



Emanuel School

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Monday 3rd - Friday 28th October

## Friday

**How the Windrush Generation built modern London**

Tom Barrett - Upper Sixth

When the Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks in 1948, the people aboard set foot into a nation decimated by War. They came to a Britain far from what we see today. Buildings collapsed, rationing still in place, sooty fumes polluting the streets, there was hardly an air of the land of opportunity.

Britain only accepted the emigration from its then colonies in the Caribbean due to a critical shortage of skilled labour. It was these people that found work literally rebuilding, with ferocious commitment, this new land they had set foot in only a few years after they had used this same commitment to help Britain win the same war for which all this devastation was caused. Many soon found jobs in the public utilities. What is often forgotten is that a fully interconnected TFL or the NHS were only possible by the skills and pioneering abilities of this

generation.

Most obviously, many soon encountered discrimination, and that the opportunities found in this country were probably less open than envisioned. They saw animosity from blatant discrimination by employers, especially with the Metropolitan Police, but also by traditional left-wing institutions such as the Trade Unions. But these people were here, soon integrating into and evolving London into the multicultural city.

While the UK had invited the Windrush Generation here for economic reasons, fixing a broken Britain, they rebuilt it and built upon it, creating a new London which we see all around us today.



### Ebony Rainford-Brent

Mr S Turner

***C'mon cricket, you are part of the solution, so don't be the problem anymore. We won't get understanding or bring people together unless we can allow people to say what they've got to say and feel what they've got to feel.***

*Ebony Rainford-Brent. 2020 – the first black woman to play cricket for England.*

If you are passionate about equality and cricket (and there is a lot of cross over in that Venn diagram, I promise you) it has been a difficult couple of years. I am, as Freddie Flintoff described me earlier this year (sorry, I should not name drop!) a 'cricket tragic,' and I also abhor inequality in all its forms and most particularly on grounds of race. So, hearing first about the way Azeem Raviq was treated during his time at Yorkshire County Cricket Club for a decade and then of the institutional racism that has been uncovered at Cricket Scotland, has left me feeling numb, disappointed, and quite embarrassed to be so besotted by the game.

I fell in love with the game at 8 years old when I watched my first ever game at Somerset County Cricket Club. After enjoying a brilliant lunch including a memorably large piece of apple

pie, I watched Curtly Ambrose of the West Indies and Northamptonshire bowl very quickly. By complete chance, we were in the stands sitting next to Curtly's wife and daughter, who was a bit younger than me. Whilst the cricket was awe inspiring, the conversation between Mrs Ambrose and my parents, and me with Miss Ambrose was enriching as we compared our lives: they from the island paradise of Antigua, and us from rural Somerset. Those kinds of conversations with people from all over the cricketing world have continued throughout all the time I have been part of the game, and it has broadened my mind and given me a world view.

Cricket has had a difficult relationship with race for some time. It was England's selection of Basil D'Oliveira - a stylish batter and a skillful bowler who was from a mixed ethnic background - for a tour of South Africa in 1968 that led to a world wide rejection of apartheid. The English selectors had hesitated to pick him, despite scoring a glorious hundred at The Oval at the end of the summer. They knew it would provoke ire among the administrators in a country that was developing a society that was entirely dominated by white people and totally disrespected everyone else. To the credit of MCC at the time, they stuck to their man and so the tour was canceled by the South African Prime Minister. This led to South Africa being excluded from international cricket for 22 years.

For much of the 1970s, 1980s and some of the 1990s, world cricket was dominated by the West Indies who were spearheaded by a battalion of seriously fast bowlers. There is a great film called Fire in Babylon (2010) that documents the rise of this team and the way in which they humbled

numerous batting line ups. But it is made clear that these players were spurred on by the racism they were subjected to by crowds throughout the world. Time and again they took their revenge.

In the wake of the death of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020 (a date etched in all our minds forever more), former

West Indies fast bowler and cricket commentator Michael Holder talked about some of the ways he had been treated by people in the cricket community because of his colour. It was not nice to hear, but he was talking about a different time, which gave it an element of distance.

However, in the same film, Ebony Rainford-Brent spoke in a comparable way about her experiences in this century. If you watch cricket, or listen to it on the radio, you will recognise Ebony for her joyful analysis, infectious laughter and ever optimistic outlook. To see her with tears in her eyes as she exposed the prejudice to which she had been subjected floored the modern cricket community. Reading the way that both Yorkshire and Scotland had systematically failed to recognise, appreciate, and respond to racism at the core of their institutions feels like yet another blow to the fundamentals of the sport. Some tough questions are being asked and I am not hugely convinced by the answers I have heard.

But I am convinced that cricket and the sense of community, kinship and joy it promotes has a wonderful opportunity to further the cause of equality. In fact, it must do for the sake of Azeem, Basil, Michael, and Ebony. C'mon cricket, you are part of the solution, so don't be the problem anymore.



## Arthur Roberts

Taiwo Ademola - Lower Sixth

We hear a lot about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and Harriet Tubman. Of course, what they did will never be forgotten, but I think it's time to highlight some other significant black people in Britain.

I want to share with you, the life of Arthur Roberts; one of the few black men who served in the trenches on the Western Front.

Arthur seems to have done well at school, staying on beyond the leaving age of 14. Certainly his war memoir conveys an intelligent, eloquent young man, well read and with broad interests, who was also a musician and an artist.

Arthur kept a diary of his military service and his diary and memoirs are a portrait of his personal journey from raw, wide-eyed recruit to a man coming to terms with the full horror of trench warfare. His story remained unknown and unpublished until a chance find 20 years after his death. It is a rare first-hand account of one of the few black British men to have served in the trenches of the Western Front. Arthur makes no reference to his colour in his writings of his wartime experience. He

offers no sense of any mistreatment, any lack of respect, singling out or other prejudice on any level – whether as a matter of colour or other aspects of his character.

I'm sure Arthur experienced racism in his time but he didn't appear to resent the British people as he fought for them. In this more political society, Arthur has set the example of letting go of bitterness and creating your own legacy as success is the best revenge.

Arthur was a great example of how to be strong in times of adversity. He didn't view himself as a victim, he didn't give a myriad of excuses, he instead served Britain on the front line and put his life on the line to protect his friends and family and create this amazing legacy.

Many a time, we don't talk enough about black people in history who weren't slaves. So I hope this article highlights another memorable black person for the history books who accomplished great things in his life. As you go on this month, think about the dangers Arthur faced in the trenches and how he persevered, nonetheless; we should all try to replicate his mindset to life and persevere no matter what.



## Arthur Roberts: On The Front Line

Gilberto Astol i - Lower Sixth

Arthur Roberts was one of the very few Black British soldiers who fought in the front line on the western front and between February 1917 and March 1918 he kept a diary of his military service, later using his daily entries to write an extended narrative of his experiences in France. His diary portrays his personal journey of going from a raw, wide-eyed recruit to a man coming to terms with the full horror of trench warfare. His story remained unknown and unpublished until almost 20 years after his death. Arthur Roberts was born in Bristol in April 1897. By his own word he believed he was "possessed of great military inclinations", he was shipped off to France in 1917 at the age of 20. Once there he admits to being unprepared for the reality of the experience yet to come. As he saw his first war casualties he wrote "that is practically photographed on my brain. At that sight, it was as if my ruminations had been cast from their exalted altitude of self-contentedness to an abyss of nauseating realities". Arthur's diary provides a rare account of a black man in the British army, and it also demonstrated how in war all men are equal. This is yet another person to be celebrated in Black History Month.



## Henrietta Lacks

Jack Geater Milton - Upper Sixth

One woman often overlooked in the contributions of black people to medicine is African American Henrietta Lacks, born August 1st 1920 and died due to cancer at age 31. Her cancer cells were taken from her body shortly before her death, without her consent – a common practice back in the 1950s especially when doctors would treat black patients. Cells derived from her cancer had a remarkable property – they did not mutate, nor did they age. This breakthrough allowed scientists to create countermeasures against multiple diseases, including creating the polio vaccine and finding new ways to slow down cancer. In essence, having a sample cell that stays exactly the same no matter how many

generations they deviate from the original is perfect for experimentations. These cells were named HeLa (Henrietta Lacks) cells.

However, there was a great deal of controversy surrounding these cells and exploitation of Henrietta's race. Not only was she not informed of these cells being taken from her, Henrietta's family were not informed or asked for their permission before the cells were researched further until 1975. After her death, in fact, her entire genome was made public to the world, again without the permission of her relatives. This massive invasion of privacy was enabled by racial prejudices at the time, with

researchers simply not caring about whether any black person would want to have such information published or not.

Decades later, Henrietta's genome was taken down from being available publicly (2013). However, she still remains a shining example of a phenomenal contribution to science, which was distorted by racial prejudice and non-consensual experimentation. While she died from the cervical cancer that doctors used to sample her cells, Henrietta Lacks' cells live on, in exactly the same condition as they did a near-century ago.

