalgleish then looks at the legacy of these ideas in our contemporary attitudes to sex, sport, psychology and the presentation of world history by academics such as Hugh Trevor-Roper (*'...there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest*

is darkness.') and political leaders such as Sarkozy ('...the African has never really entered into history...the golden age that Africa is forever recalling will not return, because it has never existed.'). He concludes with reflections on the current state of thinking about the discourse on race and concludes that 'it is with a full understanding of racism and its history that balanced debates about the historical facts and potential solutions can be had, and long-lasting improvements can be created. In a truly global world ignorance is no longer an excuse, nor a useful option.'

The guide is very clearly presented in large type with a glossary and bibliography and Dalgleish has done a great service condensing so much into such an accessible format. No doubt some readers will question some of his analyses on such a controversial subject but this booklet could be given with confidence to any GCSE, A-Level or even university student. It could also be a crucial resource for a teacher wanting to prepare lessons on the history of racism. The accompanying website, though having a few useful links and a small number of possible classroom activities, does not add much to the guide itself which is the key resource.

### Martin Spafford

**Kwaku, NARM (Naming And Role Model): Highlighting African British Male Role Models 1907 – 2007, BTWSC, PO Box 14092, London NW10 1WL.** This 96-page booklet was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is free. The Preface explains how the project was started, who worked on it and how the list of 'role models' was compiled. The meaning of 'role model' is explained and it is noted that some of those nominated refused to be included. Then there are pages of pupils' comments and photographs from schools where the project ran workshops and exhibited photographs. Clearly the workshops were meaningful to these young commentators.

The brief biographies of 'fifty-five NARM Role Models' takes up 51 pages – a few are illustrated with photographs, and some with sketches. They range from Benjamin Zephaniah, to Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and include lawyers, entrepreneurs, sportsmen, etc. The fifty-seven entries in 'Some Notable Men: A Meritorious Mention' again range widely, from film-makers to teachers and community activists. There are nineteen names listed on the final page as 'Some Of Those Empowering the Community'. Quotations considered important – from writings, autobiographies, those interviewed - are highlighted.

While I can see that to many young people a workshop would be of great interest, I think some would dislike the booklet as it is too compressed. The Table of Contents lists people by their first names or titles, so Sir Arthur Lewis is listed under 's'; Dr John Alcindor under 'd' and Lord David Pitt under 'l'. Not very helpful to readers, pupils or adults!

Marika Sherwood

**Hidden Herstories: Women of Change (DVD), free, see <[www.hiddenherstories.org](http://www.hiddenherstories.org)>** This DVD was produced by 20 young people with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It charts the lives of four women who changed society.

Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a social reformer and pioneer of the Open Spaces movement. Although Amy Ashwood Garvey ( 1897-1969) has been overshadowed by her husband Marcus Garvey, she herself was a significant pan-Africanist. Claudia Jones (1915-1964) was one of the initiators of the Notting Hill Carnival but achieved much more, like publishing the *West Indian Gazette*, the first news publication for the migrant community of the 1950s. Jayaben Desai is still alive. Her place in history was as leader of the Grunwick strike in the 1970s, which proved that immigrants are not always willing to work under inferior conditions and for lower wages than native Britons.

The DVD is well produced, mixing talking head interviews with still pictures and archive footage. The information is clearly presented and provides an excellent introduction to the work of these four little-known women and their contribution to society. Unfortunately, the producers have followed a current fashion for overlaying not always relevant music over everything, even the speakers. It is irritating to hear a constant plinking noise when trying to listen to and assimilate what is being said. However, this is in general a very useful DVD for educators.

Kathleen Chater



### Military

**Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War : Race, masculinity and the development of national consciousness* (Manchester University Press, 2004) , £13.99, pbk.**

This book examines the experiences of Jamaicans and to a lesser extent other West Indians who served in British West Indies Regiments and West India Regiments in WWI; it also takes a critical look at how racial discrimination affected Black volunteers.

It was only after British troops began to lose tens of thousands of troops that there were urgent appeals for volunteers in the West Indies. In Jamaica announcements were read out in churches in October 1915. The appeal focused on the inclusiveness of Empire, and called for “all to join hands, and hearts together to strike the necessary death blow to Germanism, bearing in mind ‘United we stand, divided we fall’.”

The call to arms did not fall on the ears of white Jamaicans only, but Black men seriously considered the threat of a German-held Jamaica and the consequences. Further, they saw volunteering as a means of gaining equality, and opportunity for social or political advancement. In September 1914, Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) passed a resolution of loyalty to the King and Empire, and in a letter accompanying the resolution he said, “Our love for, and devotion to, His Majesty and the Empire, stands unrivalled and from the depths of our hearts we pray for the crowning victory of the British soldiers now at War.” (page 44) Garvey’s support for the war effort might have reflected the degree to which he had internalised some values of Empire and which he saw it as benchmarks for self-improvement. Also, he might have been influenced by the decision of some Irish Nationalists, widely reported in the Jamaican press, to suspend Home Rule agitation for the duration of the war in exchange for post-war concessions.

But many white military men believed Black soldiers lacked the masculine qualities of stoicism, self-discipline and rationality to be an effective force on the modern battlefield. They ignored the significant role that the latter played in previous imperial campaigns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such attitudes boosted the former’s self-image and imperial arrogance.

The first chapter in the book discusses the wartime crisis of white masculinity. Raymond Asquith, son of the wartime Liberal Prime Minister, complained of the increasing irritability and war-weariness of the officers in his own regiment, and thought that it showed a declining image of British masculinity.

When given the opportunity, Black soldiers showed their masculinity on the battlefield, especially in Africa. But, at the beginning of the war, there had been a reluctance to accept them as volunteers. Although they were excluded

mainly from front-line service in Europe, Black Jamaican volunteers appropriated codes of military heroism and sacrifice.

Smith’s study also provides a comprehensive discussion of the war’s impact on anti-colonial struggles in the West Indies. Veterans used their knowledge and experience of war to support demands for land and political enfranchisement.

*Arthur Torrington*

**Chris Peers, *The African Wars: warriors and soldiers of the colonial campaigns*, Pen & Sword Military, 2010, 230pp, hbk, £19.99.** This very interesting book looks at the less-well known side of the European colonial campaigns in Africa: Africans battling the European powers. This was sometimes on their own behalf, and sometimes as the ‘askari’ used by the colonisers against Africans trying to defend their lands against the invaders. ‘Askari’, from an Arabic/Swahili word for soldier’ was a term used for native troops.

The book is broad-ranging, beginning with the Boers and the Zulus in the 1830s and ending with the British in East Africa in the 1890s, and focuses on the major campaigns. Each chapter begins with a good summary of the political history of the area with which it deals, prior to and after the arrival of the Europeans. There is also information, and illustrations, of the training, uniforms and weapons used by the Africans, and some accounts of traditional fighting tactics.

At the end of each chapter there is a paragraph on sources, but these and the bibliography seem insufficient. To give just two examples of omissions, though Peers deals with Tippu ‘Tib’, the book on him, *Tippu Tip and the East African Slave Trade* by Leda Farrant and *The Physician and the Slave Trade: John Kirk, the Livingstone Expeditions and the Crusade Against Slavery in East Africa* by Daniel Liebowitz are not listed. But I do not want to end on a negative note: this is a welcome study of a neglected area.

*Marika Sherwood*



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## Entertainment

**Corinne Skinner Carter with Z. Nia Reynolds, *Why Not Me? From Trinidad to Albert Square via Empire Road* (Black Stock Books, 2011) £12.99, pbk.** Since the Trinidadian Corinne Skinner Carter

settled in Britain in the 1950s, she has worked as a dancer, actress, carnival organiser and school teacher for several decades. Best known for her role as Norman Beaton's wife in the acclaimed BBC TV drama series *Empire Road* (1978-79), Corinne has also been featured in several landmark Black British films including *Pressure*, *Burning an Illusion* and *Dreaming Rivers*. When I interviewed Corinne in 1998 for *Black Film Bulletin*, I was immediately struck by her warmth and down-to-earth approach to her acting career. When the parts were not forthcoming, she taught in primary schools. Now, with the help of Z. Nia Reynolds, her life story is told in *Why Not Me? From Trinidad to Albert Square via Empire Road*.

Very few Black British actors have been given opportunities to publish their biographies (Norman Beaton is an exception). Corinne's modest memoir is an illuminating personal testament of interest to anyone wanting to know about the experiences of Britain's post-WW2 Black community. She fills the book with personal anecdotes and insights.

Stephen Bourne

**Colin Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain – A History* (Routledge, 2011) £24.99, pbk.** Corinne Skinner Carter is briefly mentioned here. In spite of its somewhat uninspiring title, Chamber's account is anything but dull. He has put together a rich and revealing story. Covering a vast landscape, Chambers does the subject proud, for it is full of fascinating details, acknowledging that a Black 'presence' on the British stage began well before the Victorian era when Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge (1807-67) emerged. In addition to Aldridge, the book includes studies of Paul Robeson, Edric and Pearl Connor, Errol John, Mustapha Matura, Yvonne Brewster and a number of important Black and Asian theatre companies.

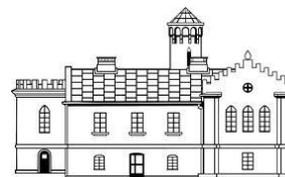
However, if I have to make a criticism, it is that the book, perhaps because of its academic approach, lacks a personal touch. Chambers is a diligent researcher, and a clever writer, and his book will find itself in University libraries, but the academic tone of the book (and its presentation, for example, an 'arty' cover and lack of illustrations), will limit its appeal, especially to younger readers who are rediscovering the history of Black Britons. It is also, at £24.99, slightly too expensive for many potential readers. In spite of these criticisms, it is a valuable and welcome addition to the Black British history book 'library'.

Stephen Bourne

**Bernth Lindfors (editor), *Ira Aldridge – The African Roscius* (University of Rochester Press, 2007)**

**£17.99, pbk.** Lindfors has edited a comprehensive account of many aspects of this celebrated African-American tragedian. Eighteen chapters cover in remarkable detail the extraordinary life and career of this theatre pioneer. It is highly recommended.

Stephen Bourne



## Local history

**Margaret Makepeace, *The East India Company's London Workers. Management of the Warehouse Labourers, 1800-1858*, Boydell Press, £60, hbk.**

The East India Company's first venture sent four ships to Indonesia in 1601 seeking spices. Collecting Indian textiles en route, by the 1620s the Company's ships also brought them to Britain. By the 1750s the Company imported Chinese merchandise (tea, silk, porcelain and textiles) and traded silver, iron goods and woollens. War between France and Britain led to the Company seizing Bengal and further military expansion changed to Company from being a commercial trader to becoming a hybrid sovereign power in much of India. It lost its monopoly of Indian trade by 1813 and that with China in 1833.

In 1800 the Company employed directly and indirectly 55,000 people in Britain, 30,000 of them in London. This book examines the work and the people from then to 1858 when the Company's military role in India was taken over by the India Office, a British government department (its archives are the source for this book). It is good to be reminded that Chinese tea was the largest single import, and that Chinese trade was four times the value of trade with India. Huge warehouses containing almost countless riches dominated several London streets and the Company was involved with the East India Dock at Blackwall. Three thousand men worked in the London warehouses – the largest single body of civilian workers in early 19<sup>th</sup> century London. Jobs were arranged through patronage, and hours were short enough for many staff to have other employment. The Company's activities were important to the British economy.

There appears to have been no employee of Chinese or South Asian descent in England, but James Inglis 'a Negro' and Richard Lane an American-born 'man of colour' were listed in 1820. The study is an economic history with a strong emphasis on people, and it notes

employees who broke the law (one man who pilfered 12 oz [300 grams] of tea was transported in 1811), as well as the impact of the loss of the China trade monopoly, when many workers continued in the same buildings which had been sold to dock companies. Others were granted Company pensions, for the East India Company in England was a decent and benevolent employer, and had fostered a sense that the workers belonged to a 'family'.

Makepeace writes well and her account of an easy to overlook aspect of imperialism should be known to readers of this Newsletter. Boydell Press has produced a well-crafted volume that is a fine example of the publisher's art.

Jeffrey Green

**Jacob Selwood, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London*, Ashgate, £65.00, hbk.** From the earliest records of London in the medieval period, England's capital has been a place of great heterogeneity: Flemings, Greeks, Jews, French Huguenots, Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East, all came either to trade or to escape oppression in their own countries. Selwood gives only a passing mention of Black people, and two of his sources – Imtaz Habib's (Newsletter #52) and Folarin Shyllon's works have significant drawbacks – but this is still a valuable work for people looking at the status of Black people in early modern London. As Selwood notes, historians working on a particular ethnic minority are prone to regard their own particular subject as the primary 'other'. Yet his detailed examination of Acts of Parliament and City ordinances shows that there were common factors in the attitudes to and treatment of all 'strangers' and, importantly, their children. The work is also valuable in tracing the development of the concepts of citizenship in this period and provides a useful background against which to set more detailed examination of Black people in the metropolis.

His conclusion, that the state government and the City authorities were in conflict, rather than presenting a united, discriminatory front, is an interesting insight. He also observes that, rather than identifying national characteristics, those who protested about the 'strangers' had generalised, nebulous complaints about their alienness. As always, their main objection was the willingness of immigrants of whatever origin to compete with the native-born. *Plus ça change....*

Kathleen Chater

**David Callaghan & Barbara Willis-Brown (eds), *A day in the Life: a Black Heritage Trail of the West Midlands*, Scawdi, Birmingham, 2011. (£5.00 + £1.00 p&p from SCAWDI, [info@scawdi.co.uk](mailto:info@scawdi.co.uk); 0121 440 7778 or The Friends Institute, 220 Moseley Road, Birmingham, B12 ODG.** This is a follow-up to SCAWDI's previous publication, *History Detectives*, which unearthed the multifaceted history of Black peoples in the Midlands. It encourages readers to visit the many areas where Black peoples lived, worked, worshipped, were baptised, buried or married, as well as local archives and museums. It has thus done a tremendous job ensuring that this history is appropriately commemorated and displayed, where possible. There are many pages, with a map, for each area: Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Birmingham. The pages are profusely illustrated with wonderful images. Much of the research was done by volunteers – I hope they continue the work, so that *all* parish records are scrutinised, as well as workhouse and court records. We also need to try to fathom whether those Blacks in the records who were not noted as 'slaves' were in fact regarded as free. I would like to know, for example, whether the 'Black slave working as a furnaceman in the slitting mill in Digbeth' in 1749 (p.36) is actually noted in the records as a slave. And what did being a slave mean in England?

One of the most remarkable findings is the drawings/portraits in the habitable caves at Guy's Cliffe in Warwickshire, thought to have been painted by slaves brought over from his plantations in St. Kitts by Samuel Greatheed to work on his newly acquired house.

A very valuable addition to our knowledge of the presence of peoples of African origins/descent in the UK, and a good reason to go on holidays in the Midlands! My only problems are the lack of a Contents page and an index, and the sometimes lax editing.

Marika Sherwood

**Richard Lea and Chris Miele, with Gordon Higgott, *Danson House: the anatomy of a Georgian villa* (English Heritage, 2011) £25 pbk.** This is a useful addition to the growing literature on the links between colonial slavery and the English country house that are starting to emerge. Although the bulk of the book details the restoration of the property, there are well-researched sections on how present-day Danson House near Bexley in Kent came to be built by John Boyd (1718-1800), a City merchant whose family fortune came from West Indian sugar and investment in the Bance Island Slave Factory off the coast of Sierra Leone. The slump in sugar prices during the 1780s

meant it had to be sold to another West Indies merchant. But before the house was rebuilt, the estate had links with the colonies. A previous owner had been in India, another was the son of a Governor of Jamaica. The chapter 'The cost of life as a gentleman' and the details of how various owners developed and decorated the house and grounds give an indication of the stupendous fortunes that were made from colonial slavery. Like all English Heritage publications, this is beautifully illustrated with both original images of the exterior and interiors and the restored artworks. The authors have done a sterling job in reminding us of the cost of such beauty.

*Kathleen Chater*



## Biography

**Peeping through the reeds by Musuva. (Author House UK Ltd, Central Milton Keynes, 2010) £7.30 pbk** This book is the most absorbing and inspiring book I have read for years. I found it hard to put it down, as it took me back to my own youth in Africa, and the joys and sadness of a nation in flux. The book is the work of South African June Bam-Hutchinson under the pen name of Musuva. The book is anchored in the complexities of life under the apartheid system in the Cape Province through the author's personal experiences of life through the 1960's into the 1990's. Whereas most of us are aware of the national strategies of the apartheid regime, few of us are aware of the background of culture contact between the original Khoisan peoples of the Cape and other Africans, of world slavery that brought West Africans and Asians, of the Dutch and British colonisation and the important Anglo-Afrikaan conflicts that provide the backdrop, if not the blueprints for apartheid. This book reflects on this past through vivid personalities and the "so-called Coloured" community. But the book does also steps through the painful and fatal process of protest and freedom, and then brings us to the turning point of post-colonialism. For myself the book offers the new South Africa a choice. Does it seek African nationalism on the lines of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, where

national identity is reduced to a racial black or white discourse and where the new African elite merely replace a 'European' elite, or does South Africa dedicate itself whole-heartedly to the 'Rainbow Nation' ethos in all sectors and not just for tourism?

*Cliff Pereira*

**Marika Sherwood, *Origins of Pan-Africanism. Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora.* (Routledge, 2011) £80.00 hbk.**

Henry Sylvester Williams (1869-1911) lived for eight or nine years in London where he qualified as a lawyer, published the *Pan-African*, was the power behind the London Pan-African Conference of 1900, and was elected to Marylebone council in 1907. He married an Englishwoman in 1898 (though no registration has been located) and with their children went to Trinidad where he had lived before migrating to Britain.

Little has been uncovered on Williams's career in London as a barrister. We have no idea how he earned a living or financed the voyages to Africa and the Caribbean and there remains much else which is still not known. Nothing, for example, has been uncovered on how the *Pan-African* was financed. Williams's legal practice over eleven months in Cape Town is not fully traced. His career as a councillor in Marylebone is lightly described in this work but it is time, as with councillor John Archer in Battersea, that we knew what committees he served on, what he said at meetings and the other apparently dull stuff of municipal affairs.

Ms Sherwood, however, often just asks questions rather than do work to answer them, and too often makes statements with no supporting evidence. Her comment under a photograph of over two dozen men published in London in November 1900, 'would these men, if they were in England in July [1900], not have attended the conference?' provokes the response 'why should they have?' Black people in Britain were numerous than often thought. Christian missionaries, doctors, students, lawyers, authors, musicians, temperance campaigners etc, may appear similar to the larger (white) society but their individual beliefs, ambitions and experiences were dissimilar. Like the Mormons baptising the dead into their own faith, connections are made posthumously by including virtually every Black person of that time in the Pan-African movement.

Of fellow students at King's College, where Williams studied Latin, Ms Sherwood writes 'these Londoners, [were] inescapably imbued with the racist notions of the times' but gives no evidence. Racist comments by authors and scientists need to be shown to have affected the masses. The

suggestion that Williams worked for the Church of England's temperance society is dismissed – 'most people I consulted thought that it would be highly unlikely that a Black man would be employed by the imperialist state church'. This may be the current democratic view but it does not fit what is known of both African descent ministers in Anglican churches in England, and Black anti-drink campaigners such as Hallie Quinn Brown and Amanda Smith of the 1890s and William Wells Brown in the 1870s.

There are a number of careless errors. Thomas Lewis Johnson made no mention of the conference in his 1909 autobiography. Dr John Alcindor's four-line biography in the appendix states he gained his medical degree in Edinburgh in 1893 when it was in 1899. Ms Sherwood's editor also lets her down elsewhere. Pan Africanist/diplomat/ author Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) appears as both Edward and Edmund in the text and is indexed as Edmund. Frederick Loudin, a Pan-African committee member, died in 1904 after months in a sanatorium in Scotland, not, as here, in 1903. These appear in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography or, like Fannie Barrier Williams, have detailed entries on the web.

There are three earlier biographies by Clarence Contee (1973), James Hooker (1975) and Owen Mathurin (1976). Williams is included in *Trinidad and Tobago Lawyers*, *Trinidad and Tobago Writers* and *Black British Politicians*. Four full studies of Henry Sylvester Williams are surely too many. What is the attraction? The answer is his role in the London Pan-African Conference of 1900. Williams's legacy is a romantic one.

Jeffrey Green

### 🔗 Quick click 🔗

On 15 November 2011, as part of the seminar series organised by Marika Sherwood, Michael Ohajuru gave a fascinating talk about medieval representations of Black Magi and saints, focusing on the Black Magus found on a 16<sup>th</sup> century rood screen from Ugborough in Devon. You can find out more about it by clicking on

<http://bhm2k8.blogspot.com>

Michael also has a blog about Blacks in Renaissance Europe on

<http://veronese1515.blogspot.com>

## Historic figure: Ladipo Solanke

By Hakim Adi

Oladipo Felix Solanke was born in the Yoruba town of Abeokuta around 1884. He was educated in Nigeria and at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone before travelling to Britain in 1922 to complete his legal studies at University College, London.



Solanke's experiences of poverty and racism in Britain led him to join the Union of Students of African Descent and to campaign against various racist articles in the British press. In 1924 he met Amy Ashwood Garvey and they jointly formed the Nigerian Progress Union, the first Nigerian organisation to be established in Britain, which aimed to 'promote the general welfare of Nigerians'. The following year Solanke became one of the founders and the secretary-general of the West African Students' Union (WASU), the most important African organisation in Britain throughout the next thirty years. The WASU served as a training ground for future African political leaders and played an important role agitating for an end to colonial rule and for self-government in West Africa.

Solanke was a prolific writer, many of his articles appearing in the Union's journal also known as *Wasu*, and in 1927 he wrote *United West Africa at the Bar of the Family of Nations*, a demand for equal political rights for Africa and Africans. In addition Solanke made the first broadcasts in Yoruba for the BBC and made several musical recordings during the 1920s.

From 1929-1932 Solanke was sent by WASU on a fundraising trip of the West African colonies. There he not only collected funds that enabled the opening of WASU's first hostel in London in 1933, but also established over twenty branches of the Union throughout West Africa. These branches later formed the nucleus of the anti-colonial movements that developed in Nigeria and the Gold Coast in the 1930s. The WASU hostel, known as Africa House, became an important social and political centre for all people of African descent,

and a 'home from home' for many visiting London at a time when the colour bar was ubiquitous.

Solanke and the WASU collaborated with a host of other organisations to realise their aims and included amongst their patrons both traditional leases in Africa and key personalities such as Paul Robeson. It was much more than a students' union, also an anti-colonial pressure group and a bureau of information. In many ways it acted as an unofficial West African embassy. During World War II the organisation established its own parliamentary committee and became the main spokesperson for anti-colonial interests in West Africa. The first West African demands for self-government also came from the WASU in London. In 1944 Solanke was despatched on another fundraising trip to West Africa, during which he was honoured with a chieftaincy title and his first child was born. His fundraising activities ultimately led to the opening of WASU's third hostel at Chelsea Embankment in 1949, but on his return he found that he was increasingly marginalised from the organisation he had created, as WASU had become much more radical.

In the last years of his life Solanke established a new organisation, WASU Unincorporated and still maintained the old Africa House hostel in Camden. Chief Solanke died from cancer in London in 1958.

#### Further reading

Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain: 1900-1960* (Lawrence & Wishart 1988)

### Historic figure: Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, the 'Black Swan'

By Jeffrey Green

A fashionable audience and 'the curious' attended a recital by Miss E. T. Greenfield at the Hanover Square Rooms, London on 30 May 1853. The critic of the *Morning Chronicle* thought she had 'some feeling for singing pathetic ballads, but nothing more, and nothing else'. A soprano with a powerful and wide range, she was assumed to be untrained ('perfectly uncultivated'). If she worked hard and trained, however, it was unlikely that audiences would attend her recitals 'because she was a woman of colour'.

In fact Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield had had some training. She was born in Natchez, Mississippi around 1824 and was freed from slavery as an infant by her mistress, who joined the Society of Friends and who encouraged her to



develop her musical studies. Elizabeth took her mistress's name to commemorate her.

She gave her first public performance in Buffalo, NY in 1851, and this 1853 visit to Britain lasted into 1854. She planned to raise money to further her training, while her British concert manager was probably planning to cash in on the massive sales all across Britain of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published in 1852. This brought a new role for Blacks in Britain, playing one of the slaves in that melodramatic novel, which was soon adapted for the theatre and taken up in minstrel shows. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reached its hundredth performance at London's Victoria Theatre in mid-January 1853.

However, the manager defaulted and Greenfield sought help from Lord Shaftesbury and the Duchess of Sutherland who became, as the *Morning Chronicle* noted, her patron. Although the newspaper did not mention this, the Duchess and Harriet Beecher Stowe had joined together to support Greenfield. The announcements of her performances often listed titled ladies who supported her and used the sobriquet 'Black Swan', declaring her to be an American vocalist.

*The Times* reported on 1 June 1853 that this 'coloured lady (from America) ... does not greatly shine' yet she had an 'extraordinary voice' with the lower notes being 'almost masculine'. The *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (2 June) reported 'a very distinguished company was present' at the concert; *Lloyd's Weekly* (5 June) headed its review with 'The 'Black Swan' and sourly noted 'even the spirit of May-fair cannot create genius'. Her second London recital was scheduled for 15 June, at Exeter Hall, the public hall closely linked with anti-slavery meetings. On 23 July she was at Stafford House (the London home of the Sutherlands). This appearance by the 'Negro vocalist' was advertised with tickets at a guinea each (at a time when the average wage was about £1.00 a week). It was reviewed in the *Illustrated London News*.

Greenfield then crossed the Irish Sea to give a recital as the Black Swan in Dublin on 9 August with a violinist from the East Indies named De La Valaderes. They were still in Dublin on 17 August and *Home Sweet Home* was still a major item in her programmes. She gave two recitals in the Corn Exchange, Preston (19 and 21 September 1853) before returning to England. She performed in York and Leeds two months later and was in Edinburgh on 5 December. In late 1853 she presented two recitals in Lincoln, one described as 'delightful'. On 10 May 1854 she sang 'some of national songs' at Buckingham Palace for Queen Victoria, accompanied by Sir George Smart. Smart was 'one of the most influential musicians of his time' and gave Greenfield lessons. The Duchess of Sutherland, her patron, was one of the Queen's ladies in waiting at this time, a famed hostess of tremendous wealth whose support of the anti-slavery movement led Thomas Carlyle to call her home, Stafford House, 'Aunt Harriet's Cabin' (Queen Victoria called it a palace). Queen Victoria herself encouraged Black singers. As well as giving her seal of approval to Greenfield, she summoned other performers to sing for her. She commissioned a huge portrait of the Fisk Jubilee singers, who sang for her in 1873, and donated it to Fisk University.

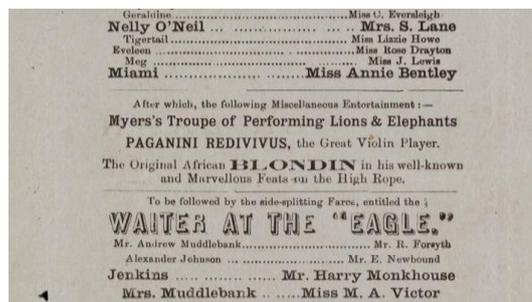
This royal command performance was the British swansong of the Black Swan. She returned to Philadelphia, where she continued to perform and also taught singing. In the 1860s she founded and directed an opera company. She died in 1876.

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### Next issue

The next issue, no. 62, March 2012 will also be posted on the internet. Articles planned for this issue include Ron Howard's tale of his great grandfather, Carlos Trower 'the African Blondin, Prince of the Air'.



There will also be a piece by Imaobong Umoren on the Afro-Jamaican feminist intellectual Una Marson, who lived in London in the 1930s and 1940s.



The BASA Newsletter always needs contributions. If you have done something you would like fellow members to know about; if you are involved in a project which needs volunteers, specialist help or just an audience, or if you simply want to share something you have discovered, like a useful website, please get in touch.

It's also helpful to get feedback from readers – what do you like/dislike most? What would you like to see more/less of?

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We look forward to hearing from you.