

BASA

(Black & Asian Studies Association)

NEWSLETTER



Elizabeth Welch honoured (p. 15)

62

March 2012

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Editor's Note

Much to my surprise, the item which caused the most comment in the last double issue of the *Newsletter* was not one of the articles but Jeffrey Green's review of Marika Sherwood's book about Henry Sylvester Williams. It was not laudatory – and not only did this prompt a comment on the BASA jiscmail, people actually came up to me at events to ask about it.

I did not expect this. BASA is an association set up to study Black and Asian history in Britain. It is not, and should never be, a cosy little self-congratulatory club, smugly puffing its members' activities. Marika herself wrote a critical review of a book by chairman George Watley in a previous issue. She has asked for, and got, a published rejoinder to Jeffrey's review (p. 32).

On the subject of criticism, I would like to see contributions that are, even occasionally, critical of their subjects or aspects of their lives. I understand that within a short article it is difficult to discuss and balance factors at length but a hagiographic approach is both tiresome and patronising. The idea that all Black and Asian people are flawless, heroic but victimised geniuses turns them into Uncle Toms. If BASA really wants to live up to its intention of *studying* history, it must cover all aspects of it, good and bad.

Kathleen Chater

Una Marson

by Imaobong Umoren

Born in the Jamaican parish of St Elizabeth in 1905, Una Marson, the daughter of a middle-class Baptist parson, rose to become an internationally prominent Black feminist, journalist, poet, playwright, social activist and BBC broadcaster. She was one of the 'first black British feminists to speak out against racism and sexism in Britain' where she lived between 1932-1936 and again between 1938-1946. In 1998, Delia Jarrett-Macauley published a detailed biography *The Life of Una Marson 1905-65* from which most biographical information about her is known. In her public life Marson's achievements were many, including becoming the first Black female Jamaican editor-publisher of a journal entitled *The Cosmopolitan: a monthly magazine for the business youth of Jamaica and the official organ of the Stenographer's Association (1928-1931)*; being the first Black woman to attend the League of Nations in Geneva in 1935 and breaking fragments of the colour bar and glass ceiling in the 1940s to become the first Black woman to work at the BBC. She was an important public intellectual and through her writings and activism she dealt with a range of issues including colonialism, colourism, racism, sexism, equality, poverty and Pan-Africanism, as well as romance, love and loneliness. However, despite Marson being a leading light in her public life, she often suffered from bouts of depression and anxiety in her personal life. This short article is an account of her life and achievements. It shows how she brought issues of gender and some of the problems facing Black women into Black racial politics and promoted the development of cultural nationalism through her activism, articles, poetry, plays and speeches.

Once Marson left Hampton High School in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1922 she turned her attention to secretarial and social work, gaining employment with the YMCA and Salvation Army. From the late 1920s onwards, she used her journalism, poetry and playwriting to confront issues of race and gender that affected the majority Black

population of Jamaica. For instance, in *The Cosmopolitan* Marson praised Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); she encouraged Black middle-class women to devote themselves to alleviating social ills on the island and in her first two poetry collections *Tropic Reveries* (1930) and *Heights and Depths* (1931) she mimicked (but also consciously subverted and parodied) European poetic conventions and the patriarchal poetry of William Shakespeare and Rudyard Kipling. However, aspects of Marson's feminism in the late 1920s still held on to traditional assumptions of gender roles in debates concerning women's participation in the workplace. In her first play, *At What a Price*, staged at Kingston's Ward Theatre in 1932 she told the story of Ruth Maitland, a dark-skinned country girl who moves to Kingston to find employment and becomes pregnant by her light-skinned boss, who is already engaged to another woman. Although the play ended in a conventional and conservative way, with Ruth marrying her close male friend, the fact that Marson portrayed this sensitive issue when young, unwedded, pregnant women in Jamaica were often chastised illustrates how she used her creative works to deal with the socially challenging experiences that Black women faced. *At What a Price* was staged in London in 1933 and became the first Black colonial production in the West End.

When Marson arrived in London in 1932, she lodged with fellow Jamaican Dr Harold Moody in Peckham and joined his multi-racial organisation, the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP). The LCP, founded in 1931, challenged racism and campaigned for civil rights for Blacks in Britain and the Empire, and Marson took up the position of editor of its journal *The Keys*. In the 1930s, London

Imaobong Umoren is a student at Kings College London. For her third year undergraduate dissertation, she researched the Afro-Jamaican feminist intellectual Una Marson.

was not only the centre of the empire but also an important site for the Pan-African movement and the city was home to a number of Black intellectuals and organisations. Through her work with the LCP she collaborated with many Black political activists, including Trinidadian Pan-Africanists C. L. R. James and George Padmore; a king from the Gold Coast, Sir Nana Ofori Atta; the founder of the West African Students Union, Lapido Solanke; Kenyan nationalist, Jomo Kenyatta; and Amy Ashwood Garvey, co-founder of the UNIA and first wife to Marcus Garvey. Interactions with these figures increased Marson's awareness of and involvement in Pan-Africanism, which altered both her politics and fashioned her new self-image as she decided to stop straightening her hair, preferring to wear it in a natural style. Her writings in London expressed some of the everyday experiences of Blacks living at the centre of the British Empire. For example, in *The Keys* she vented her attitudes towards British racism in her polemic poem 'Nigger' and preached the message of racial unity in 1935, declaring that 'the Negro world must come together... And who is going to do these things for us? We have got to do it ourselves... Then, and only then will the Negro race be a race contributing richly to the world'.

Marson also wrote about the experiences of Black colonial students in interwar London in her play 'London Calling'. The play, written in London but staged in Kingston in 1937, see-sawed between romance, comedy and parody but at its core was a serious message about the harsh realities of Black life and interracial interaction in London, as well as the contradictions that lay at the heart of colonialism. Additionally, she depicted some of the particular experiences Black women faced in her poem, 'Little Brown Girl', written in London and published in her third poetry collection *The Moth and the Star*, which expressed the dual experiences of racism and sexism. It was said that in London Marson began to write 'Autobiography of a Brown Girl' but there is no evidence to suggest that this was completed. Many have speculated on the possible impact that this publication may have had on the history of twentieth-century Black British history. Following Benito

Mussolini's 1935 Italian invasion of Abyssinia (today Ethiopia), Marson delved deep into Pan-African activism, providing assistance to Dr Charles Martin at the Ethiopian Delegation and she acted as secretary to Abyssinian leader Haile Selassie, later following him to Geneva in 1936. The Abyssinian invasion left an indelible mark on her politically and personally and she addressed the loss of human life in her poignant poem 'To Joe and Ben', which was published in *The Moth and the Star*.



Blue Plaque erected by Southwark Council in Brunswick Square (now Brunswick Park), Camberwell, where Una Marson lived for a while in the 1930s.

During her stay in London Marson actively participated in women's and feminist organisations including the Women's Freedom League, the Women's International Alliance and the British Commonwealth League (BCL), where she aired the perspective of a progressive Black woman. At BCL meetings, for instance, she raised objections to the use of the word primitive to describe non-white women. Through her involvement with these groups Marson developed a close bond with feminist writer and activist Winifred Holtby who was an influential figure in interracial salons in London. In 1935 Marson was the first Jamaican woman to speak at the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship in Istanbul and under the topic of 'East and West in Cooperation' she brought her commitment to racial and gender equality together claiming that 'Negroes are suffering under enormous difficulties in most countries of the world...We must count upon all countries where there are Negroes - for women always possess a better developed

sense of justice - to obtain for them a life more pleasant and less severe'.

In 1936, Marson sailed back to Jamaica and after recovering from a nervous breakdown caused by overworking she entered a period of active journalism writing for *Public Opinion* (1937-1942) the weekly paper affiliated to Norman Manley's People's National Party. Her articles in *Public Opinion* covered a wide range of topics, including feminism, racial and colour prejudice and Jamaican national politics. In 1937, she published *The Moth and the Star*, which consisted of a colourful mixture of poems that addressed race, gender and poverty. The collection was influenced by the rhythm and blues of the Harlem Renaissance and was inflected with Jamaican patois. Many notable poems in *The Moth and the Star* dealt with the impact of European ideas of femininity on Black women. In poems like 'Cinema Eyes' she revealed the dangers of idolising whiteness, while in 'Kinky Hair Blues' and 'Black is Fancy' she explored the politics of Black women's hair and the beauty of Blackness.



Una Marson's second collection of poems, published in 1931

Marson's third and final play 'Pocomania', staged in 1938, centred on the impact of the syncretic religion Pukkumina on the life of the Black middle-class protagonist Stella Manners. The play was unique because it cultivated

connections between Pan-Africanism and feminism and attempted to depict the retention of African culture in Jamaica. In 1938, Marson also returned to social activism establishing the Save the Jamaican Children's Fund alongside teacher and social worker Mary Morris-Knibb and her co-worker and fellow Black female activist Amy Bailey.

In Jamaica and other islands in the Caribbean, the late 1930s was a turbulent time; an era of economic depression, labour strikes and protests against colonial governments. In this climate of fierce tensions, Marson reported on the labour strikes in Jamaica's national paper the *Daily Gleaner* and *Public Opinion*. Through her reporting she made room for the opinions of the poor and working-class women, which she also reflected in her poems 'To the Prison Gates' and 'The Stone Breakers'. Her journalism gained national prominence, which resulted in her being called to London along with Bailey to give evidence about the riots to the government led Moyne Commission in 1938.

The 1940s saw Marson working at the BBC as programme assistant for the radio series *Calling the West Indies*, which turned into *Caribbean Voices*, a crucial platform for the spread and development of Caribbean literature in Britain and the West Indies. Marson's presence at the BBC was an achievement, but she faced severe opposition from the upper echelons of the organisation. Jarrett-Macauley and literary scholar Anna Snaith have observed that some officials at the BBC were unhappy with the choice of a Black West Indian woman to front the programme. Nevertheless, she remained at the BBC until the end of the Second World War. On the airwaves Marson recited her poetry and that of others, and presented talks with West Indian musicians, while servicemen used the programme to send messages home to their friends and families. Through her involvement with the BBC she worked with the likes of Learie Constantine, George Orwell, William Epsom and T S Eliot.

In 1945, Marson published her fourth poetry collection *Towards the Stars*, but at this time she was suffering from depression and trauma following her experience of war time bombing and the long-term separation from her sister Etty, to whom she was close.

After the allied forces declared victory in World War Two, she travelled to the United States of America visiting New York and Washington. She also returned to Jamaica and journeyed to Trinidad and Barbados. Unfortunately, due to illness, Marson was unable to resume her work at the BBC and she entered a nursing home before returning to Kingston. By 1948, she had recovered and a year later helped to found 'The Pioneer Press', the publishing arm of the *Daily Gleaner*. Through her role as secretary of the Pioneer Press and her revival of the Readers and Writers Club in Jamaica Marson helped to develop the literary talents of younger writers like Andrew Salkey.

Details about her life in the 1950s are fragmented but between 1952-1960 she lived in Washington and attended George Washington University studying courses in writing for children. In 1960 at the age of fifty-five Marson secretly married Peter Staples, an African-American dentist, but the union lasted less than a year after which she returned to Jamaica. From the 1960s onwards, she remained intellectually and politically active, often writing for the *Daily Gleaner*. In 1964, she journeyed to Israel to attend the Haifa seminar on 'Social and Cultural Integration in Urban Areas', and later attended a conference in Jerusalem and revisited London, before suffering a heart attack that resulted in her death on 6 May 1965.

An account of Marson's life and achievements highlights the highs and lows of her public career and personal life. Although she battled with personal problems, she produced a plethora of intellectual outpourings and helped to carve out a space for Black women's concerns to be heard within Black racial politics. Marson was a unique middle-class Black woman who led a distinctive life marked by constant movement, which allowed her to refigure her ideas in relation to the different contexts in which she lived and worked.

Today, she's receiving more attention from literary scholars, including Alison Donnell and Anna Snaith, as well as historians like Henrice Altink and Gemma Romain who included Marson in her insightful exhibition 'Archival Tales: Uncovering Inter-war Black histories', which is on display at The Women's Library.

However, more work remains to be done. Her life mirrors, but also differs from some of her contemporaries, including fellow Jamaicans Amy Bailey, Amy Ashwood Garvey and Marcus Garvey's second wife, Amy Jacques Garvey as well as Trinidadian Claudia Jones. There are other similarities to be found between Marson and franco-phone Caribbean intellectuals like the Martinican sisters Jane and Paulette Nardal, who were important women in the development of Négritude in interwar Paris, and the African-American, Pan-African activist Maida Springer whom she met in the 1940s.

In many ways, Marson may be considered one of this group of trans-national and cosmopolitan Black Caribbean and American women and thus there is a pressing need for more research to be conducted on the connections between Marson and her American and Caribbean contemporaries, which could help to shine new light not only on Black British history and the history of Black women intellectuals, but also world history.

Many of the issues that she wrote about, including racism, feminism, colonialism and inequality continue to be pertinent to our own times and this is one of the reasons that make her such an interesting and fascinating female figure.

Sources and Further Reading

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Carlos Trower, the African Blondin

by Ron Howard

Following years of endeavour and, at times, disappointment, recent technology has allowed me to uncover the fascinating story of my great-grandfather Carlos Trower, 'The African Blondin'.

It is a story of astonishing nineteenth-century showmanship that covered UK counties, countries and continents. Carlos Trower's daredevil tight-rope performances matched the private life he led as a well-paid and well-known black performer and an unconfirmed bigamist, the husband of two English ladies.

I have endeavoured to keep to the facts but have also employed some imagination. What follows is a synopsis of items in my full thirty-page narrative. If any researcher wishes to receive the complete volume, including unedited newspaper articles, theatres and locations, please contact me. I'd also like to hear from anyone who can help me resolve some unanswered questions. Was Carlos the only African Blondin or was there someone else using this name – or a close relation - who clouded my research? Under the management of J.A. Trower he performed at the New York and West Indies Emancipation Jubilee on several occasions. Research suggests that A.J. Trower was the brother of Carlos, but there was also another A.J. Trower who held a prominent position as a Central Coloured Republican in New York. It is my hope that the three Trowers' are related and all played a major role in the development of Black interest within United.

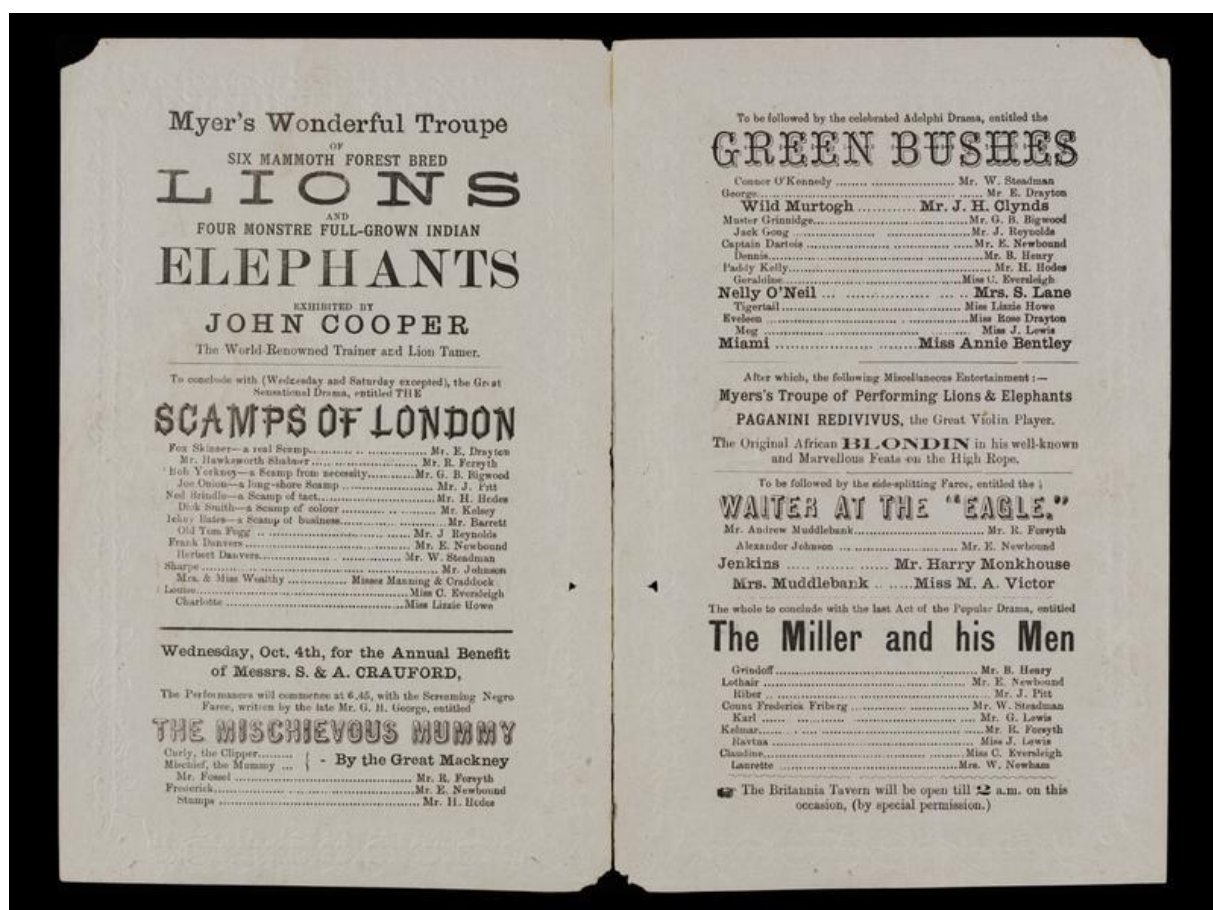
The original Blondin was Jean-François Gravelet (1824-97), whose stage name was Charles Blondin. He was a French acrobat and tightrope walker. In 1859 he crossed Niagara Falls on a tightrope – the first man to do this. He later repeated this feat with variations, blindfolded, with a wheelbarrow, with a (very brave) man on his back and on stilts. Carlos Lamartine Trower was born between 1845-1850, probably in New York. There seems to be no birth record for him. This was not unusual for Black people in the

USA at that time. It's therefore impossible to know what his second name actually was – it appears spelled in a number of ways in different sources.

Carlos's interest in performing must have been sparked by Blondin's original achievement. By June 1861, when aged between 11 and 16, Carlos was in England and confident and skilled enough to walk on a tightrope across Rudyard Lake, now a reservoir, in Leek, Derbyshire. The following year in August 'Professor' C. La Matien Trower gave a gymnastic performance in New York. He later performed in New York at the Union Celebration of Emancipation for the Coloured peoples of New York, the West Indies and the District of Colombia, where his 'walking, dancing, turning, twisting, hanging, swinging and cooking his dinner on the rope, à la the hero of Niagara Falls, was much admired and everybody who felt greatly relieved when it was a settled fact that he wasn't going to break his neck'.

Carlos came back to Britain and performed in Airdrie, Scotland. Soon after, on 2 October 1864, aged 19, he married Myra Clay in Stoke on Trent. Their son Collis Trower was born in December of the next year in Ripley, Yorkshire. Carlos remained in the North, performing in Hull and in Beverley, where he fell more than fifty feet, landing on grass with his balancing pole beneath him. The local paper excitably said that he was to all appearances lifeless and he lay in a precarious state. However, he had recovered both his health (he had broken his arm and a wrist) and his nerve enough to perform at Hartlepool in April 1869, where his performance was recorded as 'admirable'.

The son of a street trader, Ron Howard grew up in Islington, London. He recently retired after working as a planner in the communications industry and moved to the coast with his wife Rose. He continues his 40-year search to discover more about the African Blondin.



Poster from the Britannia Theatre, London, 1882, where Carlos appeared as part of a mixed programme. ©East London Theatre Archive

A reporter said 'His feat of running backwards upon the rope from the furthest part of the stage to the top of the gallery, heavily chained, and then enveloped in a sack brought down the whole house with wonder and applause.'

It was a daring act and he had another fall in February 1870, when he tumbled from his rope into the middle of a crowded pit of spectators. Luckily he fell on to a 'soft' gentleman and was not himself hurt, although he broke the nose of a spectator with his balancing pole.

He continued to appear all over the North, in Darlington, South Shields, Sheffield, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Carlisle, Halifax, Blackpool, Bradford, Redcar, Derby and Manchester with occasional forays South to Portsmouth or Ipswich or further North to Scotland. His appearances, and occasional accidents, were extensively covered in the local newspapers.

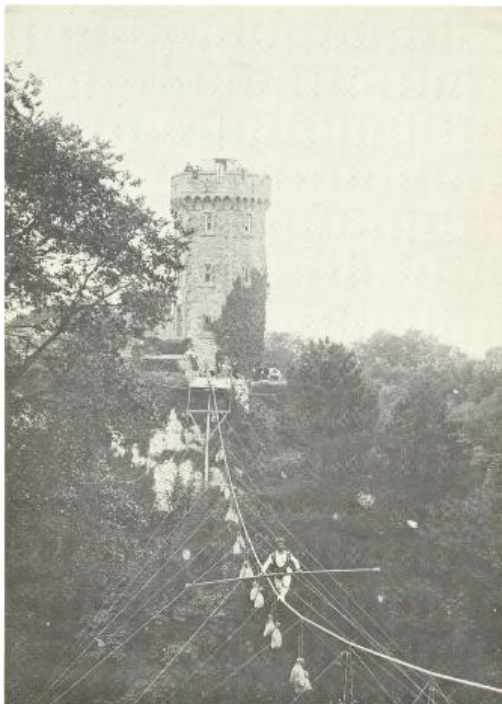
Carlos moved away from the North for the next big event in his life. On 10 October 1875, he married Annie Frances Emmett in Barnstaple, Devon. I have not found a death record for Myra, so he may have been married bigamously, although she seems to disappear completely. Their daughter Celia Annie Frances was born five months later in Bristol so the marriage must have been precipitated by Annie's pregnancy. Carlos did not abandon this family: his daughter Celia, known as the Black Star, was to perform with him in later years.

He crossed the Irish Sea to perform in Belfast in March 1876, where the newspapers advertised that the African Blondin 'this daring high rope performer will walk backwards and forwards, heavily chained, blindfolded and enveloped in a sack at an elevation of 40 to 50 feet from the ground over the heads of people.' The audience was also promised that 'He will also carry a cooking stove on his back to the centre of

the rope where he will kindle a fire and cook an omelette and conclude by carrying his son Carlos Trower, on his back across the high rope.'

By 1877 Carlos was back in Northern England, performing in Morecambe. Here it was claimed that the African Blondin had actually crossed the Falls of Niagara on a high rope but this was probably hype to attract the punters – I have found no evidence that he had ever crossed Niagara. His relentless schedule of performances continued all over the country.

The following year he returned to his birthplace. In July 1878 he sailed to America on the steamship *Ageral*. He made this a working trip by walking from mast to mast on a rope. In New York he performed at the Coloured Peoples' Celebration in Myrtle Avenue Park, Brooklyn, in Newhaven Connecticut and on Colney Island. There is a reference to a Professor Trower, 'a brother of the manager Mr J.A. Trower', who was a professional sleight of hand man and 'performed a number of entertaining tricks'. This suggests that there may have been three Trower brothers, one a performer, the second a theatrical manager and the third a politician.



Postcard of Carlos performing at Rosherville Gardens, Gravesend in Kent.

Carlos was back in England in 1879. He continued his appearances but this time they were concentrated in the south. His daughter Jynetta Caledonia Trower, my grandmother, the daughter of Annie Frances, was born in Wellingborough on 14 January 1881.

He performed in Rosherville Gardens in Gravesend, Kent the next year. Here the 'Prince of the Air' as the newspaper called him, repeated his feat of cooking an omelette on the rope and, like the original Blondin, wheeled a barrow stretched between two cliffs. He concluded with a highly dramatic performance – walking amidst a cascade of fire at night. His fame had spread to Europe and his next 'most successful' engagements were in Breslau and Berlin in Germany. He returned to England in time for the birth of his son, Harry Carlos, on 24 April 1883. By now the family were settled in London and in 1884 Carlos became 'the great sensation of the day' at the Foresters Fete at the Crystal Palace in August. Evidence of his performing schedule, even more extensive than these notes suggest, comes from medals he wore, which he had won at Sydney Northampton, Blackpool and the Potteries. In July 1885 thousands were delighted by his marvellous performance walking 100 yards at 100 ft high over Blackpool.

Nine months later in 1886 Carlos literally came down to earth. He had a serious accident, which necessitated treatment in St Thomas's Hospital in Southwark, near his home in Stamford Street, Lambeth. Three months later he appeared recovered enough to perform on the high rope in aid of the widows and orphans of the Court (not the London theatre, but the royal palaces and the royal family's entourage). Two months later he again performed at Rosherville Gardens in Gravesend, where it was noted that 'the performances of the African Blondin on the High Rope, outside the Bijou Theatre, were watched with much interest, and his feats in the centre of the rope and the walk across encumbered with a heavy chain were very clever, and well deserving of the applause elicited. In the evening his feats were shown by means of lime light.' But the fickle public had seen his act and moved on to other novelties. In the same month, Carlos put a Wanted advertisement in the *Era*, the trade news-

paper of the circus and performing acts generally. He said he was 'at liberty for Halls, Theatre, etc'. The next year it was reported that he was endeavouring to obtain permission to cross the Thames from St Thomas's hospital to the House of Commons on the occasion of Victoria's Jubilee on 1 June 1887 but nothing further is known. However, he was back before the public in January 1888, when this 'man of colour' appeared at Bristol, performing 'some most extraordinary feats, walking backwards and forwards on the rope when ' shackled to represent a convict; also blindfolded, besides which he wheeled a barrow along the rope. The performance was watched with exciting interest, and at the conclusion Blondin was loudly cheered.'

His last recorded performance was in Swansea in May 1888. A letter appeared in the *Era* in February 1889.

Mr Editor : Sir, my husband Carlos Trower The African Blondin, has been very ill for some time, and three weeks ago went quite out of his mind. There are no hopes of his recovery, and he has been removed to Grove Hall Lunatic Asylum Bow. I am left with three children unprovided for. If you will kindly mention this in The Era I shall feel more than grateful as I am sure there will be a few friends that will help me. Yours respectfully A.Trower

A few months later in April 1889 Carlos Trower, aged 40 years, High Rope Walker of 120 Stamford Street, Lambeth, died in Grove Hall Lunatic Asylum, Bow, London, of 'General Paralysis of the Insane'. GPI (as it tactfully appears in records) is the result of untreated, or incompletely treated syphilis and can lead to blindness as well as insanity.

In the same month a benefit was held at the Peckham Theatre, 'by the kind permission of Mr A.F. Lovejoy' to help the widow and children of the late African Blondin. Although he had earned a lot in his lifetime, Carlos Trower died penniless, leaving his family destitute. Grove Hall was a private asylum and it may have been the cost of keeping him there that impoverished his family. It was a sad end to what had been a triumphant career, giving excitement and pleasure to many.



Grove Hall Park, Bow, was created from the grounds of the house where Carlos Trower died at the age of 40.

Sources

The Era

Local newspapers from the various places where Carlos performed.

Family information (I am in touch with other descendants)

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Quick click

The West African Students' Union (WASU) was formed in London in 1925 based on the spirit of 'Self-help, Unity and Co-operation.' The WASU Project is based on the same spirit. It aims to present information, photos, and eventually a film about the West African Students' Union and all Africans in Britain during the 20th century who struggled for African independence and self-determination and an end to colonialism and racism.
<www.wasuproject.org.uk>

The Real Black Heathcliffs – and Heathers

by Audrey Dewjee

In the new film version of *Wuthering Heights*, the fact that Heathcliff is played by a Black actor may be more than an example of integrated casting. Portraying him as having African ancestry could be closer to Emily Brontë's original intention than previous interpretations, where he was often seen as being a traveller or gypsy.

Remember how Heathcliff is introduced into the story. Mr. Earnshaw returns from a visit to Liverpool with a child he had seen 'starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets'. He 'picked it up and inquired for its owner. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged...and his money and time, being both limited, he thought it better, to take it home with him, at once, than run into vain expenses there; because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it.' Mr. Earnshaw tells his family, 'you must...take it as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil' (my italics). Later in the book, Mr. Linton, commenting on Heathcliff's origins, suggests he could be 'a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway'.

As another indication of his possible origins, Emily Brontë gives Heathcliff just one name, which has to serve as both his personal and family name. Having only one name was common for many of the enslaved Africans who came to Britain. Masters sometimes named them after classical heroes such as Scipio, Pompey and Caesar, or with place names such as Liverpool, York, Pembroke and Barnard Castle. Some, like Olaudah Equiano, who spent many years named Gustavus Vassa after a Swedish king, managed to reclaim their African names. Emily, who was very well-read, may have been influenced by Equiano's autobiography, first published in 1797, which played such an important part in the abolition campaign, or she may have heard of the impact Equiano made when he visited Yorkshire on his speaking tours.

What could have given her the idea to place a person of African (or Asian) descent

on the moors of Yorkshire? Most likely because she saw, or heard of, such individuals in her daily life. There may have been Black workers in the mills of Haworth.

Domestic servants, sailors, mixed-race family members and, I suspect, formerly-enslaved skilled plantation workers (such as millwrights and blacksmiths), made their way to Britain. They settled in Bradford, Leeds, Scarborough and various other towns, as well as villages in the moors and dales, where the Brontë sisters may have encountered them. The sisters could have heard of others in the stories of the locality, at a time when gossip and news furnished much of country folk's entertainment. As Charlotte explained, Emily knew the people around her, she 'knew their ways, their language, their family histories, she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate' and she was used to 'listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage (i.e. neighbourhood)'. This was the material from which she fashioned her story.

Perhaps she heard about John Yorke, 'a negro servant belonging to Mr. Hutton,' who was baptised in the parish church of Marske, near Richmond. He saved someone's life in a fire on the moors and, as a reward for his bravery, he was given a cottage. Having his own home enabled him to marry a local girl and start a family. One of his sons became a noted bare-knuckle boxer; one of his grandsons moved to Bradford in search of work and found it at Bowling Iron Works. Over one hundred and thirty of John Yorke's descendants are living in Britain today.

Audrey Dewjee lives in Yorkshire and has spent many years researching the lives of Black people in that county and elsewhere. She has worked on local exhibitions and publications to spread knowledge of the Black presence and, with Ziggi Alexander, republished Mary Seacole's autobiography in 1982 to bring her before a new readership.

Maybe Emily heard tales of Ira Aldridge, a young African American, whose ambition to be an actor could not have been fulfilled in his native New York. Ira arrived in England about 1823 and a year later he married Margaret Gill, the daughter of a Yorkshire stocking weaver. He toured all over Britain, earning rave reviews wherever he went. Ira Aldridge later took British nationality, achieved star status (and a knighthood) in Europe, and died while on tour in Poland in 1867.

Thomas Place inherited his father's land at Newton-le-Willows, near Bedale. After returning from his Jamaican plantation, William Place arranged for the manumission of his young son, 'born of the body of a slave named Sherry Ellis', and sent for him. This took many months and by the time Thomas arrived his father was dead. However, his aunt, uncle and cousins raised him and Thomas eventually became a farmer near Bishop Auckland.

Thomas Leigh, 'a fine sharp boy of colour' aged 9, who had been apprenticed to a chimney sweep, had to be rescued, as he had been very badly treated by his master, whereas Thomas Anson (who may have been a partial inspiration for Heathcliff's character in the film) liberated himself from enslavement by running away from the Sill family's farm, high up on the slopes of Wharfedale.

Entries in parish registers record a variety of Africans and Asians who were baptised, married or buried in Yorkshire. Henry Osmyn, who was born in India and baptised in York at the age of three, remained in the county, where he also founded a large family.

Although the majority of the people of colour who came here were men, there were women too. Ruth 'a native of Hindoostan' (i.e. India) was baptised in Knaresborough, while Betsy Sawyer, formerly enslaved in Antigua, was buried at Yeadon, where her gravestone can still be found.

In 1797, Sophia Pierce, 'the Black Girl' was sent, among a party of children from Westminster workhouse, to work in the newly built Greenholme Mill at Burley in Wharfedale. However, her career in Yorkshire didn't last very long as Sophia 'did not choose to be employed in the Cotton Works', and went back to London the

following year. Louisa Wild was recorded because she got into trouble with the law. Described as 'a girl of colour', she was charged with being drunk and disorderly at Bradford Court House in January 1839 and committed for a month. 'She is the same damsel who a short time ago led the officers of Doncaster a steeple chase, clearing hedges and ditches with the facility of a greyhound, and eventually got clear of them all.' As the person who discovered this newspaper report remarked, nowadays she would probably be in our Olympic team.

These are just a few examples of the many real-life people of Asian and African descent living in Yorkshire around the time that Emily Bronte was growing up and creating her masterpiece.

Why would Emily choose a Black hero for her powerful love story? *Wuthering Heights* has been classed as one of the greatest romantic stories in English literature and no-one can fail to be aware of the passion it contains, but it is even more a story of revenge. Heathcliff fully repays those who for years had subjected him to degradation and torment. Coming from a fiercely anti-slavery family, perhaps Emily Bronte was trying to provide a warning of what can happen when such wrongs are heaped upon innocent people – they may acquire warped values and bring about the eventual ruin of their oppressors.

Although first published in 1847, Bronte's story is set in the years 1801-02, with the narrative ranging backwards as far as 1758. Until the passing of the Act abolishing the shipment of enslaved people across the Atlantic in 1807, buying enslaved Africans and shipping them to the Americas was a legitimate trade for British merchants. After a long and hard-fought campaign by people in and out of Parliament and, not least, by the increasingly successful efforts of the Africans themselves, enslavement in British dominions was finally brought to an end in 1838. However, at the time of the novel's publication, slavery was still flourishing in both North and South America. It was a big issue for many people in Britain who were involved in campaigns to end it globally and especially in North America where some had kith and kin.

Liverpool had been Britain's most important slave trading port. In the 18th

and early 19th century, it must have had a sizeable Black population. On a visit to the town around 1789, Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck commented, 'What surprised me most in the aspect of Liverpool was the multitude of black servants, almost all of whom had originally been slaves'.

African men, women and children were auctioned in Liverpool from time to time, for example eight people from the ship *Thomas* (3 men, 2 women, 2 boys and a girl) were put up for sale at the Customs House in 1766. Black sailors, from the Caribbean as well as Africa, were employed on board British ships, to replace the many white crew members who had died or deserted while abroad. Even greater numbers of sailors were recruited in India. Known as Lascars, they were less likely to be integrated into existing crews because of language obstacles. Ruled over by a bilingual *serang*, they usually remained apart, and thus were more easily exploited and underpaid. Liverpool became home to seafarers from both groups and it is therefore not surprising that there could have been black or mixed-race children among the many street-urchins who tried to stay alive on the city's streets.

For over a hundred years, British merchants from ports such as Liverpool and Lancaster had purchased people in Africa and taken them to the Caribbean and North America where they could be tortured and worked to death in sugar and tobacco plantations, or in growing an abundance of other crops such as coffee, cotton, rice and arrowroot.

These crops were then shipped back to Britain on the third leg of a journey which, if the ship arrived safely, could net its owners a very handsome profit. Golden opportunities existed for adventurous spirits, the poverty stricken, or those who needed to leave the country for a while to escape various forms of trouble. Although many would perish from shipwreck or war or the ever-present menace of tropical diseases, some became rich as a result and a number managed to return to their native land.

Yorkshiremen from towns and cities and from the remotest corners of the dales went to seek their fortunes in this new world. Charles Inman, a man who was in line to

inherit family property, chose to go to Lancaster to be apprenticed to a merchant. From there he went to Jamaica, where eventually he was able to buy a plantation on which he died. His wife and family in Nidderdale inherited his wealth. Henry Foster from Oughtershaw in remote Langstrothdale and John Sill of Dent both went to Jamaica, while George Kearton from Oxnop Hall in the wilds of Swaledale chose to establish an arrowroot plantation on the island of St. Vincent. When George Metcalfe retired to Hawes, he still held large sugar estates in Dominica and Demerara.

Many of those who became owners of, or workers on, plantations, fathered children with enslaved African women, regardless of whether they had a white wife and family with them or back at home.

When planters and their families returned to Britain on a visit or for good, they often brought enslaved Africans with them to look after their needs en route in order to make the long, arduous voyage more bearable. The same was true for those who went to India to seek their fortunes as traders or soldiers. They too fathered children with Indian women, and brought servants back with them; whilst men from both groups sent their mixed-race children to attend schools in Yorkshire.

Emily Bronte would have been well-aware of such facts. Intending to set her readers thinking, she shrouded Heathcliff's origins in mystery. In portraying Heathcliff as a man of African descent, Andrea Arnold, the director of the new film, has chosen a plausible, if less-familiar, interpretation of his background. In so doing she has rendered a valuable service, by reminding us of an inter-racial British past which is, too often, overlooked.

Quick click

At the end of World War II, hundreds of Chinese seamen, married to English women, were forced to return to Asia, leaving behind their families. Liverpool and Its Chinese Seamen is a website dedicated to the Eurasian community in the port.

<http://halfandhalf.org.uk/>

BASA contributing to planned MA in History
Plans to offer an MA in the history of Black/African people in Britain (title to be decided) are being drawn up. Marika Sherwood has assembled a group of interested parties to work on possible qualification for postgraduates.

At the moment there is only one university at which undergraduates can study Black British History. That is the University of Chichester, where Hakim Adi offers four courses: Africa and the African Diaspora in the Modern World; Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism in Africa; the African Diaspora in Britain and Pan-Africanism. As he says, his courses are focused on well-known individuals, which is inevitable with introductory work. The opportunity to work on a wider range of subjects and periods is necessary.

There will, of course, be problems both of funding and accommodation. A number of institutions are being approached to see if they would be interested in offering this qualification. It will also be necessary to find out how many potential students there might be.

Migrations at Tate Britain

This exhibition looks at migration from 1500 to the present day, reflecting the remit of Tate Britain. It includes works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Flemish and Dutch landscape and still-life painters came to Britain in search of new patrons, through to Britain's current position within the global landscape. The exhibition reveals how British art has been influenced by successive waves of migration, not only by the movement of artists but also by the circulation of visual languages and ideas.

Artists from the 50s and 60s who moved to the UK from the Commonwealth are included, like Guyana-born Frank Bowling, the first Black artist to be elected to the Royal Academy, and groups such as the Black Audio Film Collective, whose work sought to unearth the possibilities of being both 'Black' and 'British' in the 1980s. Their work shows how British art has, directly or indirectly, come to reflect a much wider international stage over time.



Who's Afraid of Barney Newman (1968) by Frank Bowling in the exhibition at Tate Britain
© Frank Bowling

The exhibition also features recent work by contemporary artists. At Tate Britain until 12 August 2012. Admission charge. Go to <www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/migrations> for more info.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Centenary: more events

On 3 April 2012 there will be a lunchtime concert *Classics to Jazz* at the Fairfield Halls, Park Lane, Croydon, in aid of SCAT (Skeletal Cancer Action Trust). Starting at 1.05pm, the programme will include items by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Chick Corea, & Claude Bollin, played by Megan Whiteley, Fred Scott, Cornelius Bruinsma and friends. <http://scatbonecancertrust.org/soundpractice_april3.html>
Tickets from 0208 688 9291 or go to www.fairfieldhalls.co.uk

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Petite Suite de Concert* will be performed on 27 July 2012 in Hereford Cathedral as part of the

prestigious Three Choirs Festival. The four movements go from militaristic brass fanfares and delicate dancing melodies, soft pastoral string passages to a brisk, upbeat finale. The suite has an unmistakably English essence and its understated charm provides a great contrast to the monumental theatrics of the other two pieces in the programme, Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and Berlioz's *Te Deum*. Go to sctf.org.uk/events/ for other events throughout the year around the country.

The Barbados Cricket Buckle

The Barbados Cricket Buckle was found in 1979 in the River Tweed in Scotland by a London man using a metal detector. It is to be sold at auction by Bonhams in Chester on 30 May 2012, and is expected to fetch up to £150,000.



The belt buckle shows a 'mulatto' slave playing cricket in Barbados, and is the oldest known cricketing artefact outside the British Isles. It seems to depict the period before the great hurricane of 1780 but after 1777 when the middle stump, the third, was added to the wicket. Although the earliest reference to cricket in Barbados appears in 1806, it is known that cricket was played on the Caribbean islands from early times. Plantation owners apparently encouraged their slaves to play and freed slaves are recorded as playing in the mid-18th century.

The Buckle is thought to have belonged to the Hotham family, who have long-standing links with the West Indies. Admiral Sir Alan Hotham (1876-1975) was a cricket devotee and lived upstream from where the Buckle was found. In the 1780s his ancestor, the 1st Baron Admiral William Hotham (1736-1813), served in the West Indies, notably

Barbados, during the American War of Independence.

Elizabeth Welch honoured

On Monday 27 February, the playwright, author and critic, Bonnie Greer unveiled a British Heritage blue plaque at Ovington Court in Kensington, where the singer Elisabeth Welch (1904-2003) lived. From her stage debut in 1922 to her final professional appearance in 1996, Elisabeth Welch was a sophisticated, stylish interpreter of popular songs. Her recording career spanned eight decades – longer than Sinatra or Elvis – and encompassed New York, Paris and London,

Born in New York in 1904, Welch had a rich cultural heritage through her father John, who was Native American and African-American mixed race and her mother Elizabeth, who was of Irish and Scottish descent. In 1923 she launched the Charleston on Broadway and throughout the Jazz Age she was associated with some of the great entertainers of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1930 she launched her cabaret career in Paris. Ivor Novello wrote songs for her, Paul Robeson was her leading man in films and Welch became popular as a cabaret star of London's cafe society. She settled in London in 1933 and in 1934 became the first Black broadcaster to be given her own radio series, *Soft Lights and Sweet Music*, by the BBC.



Elisabeth Welch (1904-2003)
© Stephen Bourne

She remained in her adopted country for the duration of the war (1939-45) and entertained the troops and the British public. In the post-war years she appeared in sophisticated revues in London's West End. In 1979 her appearance and rendition of *Stormy Weather* in Derek Jarman's film of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* won her a whole new legion of fans.

Stephen Bourne, who wrote Welch's biography *Soft Lights and Sweet Music* and was a great personal friend, put Welch forward for this plaque, 'I shall always remember Elisabeth as warm, funny and mischievous. She was uncomplicated, and a joy to be with. A glamorous and gorgeous lady, she had no peer in the art of interpreting the lyrics of the giants of popular song: Cole Porter, Noel Coward, Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern.'



L to R: Stephen Bourne, Bonnie Greer and Paul Reid of the Black Cultural Archives at the unveiling.

She won a number of awards and was twice a guest on Desert Island Discs. The BBC has now added her 1990 appearance to their online collection, on www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/desert-island-discs/castaway/141c4ff8#p0093zrj

Bengali textiles project

For more than three centuries textiles, like muslin, were brought from Bengal by the East India Company and were worn by fashionable British women. Now, a dozen members of East London's diverse communities will help bring that little-known Bengal-British connection to light. The Stepney Community Trust has received a £48,300 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Its project is supported by the

National Maritime Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the London College of Fashion and the Museum of London and was launched on 8 February. The Trust is recruiting a number of volunteer Heritage Fashion Recreators, some of whom may already have traditional arts and craft skills, to carry out research and then recreate some of the dresses worn during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries by fashion-conscious ladies. They will also create some of their own designs inspired by the fashions and fabrics of the period that they have studied.

Those taking part will visit the institutions and attend training and workshops there over the course of the next year. Also studied will be how individuals and companies in London decided on what would be fashionable for the coming season, the original design methods used, and how the textiles were ordered, manufactured in Bengal and imported into Britain.

As part of the project, funded separately by the Stepney Community Trust, research will be carried out in Bangladesh and West Bengal to develop a better understating of the nature of the textile manufacturing industry of the period.

In addition to the two dozen finished costumes which are to be produced, the project will also create a website, an exhibition and a full-colour book. It is hoped that some of the recreated historical dresses will be displayed in museums and galleries.

Diary Dates

Images of Black Women is holding the IBW Film Festival, a celebration of the African Diaspora cinema with a focus on women's contribution to film. This will be held at the Tricycle Cinema in London, 13- 15 April 2012. It opens with a documentary on athlete Jesse Owens, and *Yelling to the Sky*, a depiction of teenage angst. The programme on 14 April showcases the Caribbean experience.

Check <www.nucinema.co.uk> for further information. The NuCinema website also carries information about African Diaspora film releases & film events (mainly in the UK).

Caribbean Poetry Conferences

A conference on Caribbean poetry, *The Power of Caribbean Poetry - Word and Sound*, is to be held at Homerton College, Faculty of Education, Cambridge University from Thursday 20 – Saturday 22 Sept 2012. The first two days of this international gathering will take the form of an academic conference, the final day having a more educational focus and therefore likely to appeal to teachers as well as scholars.

Members of the Caribbean Poetry Project from Cambridge University Faculty of Education and the University of West Indies will be hosting the conference and disseminating its outcomes. A bookshop will be available throughout the conference and some project partners, such as the online Poetry Archive and Peepal Tree Press, will be represented.



John Agard, writer of *Equiano's Epigrams*, will be reading and performing his work at the conference.

The speakers/performers so far include: John Agard, Beverley Bryan, Kei Miller, Mervyn Morris, Grace Nichols, Velma Pollard, Olive Senior and Dorothea Smartt. Conference fees including lunch, dinner, tea & coffee will be £200. Day rate £75 for 20th, £100 for 21st and £70 for 22nd for bookings before May 1st 2012. Accommodation is available at Homerton College at £60 per night.

There is also call for papers. Abstracts (300 words approx.) should be sent to Bryony Horsley-Heather (bsjh2@cam.ac.uk) by the end of March 2012. See the website

for suggested subjects. For further information, contact Morag Styles (ms104@cam.ac.uk) or Bryony Horsley-Heather (bsjh2@cam.ac.uk) or visit <caribbeanpoetry.educ.cam.ac.uk>, where you can also register online.

Peepal Tree Press has convened a two-day conference, *Narrating the Caribbean Nation: A Celebration of Literature and Orature*, which will be held on 14-15 April 2012 at Leeds Metropolitan University. The conference is to celebrate the Silver Anniversary of Peepal Tree Press and to highlight the contribution of its own authors and other Caribbean and Black British writers to contemporary world literature.

Kwame Dawes has confirmed his participation as a keynote speaker. Widely recognised as one of the Caribbean's leading writers, Kwame is also Chancellor's Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, and Associate Poetry Editor at Peepal Tree Press.

The conference aims to bring together writers, academics, students, teachers and people with an interest in Caribbean literature to discuss the rich body of both Caribbean and Black British writing and to explore the relationship between the two. The conference will juxtapose academic papers with less formal presentations from activists and practitioners in order to raise the profile of writers of Caribbean heritage. Full details are available on <narratingthe caribbeannation.eventbrite.co.uk>

Maritime Conference in Cambridge

The Cambridge Maritime and Oceanic History Workshop is holding a conference at the Centre for African Studies in Cambridge on 22 and 23 June 2012. Entitled *Africa and the Atlantic World 1450-1850*, it has speakers from many different countries and universities looking at aspects of African history and, inevitably, the trans-Atlantic slave trades of Portugal, Britain and the Netherlands. Other topics include resistance and intrusion in the slave trade; cultural transmission of Africa in the New World; perceptions of Africa and Africans in Sweden, Britain and Guadeloupe and Africa and Portugal. It's a remarkably cheap £12 for the two days, without accommodation or meals. Full details and registration are on <www.hist.cam.ac.uk/research/conferences/africa-and-the-atlantic >

African film season

African Odysseys has been running at the British Film Institute since 2007. It screens films that are selected by cultural leaders, film makers and experts who make up the African Caribbean Consultative Committee at the BFI Southbank. Between March-September 2012 there will be inspirational films by and about the people of Africa, from archive classics to new cinema. Each screening will be introduced by a key speaker and followed by a discussion.



Still from *A Hole in Babylon*, to be shown at the BFI in April.

It's not only cinema-release films. On 14 April 2012, for example, there will be a showing of a 1979 TV drama from the BBC's *Play for Today* strand. *A Hole in Babylon* was based on actual events, when members of the newly formed Black Liberation Army attacked the Spaghetti House restaurant in Knightsbridge, and a famous siege developed. It is hoped that director Horace Ové will attend.

On the same day there will be a showing of *Mangrove Nine*, a re-released documentary originally made in 1973 about the aftermath of a Notting Hill protest against police harassment, which culminated in the arrest of nine people – including a young Darcus Howe – and a headline case at the Old Bailey.

Details of the upcoming films can be found on <www.bfi.org.uk/whatson/> Tickets for all screenings are £5.00. To book, please call BFI Southbank on 0207 928 3232.

Moon on a Rainbow Shawl

Errol John's classic play *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* was originally produced for BBC Radio as *Small Island Moon* in 1958, and later that year it was staged at the Royal

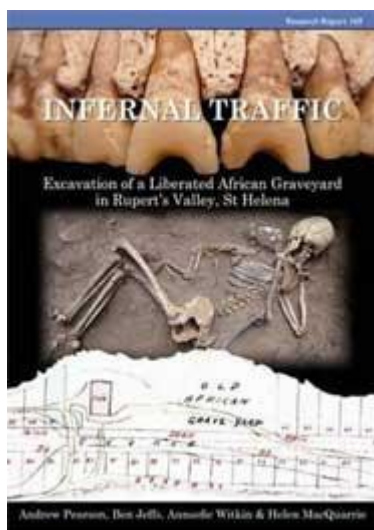
Court Theatre in London. It is now being revived at the National Theatre and will continue in repertoire until 9 June 2012. This version is directed by Michael Buffong in the Cottesloe Theatre with designs by Soutra Gilmour. The cast includes Jude Akuwudike, Jade Anouka, Ray Emmet Brown, Burt Caesar, Jenny Jules, Martina Laird, Joshua McCord, Danny Sapani, Tahirah Sharif and Lloyd Thomas.

Set in Port of Spain, Trinidad, as returning troops from the Second World War fill with their raucous celebrations, this play depicts a vibrant, cosmopolitan world that is as harsh as it is filled with colour and warmth. Snatches of calypso compete with hymn tunes, drums and street cries as neighbours drink, brawl, pass judgment, make love, look out for each other and crave a better life. But Ephraim is no dreamer and nothing, not even the seductive Rosa, is going to stop him escaping his dead-end job for a fresh start in England.

Errol John was born in Trinidad in 1924 and settled in Britain in 1951 where he worked as an actor and dramatist until his death in 1988. Stephen Bourne's book *Black in the British Frame – The Black Experience in British Film and Television* (Continuum, 2001) contains a chapter about him. To book tickets for the play, call 020 7452 3000 or go to <nationaltheatre.org.uk>.

Slave burial ground on St Helena

Archaeologists from the University of Bristol have unearthed a unique slave burial ground on the remote South Atlantic island of St Helena. This tiny island, 1,000 miles off the coast of south-west Africa, acted as the landing place for many slaves, captured by the Royal Navy during the suppression of the slave trade between 1840 and 1872. Some 26,000 freed slaves were brought to the island, most of whom were landed at a depot in Rupert's Bay. The appalling conditions aboard the slave ships meant that many did not survive their journey, whilst Rupert's Valley – arid, shadeless, and always windy – was poorly suited to act as a hospital and refugee camp for such large numbers. At least 5,000 people are likely to have been buried there.



Part of the cemetery was investigated between 2006 and 2008 and some 325 bodies in a combination of individual, multiple and mass graves were discovered. Only five individuals were buried in coffins, the remainder had been placed (or thrown) directly into shallow graves, before being hastily covered. Now archaeologists, led by Dr Andrew Pearson of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Bristol, have published the results of their discoveries and the subsequent scientific investigations of the human remains and associated grave goods buried with them.

The artefacts from the excavations are currently at the University of Bristol and will be transferred to Liverpool for an exhibition at the International Slavery Museum in 2013 before returning to St Helena. The human remains will shortly be re-interred on St Helena.

Infernal Traffic: Excavation of a Liberated African Graveyard in Rupert's Valley, St Helena by Pearson, Jeffs, Witkin and MacQuarrie, is published by the Council for British Archaeology. An article on the project can also be found in the magazine *British Archaeology* (No. 123 – March/April 2012, pp 28–33).

RAF Flight Lieutenant and Pan-African statesman dies

Dudley Thompson, born in 1917 in Panama, grew up in Jamaica. In 1940 he made his way to England and trained at Cranwell where he became one of the first Black pilots. He became a Flight Lieutenant in the

RAF, flying in Lancaster bombers, and was decorated for his work.

In 1945, in uniform, he participated in the Manchester Pan-African Congress. His first wife was Genevieve 'Pearle' Cezair, the daughter of Dr Hubert Cezair a West Indian who practiced medicine in Manchester. They had four children. Thompson was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship in 1947 and studied law at Merton College, Oxford and at Gray's Inn, where he qualified as a barrister. He went on to settle and practise law in Tanzania and also working in Kenya where he was significant in the defence of Jomo Kenyatta (later the first president of Kenya). He also worked in the West Indies. He became a QC in 1963.

In the 1970s Thompson was Jamaica's minister of foreign affairs, and in 1989 he was based in Nigeria as Jamaica's ambassador at large to Africa. His second wife was Jamaican Cecile Miller.

With poet Hugh Carberry he wrote *A West Indian in England* for the Central Office of Information in 1950, a 30 page booklet, and his auto-biography *From Kingston to Kenya* appeared in 1993. Robert Johnson's *Fighting for Africa: the Pan-African contributions of Ambassador Dudley J. Thompson and Bill Sutherland* was published in 2010. Dudley Thompson died on 20 January 2012 in New York City.

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Magazine Round-up

Midland History Vol. 36 (2) Autumn 2011 is a special issue devoted to ethnic community histories in the Midlands. BASA's George Watley contributed 'The Cultural Currency of Afro-Caribbeans in Northamptonshire c. 1960-1990'. Other articles include 'Representing Race and Place: Black Midlanders on Television in the 1960s and 1970s' by Paul Long; the 'Legacy of Partition, 1947-2009: Creating New Archives from the Memories of Leicestershire People' by Richard Bonney, Colin Hyde and John Martin and 'The Black Presence in the West Midlands 1650-1918' David Callaghan. There are other pieces on British Bhangra music, the Irish in Coventry, and Birmingham Anglo-Jewry.

The **London Journal** November 2011 has an article by BASA member Daniel Whittall, 'Creating Black Space in Imperial London: The League of Coloured Peoples and Aggrey House 1931-1943'. This looks at the history of the involvement of the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) and in particular its founder Dr Harold Moody in a Colonial Office funded project to establish a hostel for colonial students, especially African and African diasporic students in London.

Emel, the Muslim lifestyle magazine, issue 88, January 2012, had 'Portraits of our Heritage' by Ali Khimji, who was pleasantly surprised to find in the National Portrait Gallery pictures of a translator of the Qur'an (Abdulla Yusuf Ali); a Muslim servant of Queen Victoria (Hafiz Abdul Karim), and the first portrait to honour as an equal a Muslim slave from West Africa (Abuya Suleiman Diallo, also known as Job ben Solomon). The latter is on the cover. The article also describes, with pictures, others, including Mohammed Ben Haddu Ottur, an 19th century Moroccan ambassador; Lady Allia Abbas Ali Baig of Bahrain who did social and humanitarian work; Elizabeth Marc, who became Princess Nuzrat Ali Mirza of Murshidabad, India, and Nawab Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan of the Indian Army and the Carlton Club and also President of the British Falconers Club. This issue – and previous issues – can be accessed for £1 from Emel's website <www.emel.com>

Business History, Vol. 53 (7), December 2011 has an article by Katie McDade 'Liverpool merchants' entrepreneurial networks 1725-1807', which looks at a possible factor which helped Liverpool to overtake Bristol as the premier slave trading port. This article looks at how entrepreneurship and notions of capital within networks might mean there was a 'particular spirit of enterprise' in Liverpool. The merchants there managed voyages in comparatively larger investment groups, giving them a competitive advantage.

History Today, Vol. 62 (1), January 2012 carries an important article by Peter Ling 'The Media Made Malcolm', which looks at the life of Malcolm X, advocate of Black Power and charismatic and controversial promoter of Islam to the African diaspora. He visited Britain in 1964 and had followers here. Views on his life and legacy are still sharply polarised. The next issue, February 2012 carries a letter by Marika Sherwood disagreeing with Ling's conclusions.

The **BBC History Magazine** January 2012 has an interesting article by Gus Casely-Hayford on 'The Golden Coast' about the relationship (and hence trade in the enslaved) between the Asante kingdom, its neighbours, and Europeans till 1896 when the British finally conquered them and banished the Asantehene (King). Amanda Freeman nominates Malcolm X in the article on 'The most over-rated people in history'. Dominic Sandbrook's 'A big day in history' is Wednesday, 22 January 1879: the defeat of the Zulus at Rorke's Drift by the Britons.

The BBC's **Who Do You Think You Are?** Magazine, October 2011, includes an article about tracing merchant navy seamen, which is illustrated with the CRI card of Dixon Jones, born 25 October 1905 in Calabar, Nigeria and based in Liverpool. The photograph on the card shows him to be a Black African. This is from the Board of Trade records in The National Archives. It's a reminder that seamen in the merchant navy came from all over the world and the article itself might help those looking at a

range of aspects of Black British history in port cities, like union activities or the Black presence.

The Winter 2011 issue of **Cockney Ancestor**, the journal of the East of London Family History Society, carries an account by George Aldis of his family links with the Caribbean. In 1895 one of his family in Stepney married a Black seaman from Antigua. One of their daughters married a sailor (and part-time boxer), also Black, from the West Indies. She moved with him to St Lucia. The article details the descendants of the original couple.

The **Scottish Historical Review** Vol. XC (230) October 2011 has 'Lord Seaforth: Highland Proprietor, Caribbean Governor and Slave Owner' by Finlay McKichan, which examines the life of the governor of Barbados immediately before the 1807 abolition of the British slave trade. He looks at (among other factors) the parallels between the Highlands, Barbados and Berbice where Seaforth's good intentions were often of short-term or limited advantage to their intended beneficiaries.

BASA members reviewed

Daniell Whittall's review of Marika Sherwood's *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora* appeared in the *Caribbean Review of Books*, September 2011. See <caribbeanreviewofbooks.com/crb-archive/27-september-2011/the-imperial-african/>

It was also reviewed by William Ackah in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 34 (1) 2011. See <www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2011.610333>

Vincent Carretta reviewed Kathleen Chater's *Untold Histories: Black people in England and Wales during the period of the British Slave Trade in Eighteenth-Century Life* Vol. 36(1) Winter 2012. See <muse.jhu.edu/journals/eighteenth-century_life>

Diary Dates

Seminars organised by Marika Sherwood, Institute of Commonwealth Studies/BASA.

These seminars are held from 6.00pm to 7.30pm at Senate House, University of London, Russell Square, London WC1

25 April 2012, Room 349, Third Floor
Colin Grant 'Too long have others spoke for us'

Marking Jamaica's 50th year of independence, Colin Grant will discuss *Bageye at the Wheel*, the final part of a trilogy of books examining African-Caribbean life in the 20th century. His first, *Negro with a Hat*, a biography of Marcus Garvey, echoes Bageye's Jamaican Bella Figura.

29 May 2012 (awaiting room allocation)

Kwaku, African, Not Black History: Arguments for "African"

Kwaku, a history consultant and community activist, contends that 'Black' in Britain used to be a 'political colour of alliances', but whom does it now represent? Should we not use 'African'? He will focus on the issue of African identity.

5 July 2012, Room 264, Second floor
Darrell M. Newton, Paving the Empire Road: BBC Television and Black Britons

Professor Newton, Chair of the Department of Communication Arts at Salisbury University (USA), will be discussing how the BBC represented the impact of West Indian immigration, subsequent racial relations, and the efforts of Black British writers, producers, and actors to effect change. His book, published by Manchester University Press, will be on sale at a reduced price.

Everyone is welcome. You do not have to pre-book/register, but, to save overcrowding, it would be helpful if you could email <chloe.pieters@sas.ac.uk> if you intend coming. If you need any further information, or would like to propose yourself as a speaker, please contact <Marika.Sherwood@sas.ac.uk>

Parish and other records

From Audrey Dewjee

Dr. Watson did not appear in the earliest Sherlock Holmes stories. The idea of an assistant for Sherlock came from a close friend of Arthur Conan Doyle's, Dr. Mohamed Ebrahim Sufi (L.R.C.P and S.E. Edinburgh) an Indian Muslim, born in Lucknow. Doyle thought this was a brilliant idea, and created the character of Dr. Watson as a result.

From Sylvia Dibbs

Baptism at the (Roman Catholic) French Chapel Royal, King Street, Portman Square, London 19 May 1804 Celestin Louis Gabrial, godfather Louis Claude comte de la Chastre; godmother Elisabeth de Bon Temps, vicomtesse de Vaux,, priest Etienne Jean Baptiste Louis des Galois de Tours, bishop of Moulins. Notes: bp. Feast of Pentecost; aged about 25yrs; parents a labourer & merchant living in Bombay; a 'garcon de couleur noire' (a boy of black colour) of Bengal in the Island of Bombay, living in London for about two years wished to be a Catholic; given due instruction bp. conditionally; Godf. chevalier of the Order of St Louis, commander of the Order of St Lazare, marshal of French King's army & colonel in British King's service; similarly the husband of the godm.

From the French Catholic Mission registers in London. The copies are kept on film in Portsmouth Diocesan Archives. The original registers are in the *Ministere des affaires etrangeres* archives in France.

From Dr Joan Kemp

The Lincolnshire Family History Society's latest journal reports in its 'Snippets' column that in the church of St Mary le Wigford in Lincoln was 'Baptised on October 6th 1773 Charles Town a negroe'.

From Jeffrey Green

Henry Avery took a pirate ship 'Charles' from Coruna in May 1694 and reached the Indian Ocean Comoros islands in the now renamed 'Fancy'. William May, a sick sailor who was put ashore on Johanna 'had the not-so-unusual experience of being addressed in fluent English by one of the "negroes". After recovering from his

surprise, May learned that the man had been taken from the island by an English ship and had lived for a time in Bethnal Green, a London suburb, before returning home.'

Source: Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge MA, Harvard UP, 1986) p 86 and the notes give the source as *State Trials*, V, 11-12.

The *Boro' of West Ham, East Ham and Stratford Express* 14 September 1927 covered the appearance at West Ham Magistrates Court on 13 September 1927 of Thomas Miller aged 36 a 'coloured' fireman. He was charged with wounding 'another black man' named Alfred Myers aged 20 of 20 Cranbrook Road with a razor. The incident occurred on 3 September. Myers was accused of being a scab. Miller was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment and told 'he must never use a razor in that way in this country'. The case was reported, without mentioning that Myers was Black, in the *Illustrated Police News* on 15 and 22 Sept 1927.

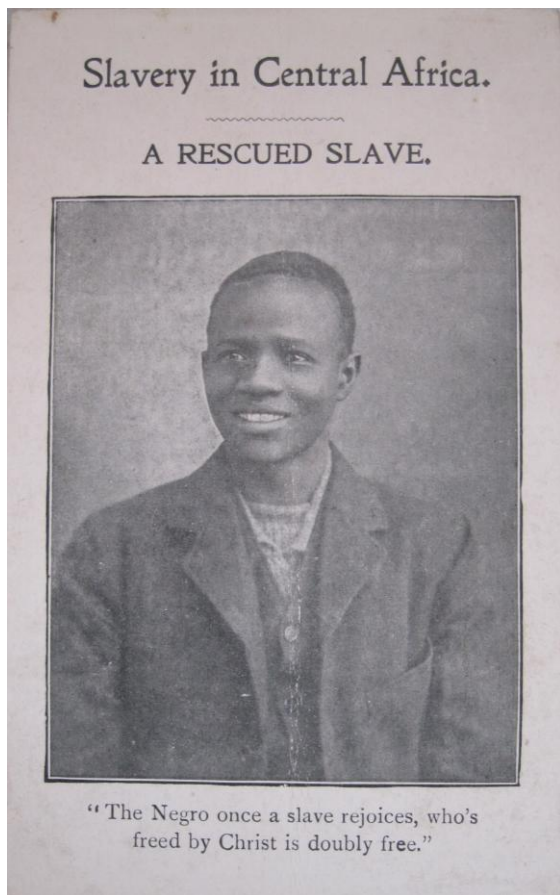
Frank Soo (1914-1991), of Chinese-English parentage was a professional footballer and later a football manager. One of his brothers, Ronald Soo, was a Flight Sergeant in the wartime Royal Air Force. An air gunner on bombers, his plane went down in Germany in mid-January 1944. With colleagues from Squadron 166 (based at what is now Humberside Airport) the 23-year-old is buried in the Commonwealth War Graves site in Hanover, Germany.

From Marika Sherwood

1755: 'The Africa Committee in London of the Company of Merchants Trading in Africa sent two native youths, John Acquaa and George Sackee, to the Governor and Council of Cape Coast Castle whom they had despatched to England two years before under the care of Capt. Geo. Cockburn'. The costs had been: '£42 per quarter at the Rev. Mr John Moore's school' and 'invoice from Mr Peregrine Cust: £93 for board, schooling, clothing, and doctor's fee (both had small pox)'. (*West Africa Review*, December 1946, p.1378)

Historic Document: A Rescued Slave

by Kathleen Chater



I saw this postcard on ebay. Unfortunately there is no information about who produced it. All it says on the back is 'postage one halfpenny', which dates it between 1840, when postage stamps were introduced, and 1918, when the rate for a postcard went up.

I asked Professor David Killingray, expert on the British churches and Black people, who told me, 'the card might have been a product of one of the several missionary societies working in central Africa - a broadly defined region after the 1870s. "Slave" most likely means from "Arab" slavery. Missionary societies such as the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and various Scottish bodies working in what is approximately modern Malawi did work hard to redeem slaves and to secure people from re-enslavement, and this frequently appeared in their literature and propaganda which included postcards'.

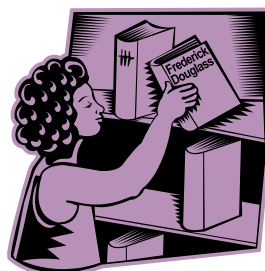
Not only was there a political scramble for Africa, there was also a religious one. The words below the image are from the Jubilee hymn, written by Henry Watson Fox (1817-1848) of Wadham College who worked for the Church Missionary Society. This is verse 4:

On Afric's sunny shore glad voices
Wake up the morn of Jubilee;
The Negro, once a slave, rejoices:
Who's freed by Christ is doubly free
Sing, brothers, sing! yet many a nation
Shall hear the voice of God, and live:
E'en we are heralds of salvation:
The Word he gave, we'll freely give.

Jubilee is a biblical reference: Jews were enjoined to free slaves and indentured labourers in jubilee years, which occurred every 50 years (Leviticus 25.13). Because of the use of this hymn, it seems likely this postcard was the product of the CMS which was founded in London in 1799 and was strongly linked to the Clapham Sect, which was involved in the campaign to abolish the British slave trade and later slavery in the Empire.

The man depicted here, however, was probably emancipated in the early 20th century. The clothes he is wearing - a collarless shirt, waistcoat and a knitted undergarment - are typical of workingmen's clothes of the late-19th-early-20th century. I am assuming the clothes were second-hand, donated to the Society after they had fallen out of fashion, so this photograph was most probably taken in the 20th century. He seems to be very warmly clad for Africa. It was rare for these emancipated Africans to come to Britain. If this man did come here, it may have been to coincide with one of the exhibitions of 'primitive' peoples that were so popular in the days of Empire, like the group of pygmies brought from the Belgian Congo in 1909. The missionary society which took this picture might have capitalised on the interest these exhibitions created to raise money for their work. There's a lot of supposition here - the next step will be to look in the archives of the CMS and other missionary societies.

Book Reviews



General History

Asher Hoyles & Martin Hoyles, *Caribbean Publishing in Britain: A Tribute to Arif Ali* (Hansib, 2011), ISBN 9781870518642, £9.99, pbk. The historical contribution of the Caribbean to the intellectual, political and social life of Britain has been of profound significance. Although this contribution has touched – and in many instances transformed – such diverse aspects of British life, it is arguably in the contribution of Caribbean peoples to writing and publishing in Britain that the most obvious sources for tracing this history are to be found.

With *Caribbean Publishing in Britain*, Asher and Martin Hoyles have provided a valuable introduction to this history. Beginning with a brief, though somewhat superficial, introduction to the history of Black publishing in Britain, their narrative then introduces the nineteenth century Jamaican radical Robert Wedderburn as the earliest contributor to the history of Caribbean publishing in Britain, and proceeds to trace this history through to the modern day, closing with an account of Hansib publications, publishers of the book itself. In between, the book provides brief yet informative accounts of a range of individuals and publishing ventures, addressing figures as diverse as Henry Sylvester Williams, Harold Moody, and Marcus Garvey, as well as a range of post-war Caribbean newspapers in Britain and publishing firms such as Hansib and New Beacon.

Having traced this history in just over 60 pages, though, the book then makes a strange and somewhat disconcerting shift. In the second section of the book, the focus

along the coast in 1498, then offers a whistle-stop tour through the history of Guyana culminating with independence.

Section 3 of the book then turns to the biography of Arif Ali, born in Guyana in 1935. Here, the authors bring to light the absorbing biography of this important figure in the history of Caribbean publishing in Britain. Ali, who founded the Hansib publishing firm having earlier been involved in the production of several Caribbean-focused newspapers in Britain, is a fascinating figure, and this section of the book draws out some interesting biographical details and ties them into broader trends in post-war Black British history.

Despite Ali's importance to this history, the dominant place he is given by this account tends to over-emphasise his place in the history of Caribbean publishing in Britain, important as he has been. The account is very much written in the mode of 'tribute', with little by way of critical analysis. Add to this the fact that the section on Guyana, no doubt designed to provide background and context to Ali's life, in fact works to disrupt the pan-Caribbean focus of the earlier sections of the book, and indeed of many of the publishing ventures covered here. Having set up their book as a history of Caribbean publishing in Britain, the authors' shift of focus to a narrower attention on Guyana serves only to undermine this broader narrative.

As an introductory overview to a remarkable history, and as a contribution to the biography of Arif Ali, an important figure within that history, *Caribbean Publishing in Britain* is invaluable. For those looking for a detailed work of scholarship on the history of Caribbean publishing in Britain, this book will not suffice – such a history remains to be written. There are too many gaps in the history here – publications unmentioned, connections untraced – for this book to fill the role. However, with its broad range and content, this book should serve as the perfect introduction to the topic. Particularly, those who work in education will value the short yet informative

descriptions of particular individuals, organisations and publications, and especially the many excellent images reproduced in the book, all of which might be made use of in the classroom, and can serve as useful tools for encouraging the next generation of young people to take an interest in the role of Caribbean people within British publishing history.

Daniel Whittall

Bressey, Caroline and Adi, Hakim, *Belonging In Europe: The African Diaspora and Work* (Routledge, 2011), ISBN 9780415488709, £80, hbk. Taking its cue from Hans Debrunner's pioneering 1979 work *Presence and Prestige: A History of Africans in Europe Before 1918*, this book adds to recent work seeking to explore the place of African diasporic peoples across Europe, ranging in time from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The editors frame the book as an attempt at understanding the ways in which 'black Europeans shared or experienced a sense of belonging in Europe.' Of necessity, the book therefore makes a novel attempt to link together histories of the African diaspora across a range of European states.

The book therefore sets its scope widely, seeking not only to incorporate a range of national contexts but also to do so across a broad period of time. In doing so, the relationship between European contexts is occasionally obscured, and requires drawing out by the reader, rather than being the main focus of the particular chapters. Indeed, it is arguably only in one chapter, that by Hakim Adi on the interactions between the Comintern and Black workers in Britain and France between 1919-1937, that any concerted effort at comparative history, integrating multiple national contexts in the same chapter, appears. Despite the editors' hope that the collection can help to emphasise the importance of looking at the way that African diasporic peoples have historically been treated across Europe, the fact that many of the chapters focus primarily on individual national contexts limits the full development of this comparative point.

That said, the chapters themselves make important historiographical interventions, ranging from Kathleen Chater's summary of her wider work on Black British history in

the eighteenth century to Dienne Hondius's research on the African diasporic presence in Holland in the same period, through to Sean Creighton's work on John Archer's place in labour politics around Battersea and Robbie Aitken's work on African migrants in Weimar Germany. The broad range of these contents highlights both the books greatest strength and also its most inevitable weakness – in covering such a broad terrain, it both provokes further interest in the many lines of connection that might be drawn between African diasporic peoples across Europe, whilst also leaving the reader with the desire for more detailed interrogation of how particular national contexts across Europe interacted with one another across this broad period.

Daniel Whittall

Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), ISBN 9781107014367, £65, hbk. The belief that the slave trade was based on kidnapping Africans wholesale, or Africans being coerced into selling their own people by superior European technology and power has long been recognised by historians as simplistic, although it is commonly held by the general public. Now Toby Green, drawing on many previously untouched sources goes a step further. As he points out, in the early days of the slave trade Portugal, Spain and Africa met on roughly equal terms. Medieval Europe was not much more advanced than Africa: indeed in many ways, particularly science and mathematics, it lagged behind. These ethnic groups not only met, they mixed culturally to lay the groundwork for what became the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The early Black presence in England during Tudor times seems to come via the trades of Spain or Portugal, so knowledge of and an understanding of them is essential to researchers into Black British history in this period. Relatively few people in Britain or the USA, however, can use the sources with any expertise.

Such an expert, however, is Dr Green and the material he quarries from Portuguese and Spanish archives not only transforms our understanding of the early period of the European slave trade but also highlights a group that has been hitherto little consi-

dered. These were the Jews living as Christians (so-called New Christians) in Iberia, who had links with Jewish communities in North Africa. He argues that their cultural flexibility, necessary for survival in the fervently Catholic peninsula, meant they could deal more easily with Africans and Arabs, who had a thriving slave trade in Africa long before the arrival of Europeans. Dr Green's main focus, however, is on the cross-cultural links between Africans and Iberians, the *lançados*, settlers in Africa, and also among the different peoples in West Africa itself.

Although historians recognise the active, even enthusiastic involvement of Africans in the slave trade, Dr Green's book is unlikely to dent popular beliefs. It is highly academic, meticulously argued and needs to be studied carefully a number of times, especially by those who are not specialists in early modern Europe and do not share his knowledge of Portugal and Spain nor the history of West Africa in this period. As this describes most of us, it follows that this is a very important book.

Kathleen Chater

Cervantes Rodriguez, M., Grosfoguel, R. and Mielants, E. (eds), *Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United States: Essays on Incorporation, Identity and Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), ISBN 978592139545, hbk.

The essays collected in *Caribbean Migrations to Western Europe and the United States* were first presented as part of a conference held in Paris in 2002. The book largely focuses on the post-1945 period, and explores various aspects of migration from across the Caribbean to Western Europe and the USA.

Following an introduction by the editors, Nina Glick-Schiller provides a general overview of the transnational theoretical frameworks which guide the book as a whole. The chapter is useful in situating the book itself within a broader range of arguments about the conceptual suitability of notions of transnationalism, and in particular in clarifying the relationship between what Glick Schiller terms 'transnational social fields' and 'transnational cultural flows'. The remainder of the book is divided into three sections, looking at 'State policies and migrants'

strategies,' 'identities, countercultures and ethnic resilience,' and 'incorporation, entrepreneurship and household strategies.'

Of most interest to BASA members will no doubt be Mary Chamberlain's chapter, 'Identity and kinship: Caribbean transnational narratives,' in which she looks closely at the ways in which two Jamaican families who moved to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s experienced life in Britain. The chapter draws out themes which have been of importance throughout Chamberlain's broader body of work, and acts as an excellent introduction to the work of one of Britain's foremost historians of the relationship between Britain and the Caribbean in the twentieth century.

The editors should be commended for focusing on the broad nature of the Caribbean experience, and also for including chapters on migration to a host of countries, including the USA, Britain, France, Spain and the Netherlands. However, the chapters themselves are uneven, and it is often difficult to track how particular essays in the three different sections of the book relate to one-another. Some of the chapters could also have benefited by placing their analysis within a longer historical context of the relationship between the Caribbean and the regions to which the people they examine have migrated. However, the book is recommended for anybody interested in work on post-war Caribbean migration from a sociological standpoint.

Daniel Whittall

Kelth Bradley & Paul Cartledge (eds), *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, The Ancient Mediterranean World*, Cambridge University Press 2011, ISBN 9780521840668, £110, hbk. This is the first of a four-volume history of slavery round the world. The focus here is on the societies of ancient Greece and Rome – all slave-holding during their hundreds of years of existence. There is also a chapter on 'Slavery in the ancient Near East'. A very brief chapter deals with the Jews in Palestine: they were both enslaved and slave owners of Jews and others; again most of the enslaved had been taken prisoners in wars. The local system changed slightly when the Roman Empire took over Palestine, but slavery continued, as it did during Christian era. From the chapter on

'Slavery and the rise of Christianity, we learn that, as far as can be ascertained, the only form of slavery the institutionalised Christian church opposed was that for purely sexual purposes. However, a few Christian sects were opposed to slavery and aided runaways.

Using written and archaeological records, the essayists present the most recent findings, often adding to and sometimes contradicting previous reports. Is it a lack of records that omits most of Africa except for 'Roman' Egypt, c.1 – 300 AD? It is important to note, I think, that the very paucity of data leads many of the essayists to compare this 'Mediterranean' slavery with that in the world new to Europeans, the Americas, over one thousand years later.

Essayist Walter Scheidel estimates that a total of about 100 million were bought or sold in the Roman Empire between c.700BC to 500AD. It was usually those (including children) captured in wars who were enslaved. Slaves were usually regarded as chattels: they were 'deracinated and disempowered', and had no 'personal or social identity'. But conditions and laws regarding their treatment, as well as those dealing with manumission, absconders and those harbouring them, varied throughout the centuries. There are reports of a few slave uprisings, the most famous of which was that led by Spartacus in 73BC, which took two years to put down; 6,000 of the rebels 'were notoriously crucified along the Appian Way between Capua and Rome'.

While I found the book immensely informative, I would certainly have appreciated at least a time-line and most certainly a map! Sadly, its price puts the book beyond most peoples' and most non-academic libraries' pockets.

Marika Sherwood

John Titford *My Ancestor Settled in the British West Indies* (Society of Genealogists, 2011), ISBN 9781907199080, £9.99, pbk. One of the problems of doing historical research in the Caribbean is the lack of information about the kinds of records there are and their locations.

Some years ago John Titford wrote a handful of articles for *Family Tree* magazine which were, until recently, the only published information about the contents of records offices in most of the West Indian

islands. He has now produced a very comprehensive guide records relating to British settlers in the West Indies and other British territories in the region, including Bermuda, British Guyana and British Honduras. Titford has deliberately confined himself to records relating to British settlers. However those researching African-Caribbeans will also find this useful to discover more about the masters of their slave ancestors. And after Emancipation, both Black and white people will appear in the same records, e.g. church records, workhouses, trade directories, hospitals, etc. Although aimed at genealogists, this thorough and very well researched guide will be of great help to historians working on this region.

There is a general introduction to colonial history in the Caribbean region, then a chapter on each of the twenty islands or countries. These start with a description and brief history, followed by a list of notable people there, then lists of the religious denominations' records and civil records in both UK repositories and local record offices. Finally there are secondary sources of printed transcripts, MIs etc, a general reading list and websites. It is illustrated with archive images and Titford's own photographs.

Kathleen Chater



Education

Jak Bubuela-Dodd, *Nubian Jak's Book of World Facts*, vol.1, London: Nu Jak Media Publishing, 2004, ISBN 0-9532017-1-6, £14.99, from <www.nubianjak.com> According to the subtitle, this is the 'Ultimate Guide to Black Entertainment History and Achievement'. The first part, of 140 pages, asks questions under theme headings: Entertainment; Science and Engineering; General Knowledge; Literature and Art; Sports; History; Politics and Law; Millennium Dawn. The second part, of 160

pages, gives answers and sources. The questions are wide-ranging, covering thousands of years of Africa and the diaspora. For example, in the history section: 'Alessandro de Medici, the famous Black Italian, was the son of a maidservant named Anna. Who was his father?' It then suggests three answers. Now turn to Part 2 where the answer given is 'Pope Clement VII', with a number of sources of information and references.

So, a massive undertaking, and very, very helpful. Quite mind-blowing, according to one of my grand-daughters, who is very interested in this history. It is very easy to use as there are two indexes, one by name (so look up Alexander Pushkin) the other by subject, e.g. African Methodist Episcopal Church. There are portraits and other illustrations. 'I must have a copy', my grand-daughter said. Everyone should have one!

Marika Sherwood

Lost Kingdoms of Africa, Series 1, DVD, (Acorn Media, 2011), 2 discs, £14.99. *The Lost Kingdoms of Africa* was first shown on BBC4 in 2010. It became one of the most watched factual programmes on BBC4. It's not difficult to see why in this four-part DVD. The viewer is transported to one of the most spectacular environments on the planet. The history of the continent is also one of the most-neglected and Dr Gus Casely-Hayford, an art historian, sets out to provide viewers with a taste of this history.

His journey, using mostly planes, boats and four-wheel drives takes him first to the legendary kingdom of Nubia, whose civilisation began more than 7,000 years ago. Traces of Nubian culture are found in rock gongs and rock art. In Kerma, he views the remains of the oldest mud-brick building in Africa from c.2000 BC. Gus (it's easy to feel on first-name terms with him) describes how the successful Nubian civilisation was a target for invasion from Egypt. Despite centuries of Egyptian rule the Nubian kingdom survived occupation and continued to flourish. Temple art depicts the Nubian ruler, Taharka, as a ruler of two kingdoms: Nubia and Egypt. Statues remain which prove that there were black pharaohs.

Gus then travels to Ethiopia. There he follows a trail to explore a legend that the son of Solomon and Sheba founded Ethiopia and its Judeo-Christian religious

tradition. In Ethiopia he finds a 17th century fort in Gondar with black angels and beehives which are venerated for their holy honey. Gus is often overcome with the magnificence of sites such as Lalibela where there are 11 churches sculpted out of a mountain. He is challenged to reach Debre Damo, a 6th century monastery, which can only be accessed by climbing a goatskin rope. He visits Aksum, once the most important city in Africa, where the Ark of the Covenant is claimed to be held. He ends his trail at Yeha, where a pre-Christian temple contains evidence of the Queen of Sheba's language.

The most disappointing episode is on Great Zimbabwe. It begins well with a section on the recently-discovered 2,000 year old trading centre of Rhapta, in Tanzania, followed by a visit to the Swahili coast to view the ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani. I was surprised that Gus neglects to mention that Kilwa was destroyed by the Portuguese, which would explain its 'Lost Kingdom' status. Gus then visits Manyikenini in Mozambique, a vital link with Great Zimbabwe, before flying to Pretoria to view the intricate golden artefacts of the 12th century Mapungubwe civilisation, which are exhibited in a museum there. Gus was allowed into Zimbabwe to visit the extraordinary 13th century site of Great Zimbabwe, where the 11 metre-high walls are not bound with mortar. European archaeologists believed only a non-African civilisation could have built such a sophisticated complex and white Rhodesia then 'actively encouraged' this belief. Here Gus's search for an African Eldorado is a red herring. Surely, the most important issue is the fact that, until independence, it was a crime to suggest Africans built Great Zimbabwe?

The final episode is centred on the Benin 'Bronzes' and the cultures that were responsible for producing such exceptionally beautiful casts. Gus doesn't raise the question of 'ownership' of these bronzes. The trail leads him to visit Timbuktu and Djenné in Mali, where hereditary guilds produce magnificent architecture in the form of houses, palaces and mosques. He then visits Dogon country to view the spectacular Bandiagara escarpment where the Tellem lived two-thousand years ago. It is fitting that the first series ends with a visit

to the recently-excavated site of Ounjougou. Here pottery fragments have been carbon-dated from 11,400 years ago. That's 8,000 years before pottery appeared in Britain. Africa was indeed the cradle of civilisation.

There is much to commend in this series. Most of the experts called upon are indigenous Africans and most are leading scholars in their field. The scenery is spectacular throughout and would make any viewer want to visit Africa and finally, despite the hat, Gus Casely-Hayford's infectious enthusiasm keeps the viewer engaged in this amazing cultural history.

John Sibbon



Arts

Henry Louis Gates, Jr, David Bindman et al. (ed), *The Image of the Black In Western Art*, Vols. I-III, (Harvard University Press, 2010-11) ISBN 9780674052710/ 9780674052567/9780674052611, £69.95 each, hbk. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. These pictures come with thousands of scholarly words, but it is their visual impact that demonstrates most forcefully that black people have been present in western culture from Ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece, all the way through to "The Age of Obama" and that they have been portrayed in a myriad of different ways by western artists. The 'Images of the Black' in these volumes range from statues of black saints such as St. Maurice, to portraits of notable African ambassadors and kings, poets and musicians, or drawings of literary characters.

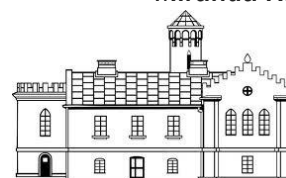
The series (first published 1976-1989) is being reissued, with an entirely new third volume, the 'Age of Discovery to the Age of Abolition', in three parts covering *Artists of the Renaissance and Baroque*, *Europe and the World Beyond* and *The Eighteenth Century*.

The project began in 1960, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in America, when French-Texan art collectors John and Dominique de Menil commissioned the search for 'positive images to counteract racist stereotypes', aiming to build a 'subtle bulwark and a living testimony against anti-black racism'. This resulted in a photographic catalogue containing over 30,000 images that now survive in duplicate at Harvard and at the Warburg Institute in London. This little-known archive is arranged geographically, chronologically and thematically, and is a goldmine for researchers looking for pictures of Africans, both real and imagined.

Many of the images are positive. Africans were painted and sculpted by some of the most eminent artists in the Western tradition, including Titian, Tieopolo, Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Reynolds, Hogarth, Watteau and Gainsborough. More importantly, they have not been caricatured, but sensitively portrayed, their humanity captured on canvas for all to see. That said, many are portrayed in subservient roles, such as the servants in classical or biblical scenes, or the adoring pages in aristocratic portraits.

Seen through the prism of Western art these images of 'the Black' often tell us more about the Europeans and their agendas than the Africans they portray. Nonetheless, the cumulative effect of these images is to demonstrate a continuous black presence in the Western imagination and experience. Despite their grand size and scope, these volumes are by no means definitive, but rather provide a fascinating starting point for discussion and further research.

Miranda Kaufmann



Local history

Patrick Eyres (ed) *The Blackamoor & The Georgian Garden*, ISSN 0262-558, £20 inc p&p, pbk, from 13 Graham Grove, Leeds LS4 2NF. E-mail patrickjeyres@gmail.com> This volume, published as part of the New

Arcadian Journal series, looks at the figure of a Black man supporting a sundial or other decorative object that was found in many grand gardens in eighteenth century. It was known as 'The Blackamoor'. Like its living counterpart, it became something of a fashion accessory.

The figure was brought to England from the Netherlands by William III, who came to the throne in 1688. It first appeared in 1701 at Hampton Court, with a companion figure known as the Indian slave. Dr Patrick Eyres, Sylvia Collicott and Richard Wheeler explore the symbolism and iconography of the Blackamoor and other statuary found in the gardens of the rich and powerful both in England and on the Continent.

Contemporaries, much better versed than we are both in classical literature and interpreting images, would have 'read' these with ease and the three writers are knowledgeable guides to the figures and their multiple meanings. The writers also explore the links between those who owned or built the estates and the building up of the empire and trade through warfare and commerce, expressed not only in their garden statuary but in the interior decorations of their houses.

Professor Michael Charlesworth uses a ship's log, found in Sheffield Archives, to show what happened when a Yorkshire merchant decided to invest in a slave trading voyage. It is a reminder of what underpinned at least some of the wealth of those who created the houses and gardens. By chance, a Blackamoor figure from a nearby estate, Wentworth Castle, wound up in this long-dead merchant's house after the statue was vandalised in the early 1980s by students who painted it white. It has now been restored and returned to the Castle.

Dr Eyres has also compiled an inventory of figures and their locations, both past and present. Many, because they were made of lead, were melted down. Others have just disappeared, but some are still *in situ*. There may be others awaiting discovery. The illustrations are not photographs but original drawings by a number of artists. Because the A5 format is so small and the paper is of standard quality some of the detail and impact of them is lost. However, a selection from ninety original drawings made for the journal is on display at the Henry Moore Institute Library in Leeds until

13 May 2012. See <www.henry-moore.org/hmi/library/on-display1/drawings-and-proofs-for-the-new-arcadian-journal> Hopefully an enterprising publisher will see the potential of this for a sumptuous art book.

The *NAJ* investigates the cultural politics of historical landscapes by scrutinising their architecture, gardens, monuments and sculptures. This volume will add both to what we know and what we understand about the slave trade in the eighteenth century and how contemporaries regarded it. Other volumes in the series consider aspects of commerce and empire as they were reflected in landscape gardens, so will also provide background information.

Kathleen Chater



Biography

Vincent Carretta & Ty M. Reese, eds, *The Life and Letters of Philip Quaque, the First Africa Anglican Missionary* (University of Georgia Press, 2010). \$39.95, hbk.

Students of late eighteenth century Black writers are indebted to Vincent Carretta. He has not only edited and annotated several major texts of some of these writers' works but also produced substantial biographical studies of Equiano and, more recently, of Phillis Wheatley (to be reviewed in the next issue).

In this book he and his co-editor have produced the known correspondence of Philip Quaque (c.1741-1816), probably the first African to be ordained in the Church of England, 44 letters held in the papers of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in Rhodes House, part of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, plus a few other items from collections in New York, Pennsylvania, and Kew. In addition there are 25 documents, mainly from contemporary sources, that refer to Quaque. It is an

impressive collection, meticulously edited, and with a very helpful introduction.

Quaque was born on the Gold Coast, educated in England, and ordained in 1765; he then returned home to Cape Coast Castle where he served for 50 years as the SPG's missionary and also chaplain to the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. This proved a hard post. Quaque's white British wife and their stillborn baby died within a year, he was poorly paid and had to turn to trade to sustain himself, his evangelistic work among indigenous peoples was largely unsuccessful, and he was often treated with disdain by white merchants and officials. In this long period, 53 of Quaque's letters have survived, most to the SPG secretary's in London, but including several that were addressed to fellow clerics in the north American colonies. He wrote about a range of matters: his travels along the coast where he occasionally took charge of minor trading posts; relations with the indigenous peoples along the coast; and slavery and the slave trade – in 1775, writing to the Revd Edward Bass in Massachusetts, of seeing 'with Sorrowful sighing my poor abject Countrymen over whom You, without any Bowels of Christian Love and Pity, hold in cruel Bondage. This Iniquitous Practice, methinks, seems to set Religion aside ...'. His one, and even then perhaps limited success, was in running a school for local boys at Cape Coast.

BASA on Jiscmail

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Quaque was 'an Atlantic creole', a man caught between two worlds, highly literate in English, acculturated there but regarded by most whites on the Gold Coast as an alien, and yet often viewing his 'own' people as foreign and backward, even having to relearn his native tongue (the 'vile jargon') lost while he was in England. He was anxious to have his own children educated in England, taking two of them there for that purpose in 1784, the only time that he was known to have revisited London.

The role of Black Christians in Britain and its overseas possessions has been acknowledged, but few have bothered to pursue the rich sources available on this topic in the way that Carretta and Reese have done with Quaque. Primary and secondary sources of churches, dioceses, missionary societies, schools and colleges, and also the burgeoning religious and local press after 1850 are among the reasonably accessible records that need to be worked on by scholars with eyes alert for Black and African contributions to Britain's imperial past.

David Killingray

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C.L. Innes (ed.), *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky: A Narrative by Francis Fedric, Escaped Slave*, (LSU Press, 2012), ISBN 978-1275654501, \$19.75, hbk. In 1854 Francis Fedric was fifty when he fled from Kentucky via the Underground Railroad to Canada. In Toronto he married an English-woman and in 1857 they came to Britain, where he lectured. Two editions of his narrative were published. Using a combination of edited slave narratives alongside critical scholarship, this work simultaneously illustrates how an individual's African-American slave narrative changed over time, whilst using extensive research to confirm the overwhelming majority of Francis Fedric's narrative. Also notable within this book is Professor Innes' refutation of Henry Louis Gates's claim that Fedric's narrative was fictional rather than authentic.

Professor Innes' introduction adds to this book by providing historical and cultural contexts to this compelling work. The narrative is compelling because it illustrates the depravity of slavery whilst providing the

reader with enough detail to help understand the locations and people that Fedric encountered in his pre-emancipation life. Without such detail, Professor Innes would not have been able to have conducted her own research into the authenticity of Fedric's narrative. The combination of Fedric's narrative alongside his editor's historical judiciousness makes this book a must-read for those potential readers interested in authentic African-American slave narratives that are captivating whilst being very readable, considering the cruelty Fedric recalls.

George Watley
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Kenneth E. Marshall *Manhood Enslaved: Bondmen in Eighteenth and Early Nineteen Century New Jersey* (University of Rochester Press, 2011) £40 hbk ISBN 9781580463935

This book reconstructs the lives of three men, enslaved in New Jersey, America. It is of interest for a number of reasons. The first is that American slavery is generally associated with the southern states so a reminder that it was also found in New England is useful. The second is that the questions it raises about the nature of biography and autobiography are universal, whether we are reading a slave narrative from the United States or Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*. The third is the role that the race and gender played in representation, which prompts both historical and contemporary considerations.

The three men whose biographies were written and published by white people reacted in different ways to their status. Quamino Buccau 'a pious Methodist' and Dick Melick 'a house nigger' conformed. Yombo Melick, obstinate and proud of his African ancestry, rebelled. The Melicks were not apparently related but took their name from their master, Andrew Mellick (note the difference in spelling) who wrote their stories. Mr Marshall's book ranges beyond these three men and their lives to look at general aspects of American slavery and its legacy for African-Americans in America today. This has implications for those young African-Caribbeans in Britain who are heavily influenced by their cousins over the Atlantic.

Kathleen Chater

Henry Sylvester Williams : a response to the review in Newsletter #60 & 61

Marika Sherwood writes: It is quite true that that are a number of 'careless' errors, some of them due to the publisher's total lack of editing. (I did complain!)

Yes, mine is the fourth book. The first book on Williams, by Clarence Contee published in 1973, is only available at the British Library; the other two, by Hooker published in 1975, and by Mathurin published in 1976, are not much more readily available elsewhere. Hooker's is a small paperback of a total of 135 pages, of which only 11 deal with the 1900 Pan-African Conference. Mine is the only book with biographies of those attending and with reports of the speeches.

Jeffrey Green's comment that I give no evidence of 'racist notions' among the masses I find peculiar. I give much evidence of the situation of Black peoples and their treatment, as well as of racist attitudes and ideology everywhere Williams lived – in Trinidad, Nova Scotia, South Africa, the UK. This is totally absent in the other books on him and thus do not put his work in the all-important contemporary context.

Contributing to the Newsletter

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, 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?

E-mail the editor
<untoldhistories@live.co.uk>

We look forward to hearing from you.

Historic figure : Bert Williams (1885-1922)

by Jeffrey Green

Egbert Austin Williams was born in Nassau, Bahamas on 12 July 1874. His father was Frederick Williams, a waiter at the Royal Victoria Hotel, and his Antigua-born wife Julia Monceur. The family left the Bahamas for Florida in 1885 and then settled in Riverside, California. In 1893 Williams joined a touring show, moving into a minstrel show in San Francisco. He met Kansas-born dancer George Walker, and the pair formed a partnership, writing songs and performing. They moved into theatrical shows based in New York City, and with *In Dahomey* which opened in Boston in September 1902 and moved to New York they achieved fame: this was the first full-length musical written and played by Blacks to play a major New York theatre. Following 53 performances the show crossed the Atlantic.

The play lacked a recognisable plot and confusion is seen in London press reports. However, theatre-goers were convulsed by comedian Bert Williams and greatly enjoyed the singing, dancing and acting of over three dozen other African Americans who presented *In Dahomey* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in central London. The *Daily Mail* (18 May 1903) reported that 'there were moments when the audience literally screamed with merriment over the whimsicalities of a tall low comedian named Williams. He upset the gravity of everybody, and the preservation of a rigid and decorous countenance became absolutely impossible'.

Williams was described as 'extraordinary amusing' and 'from every point of view, admirable' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 May 1903). 'Williams and Walker have already become a trade mark' (*Weekly Dispatch*, 24 May 1903). Playwright George Bernard Shaw thought that Williams would be perfect in the role of the comic nurse Ftatateeta in his *Caesar and Cleopatra*. The cast presented a version of their show in Buckingham Palace on 23 June, an event that show business tales may have been elaborated - did Williams really teach Edward VII to play the card game craps?



Bert Williams (front) and his partner George Walker. Both are wearing gloves.

In Dahomey was all the rage in London and only the closure of the theatre for redecoration after Christmas 1903 ended the metropolitan success. The troupe toured Britain in 1904 but, when Williams and Walker departed for America, the spirit and zip was absent, and that tour folded. Walker died in 1911, his wife Aida Overton Walker – also a star of *In Dahomey* in London – in 1914.

Williams was a pioneer in films, made several gramophone recordings, and entered the otherwise white shows of Florenz Ziegfeld. He died on 4 March 1922; thousands attended his funeral in Harlem, and songs were written as tributes. His legacy in Britain was that many people of African descent claimed to have been in *In Dahomey*, for it was a yardstick of black entertainment into the 1920s when jazz-revues became the new rage. Will Garland and Norris Smith had been *In Dahomey* members, and both settled in England. Garland's shows employed British-born, West Indian and African singers and dancers and toured widely into the 1930s.