

**Resources page for Shropshire Council website:**  
**Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Section: Mini Section**

**Black History Month 2020**

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**Guide to national and local online resources**

[www.100greatblackbritons.com](http://www.100greatblackbritons.com)

[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

[www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk)

[www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/posts](http://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/posts))

[www.theredcard.org.uk](http://www.theredcard.org.uk)

[www.windrushfoundation.com](http://www.windrushfoundation.com)

**Introduction to Black History Month**

**October is Black History Month in the UK, an event that has been celebrated nationwide for more than 30 years.**

The month was originally founded to recognise the contributions that people of African and Caribbean backgrounds have made to the UK over many generations. Now, Black History Month has expanded to include the history of not just African and Caribbean people but black people in general.

**Why is Black History Month important?**

It is held to highlight and celebrate the achievements and contributions of the black community in the UK. Throughout history, black people have made huge contributions to society in the fields of art, music, science, literature and many more areas.

Black people have been in Britain for a lot longer than may have previously been thought. One of the oldest skeletons ever found was that of the **Cheddar Man** who had dark skin.

Although black people have always been present in the UK, there has been a lack of representation in the history books. Contributions made by black people have often

been ignored or played down because black people weren't treated the same way as other people because of the colour of their skin.

### **Did you know?**

Queen Victoria had a black goddaughter who was given to the queen at age 7 when her parents died and she was captured by slave traders in Dahomey, West Africa. Her name was changed from her Yoruba name to Sarah Forbes-Bonetta, after Captain Forbes of the British Royal Navy, her rescuer, and the name of his ship. Queen Victoria took her under her wing, became her godmother, and paid for her education. Sarah went on to marry and have children, naming her first daughter after Victoria.

### **2020: an historic year**

This year has seen demonstrations in Britain and around the world in response to the death of George Floyd, the black man who died while being stopped by police in America. In the UK, **Black Lives Matter** demonstrations have called for an end to **systemic racism**, where people aren't treated fairly because they are black.

*"Black Lives Matter protests around the world sparked a commitment among many individuals and organisations to educate themselves about Black history, heritage and culture - as part of understanding racism and standing in solidarity against it,"*  
(Catherine Ross guest editor of Black History Month 2020.)

*"For countless generations people of African and Caribbean descent have been shaping our nation's story, making a huge difference to our national and cultural life and helping to make Britain a better place to be."*  
(Boris Johnson, Prime Minister).

(Source for more resources: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk))

### **Feature: Lilian Bader: a pioneer with a Shropshire connection**

Lilian Bader was born in 1918 in Liverpool and went on to become one of the very first black women to join the British Armed Forces

The reality of being a Mixed Raced Woman, in Britain in the early 1930's, would be one her intelligence and popularity would never be able to escape and at the age of twenty, Lilian would still be at the Convent she joined as a nine year old, simply because nobody was willing to hire her for work.

However, 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.

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.

Lilian was accepted into the Women's Auxiliary Air Force on 28th March, 1941 and was sent to York. She qualified as an Instrument repairer; a relatively new job that had been made available to women in 1940. Her academic prowess and personable nature 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.

Lilian would go on to 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.

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.

(Source: [www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk))

## **Shropshire Archives**

Shropshire Archives operates across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. It aims to collect material which relates to the whole community of Shropshire past and present. We are aware that the collections don't always reflect this fully and the service would be grateful for any help which enables us to build a more complete picture of life in Shropshire.

If people would like to share their knowledge and perspectives about their families, or look into the archives to find out more, the Archives service would be delighted to hear from them and to assist them. In so doing, we can reach a fuller collective understanding of the contributions that people of colour have made to life in Shropshire. Please contact [archives@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@shropshire.gov.uk)

Many Black people came to Britain from Commonwealth countries during the First and Second World Wars, some stayed and settled in Britain. African-Americans were also stationed in Shropshire in the 1940s. Undoubtedly the most famous visitor was Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia who stayed in Walcot Hall during some of his years of exile in the late 1930s.

The Black presence in Shropshire was enhanced by economic migration after the Second World War and some came seeking work in the engineering industries particularly in the Telford area. Those who came from the Commonwealth to the UK between 1948 and 1971 are often known as the 'Windrush Generation' after the Empire Windrush ship that docked in 1948.

During the recent Windrush scandal, people who had legitimately settled and worked locally for decades were threatened with sudden deportation. Sources at Shropshire Archives including school records helped provide at least one proof of residency and a successful last minute challenge to deportation. This is a powerful demonstration of how important archive sources can be.

### **Feature: Katherine Plymley, diarist**

Sources at Shropshire Archives show how the abolition movement found support in Shropshire at the end of the 18th century and how campaigners and emancipated slaves visited the county.

Local boroughs, in particular Bridgnorth and Much Wenlock, regularly petitioned Parliament for the abolition of slavery.

A fantastic series of diaries by Katherine Plymley show the support she and her brother, Archdeacon Joseph Plymley of Longnor, gave to the Abolitionist movement. She writes with admiration for Prince Naimbana of Mobana who visited Britain in 1791 and also describes meeting Gustavas Vasa (also known as Olaudah Equiano) who was enslaved at 11 but bought his freedom and wrote compellingly about his experiences (Shropshire Archives refs 1066/17 and 19).

Further details of Katherine's life can be found on Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine\\_Plymley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine_Plymley) and on the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography .

(Source: [www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/posts](http://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/posts))

### **Show Racism the Red Card**

Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) is the UK's largest anti-racism educational charity. It was established in January 1996, thanks in part to a donation by then Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop.

In 1990s Newcastle, Shaka was at a petrol station near St James Park when he was confronted with a group of young people shouting racist abuse at him. After one of the group realised that they had been shouting at Shaka Hislop, the Newcastle United football player, they came over to ask for an autograph. It was from this experience that Shaka realised he could harness his status as a professional player to make a difference. Coupled with the power of football and his status as a role model, Shaka thought education could be an effective strategy in challenging racism in society.

### **Why is it important?**

To this day SRtRC continues to utilise the high-profile status of football and football players to help tackle racism in society and has also expanded into other sports. The majority of the campaign's work involves the delivery of educational workshops to young people and adults in schools, workplaces and at events held in football stadiums.

In addition to the direct education of young people and adults, SRtRC produces educational resources, to challenge misconceptions, stereotypes and negative attitudes in society.

The following film is available to view here.

<https://youtu.be/EmZv2kn4qtE>

### **Feature: Shropshire Council**

Shropshire Council was the highlighted local authority by the national charity for this year's Red Card Day event on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

The aim of the day is to unite the country in taking positive action against racism, by inviting schools, businesses and individuals to donate to wear red for the day, to help fund anti-racism education for young people and adults.

This year's event was different due to coronavirus restrictions across the country. However, Shropshire Council emerged as an example of how to successfully bring 3,500 staff together, even though they are working from home, and demonstrate solidarity against racism.

Council staff were encouraged to wear an item of red clothing or display a red prop in the background of their screen, and send these in to form a visual gallery of support. The gallery was added to during the day as the pictures arrived

(Source: [www.theredcard.org.uk](http://www.theredcard.org.uk))

### **100 Great Black Britons**

A book has been published this September 2020, entitled, "*100 Great Black Britons*", which honours the remarkable achievements of key Black British individuals through history, in collaboration with the 100 Great Black Britons campaign founded and run by Patrick Vernon OBE and Dr Angelina Osborne.

The book features a list of Black British names and accompanying portraits – including new role models and previously little-known historical figures. Each entry explores in depth the individual's contribution to British history – a contribution that too often has been either overlooked or dismissed.

The arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* in Britain from the Caribbean may have been seen as the defining moment that changed Britain from an exclusively white country into a racially diverse one. Yet Africans have been present in Britain since Roman times and there has been a constant Black presence in Britain since the sixteenth century.

In 2003, Vernon and Osborne, frustrated by the almost complete exclusion of the Black British community from mainstream notions of Britishness in education and popular media, launched their ground-breaking 100 Great Black Britons campaign, which invited the public to vote for the Black Briton they most admired. The campaign was a huge success across Britain, with Mary Seacole emerging at the top of the list.

In 2019, in the wake of Brexit and the 2018 Windrush Scandal, Vernon and Osborne decided it was time to relaunch the campaign to ensure recognition of the continued legacy and achievement of Black people in Britain.

### **Feature: Arthur Wharton, the first black professional footballer**

Arthur Wharton was born in Ghana on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1865. His father, Henry Wharton was a famous Methodist Minister and Missionary from Grenada in the West Indies and his mother was Annie Florence Egyriba, was related to the Fante Royal Family.

In 1882 Arthur moved to England to train as a Methodist missionary. It was whilst at College that he began his amazing sporting careers, competing at this stage as a 'gentleman amateur'. He excelled at everything he tried (even setting a record time for cycling between Preston and Blackburn in 1887).

In 1886, he became the fastest man in Britain winning the Amateur Athletics Association national 100 yards champion at Stamford Bridge, London - the first time the trophy was won by a Northerner.

This success gave him the opportunity to compete in professional athletics tournaments, where he was able to make a living from appearance fees. His abilities also brought him to the attention of various professional football clubs

He was first signed as a semi professional player with Preston North End in 1886, as goalkeeper. His highpoint with Preston was to make it to the FA Cup semi finals in 1887 where they lost 3-1 to West Bromwich Albion. There was speculation at the time that Arthur was good enough to play for England, but he was never considered for the position by the FA, due in part to the racial prejudice of the time.

He turned fully professional in 1889, when he signed for Rotherham United, and in 1894, Sheffield United poached him. Unfortunately, the move was not a success; he was getting older, and was competing with United's new and younger goalkeeper, Bill "Fatty" Foulke.

Arthur's career then drifted as he moved from club to club to try and make a living. At the same time, he started drinking heavily, and eventually retired from football in 1902. He died in 1930, a penniless alcoholic who had spent the last 15 years of his life as a colliery haulage hand.

His story was uncovered in 1997 by the Sheffield United based project, "Football Unites Racism Divides". His unmarked grave in Edlington has been given a headstone, and his picture was included in an exhibition of British Sporting Heroes at the National Portrait Gallery.

(Source: [www.100greatblackbritons.com](http://www.100greatblackbritons.com))