

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

October is Black History Month in the UK. It is an annual event honouring the contributions and accomplishments of the Black British community. It celebrates both current and historical individuals and the positive impact they have made to our society.

Black History Month provides great opportunities to highlight key moments in Black British history. It is important to celebrate the contributions of everyone to our society and support the multi-culturalism and diversity that helps shape our communities. More information can be found at: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory>

The Learning Curve have put together a list of black men and women who have contributed to British history. Please read on and enjoy their stories.

Know the past, shape the future.

Dido Elizabeth Belle, English Aristocrat



Dido Elizabeth Belle was born in the British West Indies around 1761. Her father Sir John Lindsay was a British nobleman and navy captain, and her mother Maria Belle was an African woman that Lindsay is thought to have found on a Spanish ship in the Caribbean (little else is known about her). Her parents were not married. Dido was named after her mother, her great-uncle's first wife, Elizabeth, and for Dido the Queen of Carthage. "Dido" was the name of a popular 18th-century play, William Murray, a descendant of Dido's great-uncle, later said. "It was probably chosen to suggest her elevated status," he said. "It says: 'This girl is precious, treat her with respect.'"

At about the age of 6, Dido parted ways with her mother and was sent to live with her great-uncle William Murray, Earl of Mansfield, and his wife in England. The couple was childless and already raising another great-niece, Lady Elizabeth Murray, whose mother had died. It's unknown how Dido felt about the separation from her mother, but the split resulted in the mixed-race child being raised as an aristocrat rather than an enslaved person (she did, however, remain the property of Lord Mansfield).

Dido grew up at Kenwood, a royal estate outside of London, and was allowed to receive a royal education. She even served as the earl's legal secretary, assisting him with his correspondence (an unusual responsibility for a woman at the time).

A 1779 painting of Dido and her cousin Elizabeth—which now hangs in Scotland's Scone Palace—shows that Dido's skin colour did not give her inferior status at Kenwood. In the painting, both she and her cousin are dressed in finery. Also, Dido is not positioned in a submissive pose, as Black people typically were in paintings during that time period. This portrait—the work of Scottish painter David Martin—is largely responsible for generating public interest in Dido over the years, as is the notion, which remains in dispute, that she influenced her uncle, who served as Lord Chief Justice, to make legal decisions that led to enslavement in England being abolished.

William Murray cared enough about her to want her to live autonomously after his death. He left her a large inheritance and granted Dido her freedom when he died at the age of 88 in 1793. After her great-uncle's death, Dido married Frenchman John Davinier and bore him three sons. She died in July 1804 at age 43. Dido was buried in the cemetery at St. George's Fields, Westminster.

(Nittle, Nadra Kareem. "Biography of Dido Elizabeth Belle, English Aristocrat." ThoughtCo, Aug. 29, 2020, [thoughtco.com/dido-elizabeth-belle-biography-2834910](https://www.thoughtco.com/dido-elizabeth-belle-biography-2834910).)

Sarah Forbes Bonetta, Queen Victoria's Goddaughter

Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a princess of the Egbado clan of the Yoruba people, is best known as the goddaughter of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. Bonetta was born in 1843 in what is now southwest Nigeria. Her parents' names are unknown as are the names of her siblings who were all killed in the 1847 slave raid that made Bonetta a captive.



Bonetta's village of Okeadan was attacked by King Gezo of Dahomey, the most notorious slave trading monarch in West Africa in the early 19th century. Intent on capturing slaves and killing those not taken, Gezo's men seized the four year old girl. For reasons that are unclear, the girl was not killed and remained at Gezo's Court until 1849 when British Commander Frederick Forbes landed the HMS

Bonetta in Dahomey to persuade Gezo to give up slave raiding and trading. Forbes noticed the young girl and bargained for her life. He persuaded King Gezo to "give" her to Queen Victoria, saying "She would be a present from the King of the Blacks to the Queen of the Whites." The girl remained with Forbes in West Africa for the next year where she was baptized and given the name Sarah Forbes Bonetta. Forbes wrote that "She is a perfect genius; she now speaks English well, and [has] great talent for music... She is far in advance of any white child of her age in aptness of learning, and strength of mind and affection..."

Sarah Forbes Bonetta was taken to Great Britain and met Queen Victoria on November 9th, 1850 at Windsor Castle. The Queen was impressed by her intellect and entrusted her care to the Schoen family in Palm Cottage, Gillingham when Forbes died early in 1851. The Queen declared Sarah her goddaughter and paid her tutorial expenses. Young Sarah became a regular visitor to Windsor Castle. Less than a year after she arrived, however, young Bonetta developed a cough believed to be caused by the climate of Great Britain. Queen Victoria arranged for her to be sent to what she believed was a better climate for Bonetta in Sierra Leone. There she was educated at the Female Institution, a Church Missionary Society school in Freetown. Bonetta excelled in music and academic studies but was unhappy prompting the Queen to bring her back to England in 1855.

In January 1862, 19-year-old Bonetta was a guest at the wedding of the Princess Royal Victoria, the eldest child of the Queen. In August of that year Bonetta herself was given permission by Queen Victoria to marry Captain James Pinson Labulo Davies, a 31-year-old wealthy Yoruba businessman from Sierra Leone. The couple married in an elaborate wedding at St. Nicholas Church in Brighton, England. Sarah arrived at the ceremony in an entourage that included ten carriages. The couple lived in Bristol, England briefly before returning to Sierra Leone. While Davies continued his work, Bonetta began teaching in a Freetown school. Shortly after the marriage, she gave birth to a girl and was given permission by the Queen to name her Victoria. The Queen also became young Victoria's godmother. In 1867 Sarah and her daughter visited the Queen again. For Sarah this would be her last visit. Her cough continued and she was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Bonetta had two more children but died in 1880 at the age of 37. Queen Victoria continued to provide for Sarah's daughter. She supported young Victoria's education and gave her an annuity. Young Victoria continued to visit the royal household for the rest of her life.

(Braithwaite, A. (2014, June 05) Sarah Forbes Bonetta (1843-1880). Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/bonetta-sarah-forbes-1843-1880/>)

Fanny Eaton, Pre-Raphaelite Model



Eaton was born Fanny Antwistle or Entwhistle on 23 June 1835 in Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica. Her mother was Matilda Foster, a woman of African descent, who may have been born into slavery. No father was named on Eaton's birth records, suggesting that she may have been illegitimate. Eaton and her mother made their way to England sometime in the 1840s. By 1851 she is recorded as living in London, with her mother, and working as a domestic servant. In 1857 she married James Eaton, a horse-cab proprietor and driver, who was born on 17 February 1838 in Shoreditch. Together they had 10 children.

It was during this period of Fanny Eaton's life as mother and new wife that she began modelling for the Pre-Raphaelites. Eaton primarily modelled out of necessity; to augment her salary as a "charwoman" and provide sustenance for her 10 children. Her distinctive features were often used by artists to portray a variety of ethnicities and characters. The earliest studies done of her are pencil sketches by Simeon Solomon in 1859, and she appears to be used by other artists who were Solomon's friends, including William Blake Richmond and Albert Joseph Moore. This includes Richmond's painting *The Slave* (1886), found in Tate's collection.

These sketches were used as preparation for his *Mother of Moses*, now in the rich collection of the Delaware Art Museum. Two specific sketches from this series, depicted Mrs Eaton as the two Biblical figures of Jochabed and Miriam. The finished painting was shown at the Royal Academy in 1860. In 1865, she was used by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for the figure of the one of the bridesmaids in his painting *The Beloved*.

Although Eaton's modelling career for the Pre-Raphaelites seems to have been short, her impact has been undeniably intense. This impact is evident enough from the large body of work in which she features. In a letter to Ford Madox Brown, Rossetti praises Mrs. Eaton for her incomparable beauty and "very fine head", a not insignificant feat considering that the era is infamous for its rigid beauty standards and intense racial prejudices. Born in the British colonies and daughter of a former slave, Fanny Eaton's visual presence in artwork represented a social group outside of the traditional Victorian parameters. Her appearance in paintings and Pre-Raphaelite art focused attention onto the "Other" in Victorian society, challenging societal expectations of black women. Victorian art typically portrayed people of colour as decorative figures and they were rarely seen as models of idealized beauty.

By 1881 Eaton had been widowed and was working as a seamstress. In the final years of her life, Eaton worked as a domestic cook on the Isle of Wight for a Hammersmith-based wine merchant and his wife, John and Fanny Hall. By 1911, however, Fanny is said to be residing with family in Hammersmith with her daughter Julia, son-in-law Thomas Powell and grandchildren Baden and Connie Powell. After a long life as a working-class émigrée, Fanny Antwistle Eaton died in Acton on 4 March 1924 at the age of 89 from senility and syncope.

In 2018, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote, *The Voice* newspaper listed Eaton among eight Black women who have contributed to the development of Britain. In October 2019 to January 2020, she was one of 12 women included in the Pre-Raphaelite Sisters exhibition at London's National Portrait Gallery.

(Retrieved from Wikipedia)

John Kent, UK's First Black Police Officer

Kent was the son of Thomas Kent, a seaman who worked on the estate of a Cumberland colonial civil service worker in the West Indies. Kent's father is believed to have originally arrived at Whitehaven, England, where he worked at Abbey House, Calder Abbey, in the service of the Senhouse family, where he was 'considered a slave'. He was later given his freedom and went to sea. It is unknown the true origin of the Kent name, in John Kent's eulogy the father was said to have taken his



surname from the region of England where his ship may firstly have docked. Thomas Kent married Mary Wilson in 1787 and the couple had nine children, (some dying in childhood) John was the eighth born.

John Kent married a white woman, Mary from Longtown, and settled on Botchergate Street, first recorded in the 1841 national census. He was described as a "quiet, inoffensive man" as well as a "big powerful man" who worked for the local authority, laying down paving slabs, in his own words between the move from Maryport to Carlisle.

Kent was originally at Maryport as a parish constable then joined Carlisle City Police force as a supernumerary Constable on 17 August 1837, later being made a substantive Constable. He was known among city residents as "Black Kent" during his service and this nickname was used by adults to scare unruly children. Kent was credited with several arrests. He provided several accounts in his later years, one of arresting two "coiners". After arresting one suspect, he handcuffed him to the fire grate in his own house. He left an unloaded pistol with his wife, telling her to shoot the prisoner if he tried to escape. Kent then apprehended the second outstanding suspect.

In 1841, he was policing an election crowd in the city centre when it became violent. As the crowd became more unruly, a police officer was struck on the head by one of the crowd and died. The matter was recorded as a murder and Kent provided evidence of the general riot at Carlisle Assizes.

Police officers being drunk on duty was a common occurrence in the 19th century, as clean drinking water in the city was a rarity. On 6 December 1844, Kent arrived for duty while intoxicated. Owing to new policy, introduced by a new Chief Constable, to severely punish officers drunk on duty, Kent was instructed to attend a watch committee. He was later disciplined, and he was dismissed from the service on 12 December 1844. Accounts then show he was a court bailiff and then a parish constable in the Eskdale ward.

Kent returned to work in Carlisle after leaving the police force. At the age of 78, he was recorded as being employed as an attendant in the service of the London and North Western Railway Companies, specifically working in the waiting rooms at Citadel station.

Kent died on 20 July 1886 at his home in Henry Street, Carlisle, and was buried in Carlisle Cemetery. His obituary in the Carlisle Journal announced that "Black Kent is dead" and the Carlisle Patriot described the passing of Kent as "The Death of a Carlisle Notable"

(Retrieved from Wikipedia)

Lilian Bader – First Black Woman to Join the Armed Forces



Lilian Bader was born at 19 Stanhope Street in the Toxteth Park area of Liverpool to Marcus Bailey, a merchant seaman from Barbados who served in the First World War, and a British-born mother of Irish parentage. Bader was orphaned at the age of nine years old, when her father died in 1927. She was separated from her two brothers and placed in a convent, where she remained until she was 20. [1]

The outbreak of World War Two in 1939 would be a surprisingly positive point for Lilian who now found herself accepted as a Canteen Assistant at NAAFI, Catterick Camp and away from the convent for the first time. It took only seven weeks for Lilian to be disappointed, as she was sacked from her role due to the fact her father was born outside of the UK. The story is, that the District Manager had toyed with the decision for several weeks, sympathizing with Lilian's Irish and Roman Catholic backgrounds as he himself was Irish and Roman Catholic. [2]

Determined not to let her background be a stumbling block, Lilian found work again in January 1940. Now working on a farm near RAF Topcliffe, Lilian was once again feeding soldiers who ventured outside of the base. She would leave the farm voluntarily and would take up the role of a domestic servant until 1941, where a chance to join the army once again surfaced. [2]

Lilian was accepted into the Women's Auxiliary Air Force on 28th March, 1941 and was sent to York. Yet turmoil was to strike once more for Lilian and two weeks into her training, her Brother would be lost at sea whilst serving as a Merchant Seaman, just like their father. Returning from compassionate leave, Lilian embarked on a twelve-week training course, qualifying her as an Instrument repairer; a relatively new job that had been made available to women in 1940. [2]

Her academic prowess and personable nature once again shone through and after passing several exams, Lilian graduated as a First Class Airwoman and was soon in Shropshire where her skills saw her being promoted to Corporal and leading Aircraftwoman. [2]

The true influence of Lilian and her crew is difficult to fathom. As servicewomen, their role may have been limited to running routine repairs and replacing sensitive equipment. However, the simplicity of their work does not negate its importance. Furthermore, the sheer scale of the work these women undertook was of a magnitude many would have found reason not to enjoy. [2]

Lilian would go onto marry another mixed raced serviceman, Ramsay Bader in 1943 and in 1944; would be granted compassionate leave as she left to start a family with the Tank driver. [2]

Lilian Bader's achievements do not stop once she left the army. Now a mother of two children, she sought it necessary to go back to school, achieving the necessary 'O' and 'A' levels to secure a degree at University of London; a degree that would let her go onto be a teacher. [2]

Lilian Bader passed away on the 13th March 2015 at the age of 97.

[1] Retrieved from Wikipedia. [2] Retrieved from Black History Month, written by Abdul Rob <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/bhm-heroes/black-history-month-firsts-lilian-bader/>

Clive Sullivan- Rugby's First Black Captain



Clive A. Sullivan MBE (born 9 April 1943 in Cardiff, died 8 October 1985 in Hull) was a Welsh rugby union and professional Rugby League World Cup winning footballer of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. A Great Britain and Wales international winger, he played with both Hull and Hull Kingston Rovers in his career, and also played for Oldham, and Doncaster. He was the first black captain of the Great Britain Lions and for any national British sporting side.

Whilst growing up in the Splott district of Cardiff as a young teenager, he required operations on his knees, feet and shoulders. Due to the extent of these operations, a rugby career seemed unlikely. Sullivan never gave up, however, and he overcame his early childhood trauma by being granted a trial by Bradford Northern Rugby League Club at the age of just 17. Bradford however, passed on the young winger.

Rugby league club Hull, had different ideas about Sullivan and gave the young man, who boasted phenomenal speed, a chance to play rugby league. In his debut for Hull, Sullivan had an outstanding game and gained the support of the Hull club and city. Sullivan became known for his exceptional speed and the way he would outplay rugby league's finest opposition wingers. His upper-body was deceptively strong which gave him excellent cover defence. Despite his knees which haunted his childhood requiring constant attention and further operations, he played a total of 352 games for Hull, scoring 250 tries. In his 213 games for Hull K.R. he scored 118 tries.

His international career took him to great heights having made his debut for Great Britain in 1967. The following year he played three World Cup matches, grabbing a hat-trick against New Zealand. In 1969, he toured Australasia, but only participated in one game due to injury. He however won a further three test caps against New Zealand in 1971. In 1972 he was handed the captaincy of Great Britain and played two tests against France. The World Cup took place that same year, and he captained Great Britain to become world champions. He scored a try in each of Great Britain's four games. Sullivan scored possibly the most famous try in the history of the World Cup to level 10-10 against Australia in the final, after a length of the field run.

In 1973 his Great Britain career came to an end with three tests against Australia. He was captain-coach of Hull FC from 1973 to 74. The 1975 Rugby League World Cup saw Sullivan lead Wales in all four matches, scoring a try in the defeat of England in the second game for the Welsh team. Wales ended up finishing 3rd in the five-team World Cup. Sullivan was unexpectedly called back into the Hull FC team in 1982 after a period on the coaching staff. At the age of 39 he played in the Challenge Cup Final replay at Elland Road which Hull won against Widnes.

When Sullivan died of cancer in 1985 aged just 42, the city of Hull held him in such high regard that a section of the city's main approach road (the A63) between the Humber Bridge and the city centre was renamed Clive Sullivan Way in his honour. Sullivan represented Great Britain 17 times and appeared at three World Cups, 1968 and 1972 with Great Britain and in 1975 for Wales.

(Article from Black History Month. Retrieved from <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/bhm-firsts/clive-sullivan-rugbys-first-black-captain/>)