



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
Black History
A S S O C I A T I O N

Newsletter

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SHAPING THE FUTURE

NBHA aims to share research into local Black History with the widest possible audiences over the next two years. Led by Project Director Nikki Taylor and Community Learning Officer Don Allen, our Education Project is already reaching out to schools and community groups across the county.

An Open Invitation ...

As part of the new and exciting **Shaping the Future** project we are working with Northampton Museum Service to look at how Black History can be integrated into the interpretation of objects on display at the museums across the town.

Over hundreds of years people from Northamptonshire have travelled around the world. The Cartwright Collection, held at the Record Office, Wootton Hall Park, contains the travel diary of William Cornwallis Cartwright who describes his travels to Egypt in 1849. Many such Victorian travellers returned to the county with objects from places across the globe and some of these objects are now in the collections stored at local museums.

Over the next few months we will be engaging the services of an ethnographer to come and work with individuals and groups looking at the collections on display and in storage. This promises to be an exciting time for the NBHA project and the Museum Service.

On **Tuesday 19 December** we are holding an event at the Doddridge Centre to give individuals and groups a chance to come along and examine some of the interesting objects from the Museum. We are hoping that some of you might also be able to reveal a story that accompanies the objects. The event is from 6:30 to 8:30pm and light refreshments will be provided. **Please come and join in!**



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For further details please contact Nikki Taylor on 01604 590 967 or email research@northants-black-history.org.uk .

This event is held in partnership with Northampton Borough Council Museum Service.

Staff Update

Don Allen writes...

I started my job as Community Learning Officer on 2 October and I am really enjoying the work.

I am currently working on the first of three community learning projects. The project, *Food through the Generations*, will run for several weeks starting in January. Our aim is to create a project that will encourage individuals and groups to uncover the heritage and cultural diversity of food. We will produce a cook book celebrating the diversity of food in Northamptonshire. We also aim to offer a variety of learning opportunities for individuals and groups. Participating groups will come from Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough. They will include Dostiyo, the WACA youth group and a group linked to KRISP.



Donald Allen

Another important part of my job is to continue to develop the outreach work of NBHA. Over the forthcoming months I hope to meet a range of local community groups to explain the work of the NBHA Education Project and the ongoing role of the Northamptonshire Black History Association.

Other activities I have been involved in so far include giving a Black History talk to students at Kingsthorpe Community College, taking part in the Black History course at the University of Northampton, and attending the Connecting Diasporas conference in Birmingham on 4 November. This event was about local Black History in Birmingham, especially the experiences of more recent settlers such as the Kurdish and Somali communities.

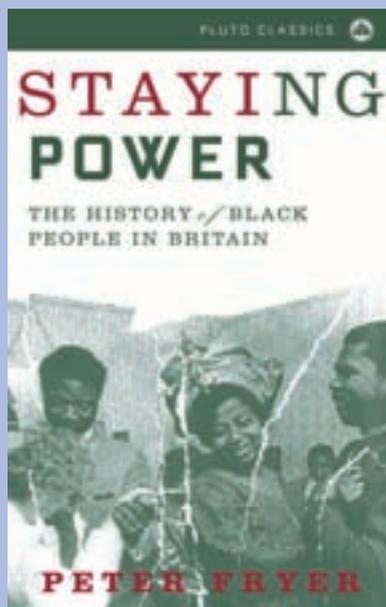
I have been busy familiarising myself with the research and other work that has been done by the NBHA over recent years, and now I am looking forward to the challenges ahead.

Remembering Peter Fryer, 1927-2006

Peter Fryer, who died on 31 October, was one of the most important writers of Black British History. His book **Staying Power** (Pluto Press, 1984) was a landmark publication which opened up the hidden histories of Black and Asian people in this country to many thousands of readers. It begins with the unforgettable statement that 'There were Africans in Britain before the English came here'. Tracing Black British History back to the soldiers of the Roman imperial army, he provides detailed, fascinating proof of the achievements of visitors and settlers over the centuries, dispelling for ever the myth that Black British people played no part in this country's heritage until after the Second World War. **Aspects of Black British History** (Index Books, 1993) offers a shorter summary, showing that black people within the British Empire were not only victims but also active freedom fighters.

Remembering Peter Fryer, 1927-2006 cont.

Peter Fryer was an activist as well as a scholar. His interest in Black History began when he was a young journalist, covering the story of the arrival of the Empire Windrush with its cargo of Caribbean settlers in 1948. As a Communist, he controversially reported the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, siding with the revolutionaries. As a historian, he sought out stories of black resistance to oppression, introducing modern readers to the life stories of black opponents of the slave trade such as Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cuguano, as well as explaining the economic and ideological roots of slavery and racism. He showed how Britain fostered challenges to imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at the same time as Black Britons contributed to the country's social and cultural life and to both World Wars.



Front cover of Peter Fryer's
Book, *Staying Power*

Peter Fryer believed that a full appreciation of Black History was vital to the future of Britain's multicultural society. Alongside his research, he travelled the country spreading this message. In 1989 The Wellingborough Racial Equality Council invited Peter Fryer to speak. His message was inspiring, and his enthusiasm for our early researches into local Black History helped set us on the road to the Northamptonshire Black History Association which exists today. Thank you, Peter – your work goes on!

Exclusive Offer: NBHA members can buy Peter Fryer's book **Staying Power** at a discounted price of £15 by calling 01264 342932 or e-mailing tps.pluto@thomson.com and quoting **PLUFRYER1**.

Best Foot Forward: Remembering the Shoemaker

Northampton Museum and Art Gallery is currently running an oral history project about the shoe industry in Northampton from 1945 to the present day. The project is a regional initiative to record the memories of the people working within the shoe factories and offices at that time.

When faced with the numerous books on the subject of shoemaking in Northampton, it is surprising to find that very little has been recorded since the end of the Second World War. Yet we are in a situation where vital information is at risk of being lost for ever. This prospect has led the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery to invite all members of the community who worked within the industry between 1945 and present day to join the project and share their memories.

The recordings will then be archived for future generations learning about the proud history of shoemaking in Northamptonshire. We also plan to use recorded memories to complement the machinery collection, making the history of industrial development more exciting to our younger audience members and adding a human context.

The project is funded by the East Midlands branch of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council so as to make the region's collection of industrial machinery more accessible to the communities of Northamptonshire.

NBHA members and supporters will look forward to finding out more about local black shoe workers, who included the famous 'pocket rocket' weightlifter Precious Mackenzie. You can help make sure this dimension of the project is well represented. NBHA members will also be providing help with the training of interviewers for the project and with the editing process, based on our experience of creating the NBHA oral history archive over the past few years.



The former Barratt's Shoe Factory, Kingsthorpe Road, Northampton

If you are interested in taking part in the project please contact Francis Nielsen at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery on 01604 838111, or e-mail fnielsen@northampton.gov.uk

Black History Month

What's Black History Month all about?

Black History Month has its origin in the USA since February 1926. Its original aim was to acknowledge, celebrate and promote the histories, achievements and cultures of people from the Afrikan Holocaust/Black Diaspora. African American communities across the States began to unite to celebrate and acknowledge their achievements, keeping alive their traditions and heritage. It started as Negro History week and then became BHM. It was founded by Dr Carter G Woodson who began documenting, writing, recording and researching the histories of the African American people. Woodson chose to commemorate the birthdays of both Frederick Douglas, ex-slave and abolitionist, and Abraham Lincoln, former President, in February because of their impact towards positive change on Black American life.

In Britain BHM was officially launched by Akyaba Addai Sebbo of the Greater London Council following an African Jubilee Year event in London in October 1987. Different African Caribbean communities up and down the country had previously celebrated their histories promoting arts and culture through different events, such as Caribbean Week in Manchester in the 1970s and 1980s and the launch of the BBC Radio London Black Londoners radio programme.

In Northampton

In 2006, BHM was acknowledged by various organisations and community groups. Some of the events that NBHA presented or participated in, and others that caught our attention, were as follows:

Wellingborough Black Arts Consortium is following the American tradition and will be celebrating BHM in February 2007 instead of October with Afrikan History Month. They are in the process of planning and two of the possible features are a Black History drama performance and a Community Showcase. Watch this space.

Camrose Centre Sure Start held a BHM exhibition throughout October with an Activity Day on the 20 October. The exhibition was a vibrant visual array of cultural artefacts, images, books and information. On 17 October the children from the nursery enjoyed a full day's programme of story-telling, dance, music and movement. An activity day was also held on 20 October with a Caribbean lunch, story telling, hair care advice, nail art and mehendi art for members of the local community and visitors.

The University of Northampton hosted the NBHA exhibition of ten banners illustrating local Black History in the lobby of the main library at Park Campus during the month of October. Several events were also organised linked to equality and diversity during One World Week, 16-22 October.

The Northampton Museum and Art Gallery created a Josephine Baker display for BHM, which celebrated and documented the life of the famous 1930s American entertainer and civil rights activist. The gilt chain-mail stockings shown in the photo are part of the Museum's collection and were on display throughout October.



The Josephine Baker display at the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

NBHA staff were out and about visiting schools and community organisations throughout October. On 25 October Nikki Taylor spoke to inmates at Wellingborough prison, introducing the work of the Northamptonshire Black History Association. A debate and lively discussion followed.

On 28 October Nikki Taylor and Don Allen attended the Northampton West Indian Community Association's celebration of Black History Month at the Elim Centre, Gladstone Road, Northampton. Nikki Taylor gave a talk about the importance of teaching Black History as part of the National Curriculum. It was an inspiring evening with crafts, stalls, Caribbean food, music from Inspiration FM, a local dance troupe and the NBHA Black History display. Professor Gus John, activist and author, was the main speaker. He enlightened the audience about young black people, parents, parenting and the education system. NWICA are a new organisation and can be reached at their attractive website: www.nwica.co.uk.

A Service of Remembrance

Monica Babb writes...

I attended the Service of Remembrance on Sunday 12 November 2006 at the Parish Church of St Peter, Clapham, London. After the service a commemorative plaque was unveiled by the Mayor of Lambeth, honouring World War I veterans from the West Indies, the UK and Canada who are buried in the Seaford cemetery, East Sussex, England.

The service was organised by the West Indian Ex-Servicemen/Women's Association (WIESA). Each year on Remembrance Sunday the Association pays tribute to the West Indian Servicemen and Women who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars.

The Association was formed about 36 years ago, primarily to promote the welfare of the large group of West Indian ex- Servicemen/Women and their families who remained in Britain after the Second World War. Over the years the Association began to help other members of the community, especially elderly West Indians. WIESA has a network of supporters who try to promote social inclusion by going out to visit the elderly thus trying to prevent loneliness and isolation. The Association provides a vital lifeline for many people in the community and gives practical support wherever possible, including advice on issues such as heating, homelessness and immigration matters.

I felt it was a privilege to be part of such a wonderful occasion. There were members present from the British Armed Forces, the Canadian Veterans Association, and members of the Fevrier family who had lost members of their family in the War.

Have YOU been a victim of crime? If so, Victim Support can help



Runa Begum

My name is Runa Begum. I am the County Racist Incidents Officer for Victim Support. Victim Support is an independent charity that helps victims of crime. We can help you in the immediate aftermath of a crime. You do not have to report a crime to the police in order to access our services. The service we offer is free and confidential.

We offer emotional support and practical help to our users. We can help, whether you just want someone to talk to, information about the criminal justice system such as police, compensation, insurance, crime prevention or information about other agencies. We can also arrange an interpreter should you require one. In terms of practical help, we can write to other agencies on your behalf, help you to fill out forms, provide you with personal attack alarms etc.

We deal with all types of crimes including criminal damage, burglaries, harassment, domestic abuse and assaults. Many witnesses feel worried about going to Court so Victim Support's Witness Service helps victims, witnesses and their families before, during and after a trial. Our Witness Service staff and volunteers can provide information such as court procedures, explain legal terminology, arrange a pre-court visit and provide witnesses with a quiet place to wait on the day of the trial.

If you would like our help please contact us at **Victim Support:**

Western Branch (covers Northampton, Daventry & South Northants)

Telephone: (01604) 603477

Northern Branch (covers Wellingborough, East Northants, Kettering & Corby) Telephone: (01536) 417119



Somali Health Awareness Foundation

Somalis began arriving in the UK from 1993 onwards as a result of the civil war and the subsequent collapse of the Somali government. The Somali community in Northampton has grown dramatically and they are one of the largest refugee communities in the county. Many refugees feel isolated while overcoming loss and coping with cultural adjustment and learning English. The limited data available shows that Somali refugees (especially women) have important health concerns. They experience barriers and may lack the navigational skills required to communicate health care needs. This is often compounded by past experiences in their country thus preventing them from getting proper treatment. They may have a different set of beliefs and expectations about health care which may inhibit their ability to properly access health care for themselves and their families.

The Somali Health Awareness Foundation (SHAF) is a non-profit organisation established in 2005 for promoting Health Education programmes within the Somali community thus bridging the gap between the Somali community and health care providers in Northamptonshire. SHAF's multidisciplinary professional members are dedicated to serving the Somali community by sponsoring joint health programs, seminars and workshops that raise the level of health awareness, thus reducing health inequities in key health priority areas including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, tuberculosis, healthy eating and immunization programs to benefit the Somali community. SHAF's primary goal is to implement motivational and educational programs in English and Somali languages for the benefit of the whole community.

For further details contact: Ismail Ali (Chair) The Somali Health Awareness Foundation (SHAF) Tel: 07961867967

ORAL HISTORY UPDATE

19 more interviews have been deposited at the Record Office, bringing the total to 97. The latest deposits include the following people: Jenny Labbon; Norma McFarlane; Constance Violet Mutemasango; Jamila Amar; Doo Sik Lim; Merlynne Francique; Niranjani Jani; Victor Ukaegbu; Margaret Plowman; Pratima Dattani and Meena Modha

NBHA Forthcoming Events

- **14 December 2006** NBHA Committee Meeting in the Godwin Room at Northampton Guildhall at 6.30. All members are welcome.
- **19 December 2006** 6:30 to 8:30pm. NBHA Show and Tell event at Doddridge Centre, organised with Northampton Museum Service. Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be available.
- **18 January 2007** NBHA Committee Meeting, Northampton Guildhall at 6.30. Kettering Museum staff to attend for discussion of educational loan boxes.
- **27 January 2007** Holocaust Memorial Day. Details tbc. Contact Lindsey Ambrose 01604 837566.
- **8 February 2007** Race 2 Score Performance at the Castle Theatre in Wellingborough. Performance starts at 2pm and tickets cost £2 and are available from the Box Office: 01933 270007.
- **25 March 2007** Set All Free event to commemorate the Abolition of the British Slave Trade at Unity College, Northampton. Visiting speaker from Haiti. Details tbc.

Stop Press: New Black History Course from 10 January

The University of Northampton and NBHA have created a new course building on the success of 'Black British History: From Past to Present'. If you have had some experience of studying Black History, you are invited to enrol for 'Special Study in Black British History', beginning at the University, Park Campus on Wednesday 10 January from 6.00-8.00pm. This one-term course gives you a chance to research in greater depth any aspect of Black British History which particularly interests you. For further details and an application form, contact Julia Bush through the NBHA office or by email: julia.bush@northampton.ac.uk



The Class of 2006:
Students attending the current Black History course at the University of Northampton

Where can you find us?

Northamptonshire Black History Association is based at

Doddridge Centre, 109 St James Road, Northampton NN5 5LD

Phone: 01604 590967 Email: admin@northants-black-history.org.uk

Website: www.northants-black-history.org.uk

Please contact us at this address for further information on all NBHA's plans and activities, and please come and join in!



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