

Week three - The presence of Black people in the UK.

During week three, we looked at how Black people have contributed to British Society over the years.

John Blanke was a black musician in London in the early 16th century. He probably came to England as one of the African attendants of Katherine of Aragon in 1501. John Blanke is one of the earliest recorded black people in England after the Roman Period.

He is known to have existed because there is an image of him on the Westminster tournament roll which is a document in the College of Arms in London.



John Blanke played the trumpet and he played at a number of occasions, including Henry VII funeral. John Blanke was paid for his work he actually petitioned to get a pay increase from the King as he wanted to be treated in the same manner as his fellow trumpeters. And it was agreed that his pay would be increased - in fact, it was doubled!

The presence of Black people in the RAF

With the outbreak of war with Nazi Germany, Britain needed all the manpower it could get. The RAF began recruiting for air crew amongst black people but despite the formal end to discrimination, black people still found it hard to enlist. In 1939-1940, approximately 6,000 black Caribbean men volunteered for the RAF as either ground staff or air crew.



Windrush

On 22 June 1948, the empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury docks, Essex, carrying almost 500 Caribbean passengers.

The day that Windrush discharged its passengers at Tilbury has become an important landmark in the history of modern Britain. Caribbean migrants have been a fundamental and critical part of British society and in the process, have transformed important aspects of British life.



Notting Hill Carnival

This annual celebration is another example of black presence in British Life. The first Notting Hill carnival took place in August 1966, and to date, it attracts around one million people every year to Notting Hill and highlights Caribbean and other black cultures.

It celebrates the British West Indian community and encourages cultural unity. In the '60s, the festival sprang up as one way to address community unrest and improve racial relations. But today, Today, the carnival features a parade with elaborate and beautifully decorated floats, costumed performers, steel pans and soooooo much food! There is a sense of enjoyment, freedom, unity and celebration.

