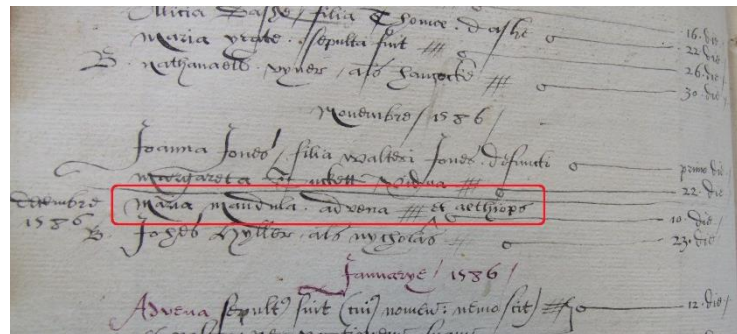


WILTSHIRE BLACK HISTORY

Early Black presence

By the early 1500's a number of Black people were associated with royal courts, notably John Blanke, a trumpeter who is depicted on the Great Tournament Roll of Westminster celebrating the birth of a son to Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. There is a copy of this roll in the Methuen collection deposited with the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives.

On 10th December 1586 the Calne Parish Register notes the burial of "*Maria Mandula advena et aethiops (stranger and Aethiops).*" This is the earliest recorded Black presence in Wiltshire.

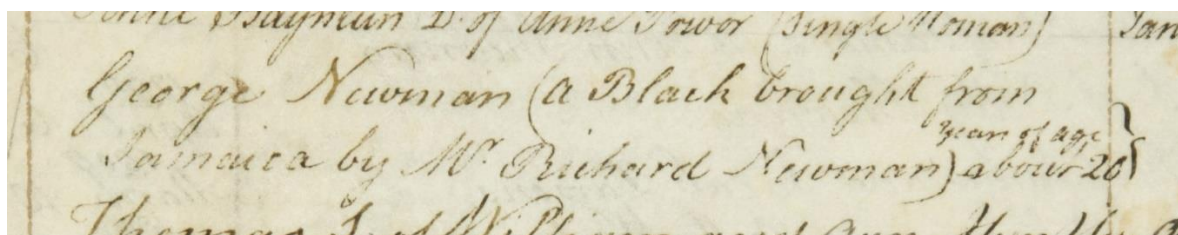


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In the reign of Queen Elizabeth I privateers like John Hawkins were beginning a slave trade along the West African coast. Slaves, servants, those who had bought or been granted their freedom, soldiers, sailors, musicians and runaways, all found themselves in Britain, while some found their way to Wiltshire. For example, Elizabeth the Blackmoor, lived at the White Hart in Salisbury and was buried in the city on 26th January 1653.

Black Servants

At the height of the slave trade in the 18th century, Black servants were brought back from Africa and the West Indian plantations and shown off in society as the status symbols of newly wealthy families. In Longleat there is a painting which shows a black page in a hunting scene with the 2nd Viscount Weymouth. It is thought his name is Juba, who arrived at the house in 1732.



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There are numerous entries in parish registers for black servants in Wiltshire households. For example, the Preshute parish register includes the baptism in July 1717 of Charles Mustava, 'black boy servant to Hon Ld Hartford', while "*Fortune York, black manservant to Sir William Howe, aged fifty*" was buried at Cholderton in April 1779.

They may have been well looked after, but they were unlikely to be free. Some were given their freedom, perhaps on their master's death, others ran away. However, life without a job or a means to survive was hard. In Bristol in 1757, an advertisement offering a guinea reward for a young black slave called Starling who 'blows the French horn very well' was placed by a publican in Prince's Street. Could this be the same man who placed an advertisement the Salisbury Journal, six years later: "[Sarum] Wants a Place as Footman, A Sober young Black, who can sound the French Horn extremely well."

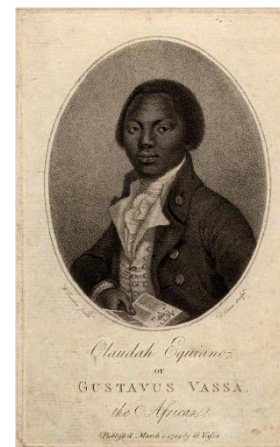
Joining the Military – a route to freedom?

As Britain expanded its colonies through trade and conquest, so Black servants and slaves were enlisted into its Army and Navy. Some are part of Wiltshire's long military heritage. Black musicians were used in many regiments, especially drummers and trumpeters.

In 1782 Jeremiah, son of Jacob and Betty Salisbury, of St Thomas parish in Salisbury, was "a Negro man and a trumpeter in his majesties fourth regiment of dragoons" while George Sydown, buried in Marlborough May 1779, was 'A Black Drummer in the Wiltshire Regiment of Militia.'

A notable visitor

Olaudah Equiano, the writer of 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African' is one of the most important Black voices from the 18th century. His book influenced the anti-slavery movement and he became famous for his eloquence and the power of his words. One of his campaigning journeys brought him to the West Country, and he spoke at Bath and in Devizes in 1793.



Daniel Orme, after W. Denton, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

But there were also other black visitors who we know less about. For example, who was the African "lately arrived from Guinea, preached in the tabernacle at Chippenham to a crowded audience" in February 1774?

Nineteenth Century

Leonora Casey Carr (1808 – 1837) was an Antiguan 'Mostee' (dual heritage), the daughter of Frances, a slave woman, and George Carr. Leonora was born into the slave culture, before being brought to England as part of the Moravian community in East Tytherton, together with four other young Antiguan women. She is buried in East Tytherton Moravian Graveyard, where her memorial stone has been recently rediscovered.

Black people in Wiltshire were not only of African and Caribbean heritage. For example, Anne Smith Kuirman, "a native of Bengal" was baptised in Chippenham on 15th March 1826.

Black people were involved in all areas of life, including as lawyers, doctors and politicians. Some attempted notable feats such as “a man of colour” who in October 1825 attempted to walk 14 miles in two hours. He would have easily done so but after walking 7 miles in 53 minutes was halted by the Mayor of Salisbury who feared a public disturbance.



Twentieth century

Black communities and individuals continued to thrive in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century, notably in our major cities and towns.

People from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean also fought and lost their lives in both World Wars, including some ancestors of people in Wiltshire’s BAME communities today. James Marshall joined the British Army in the First World War and was killed by enemy action as a merchant seaman in the Second World War.

Jim Merrick was a Black American G.I., one of a number who were stationed in Wiltshire in the months leading up to D Day in 1944. He recalled spending time in Lydiard Tregoze where he sang spirituals in the church as part of a quartet of four black soldiers.

Britain hosted many thousands of Allied servicemen and women in the Second World War, who all responded to the chance to support the war effort. Wiltshire was at the heart of D-Day preparations, with army camps and bases spread throughout the county.