

Surrey Heritage

Discover Black History at Surrey History Centre



For centuries, people have moved to Surrey from across the UK and throughout the world. Some came as merchants or economic migrants, and some came as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. By whatever means Black people arrived in the county, they made Surrey their home and became part of the county's amazing diversity. This brief guide shows how Surrey History Centre can help you discover Black family and community history through library, archive and online sources.

Where to start?

Tracing Black ancestors, particularly if they have been slaves, can be difficult as few records are held in Britain. Each country maintains its own archive and register offices, and records may be incomplete or not survive at all. However, with more records being made available online every month through family history websites, it is not an impossible task. Below are just a few of the sources that may be useful in your research:

- Birth, marriage and death records (slave marriages are rare; slave burials were often unrecorded as they usually occurred in the grounds of the plantation or house)
- Baptism registers
- Military records
- Personal papers and wills
- Newspapers & street directories
- Electoral registers
- Migration records, such as ships' passenger lists and naturalization records
- Land and property papers, including Plantation records
- Records of the Slave Registry & Slave Compensation Commission
- Refugee records and 'Alien' (foreign national) registration papers

Online resources

The online family history sites [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and [Findmypast.co.uk](https://www.findmypast.co.uk) are free to use at Surrey libraries and Surrey History Centre. They are a great place to start and contain a vast range of records and guides. Other helpful websites include:

- A variety of Jamaican records feature on <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/>
- 'Moving Here' is a vast family history resource for migration to England <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>
- The National Archives hold the records of the British Colonial Office and has an online guide to Asian and Black History in Britain, 1500-1850 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/>
- The Caribbean Roots website <https://grannum.wordpress.com/> has an extensive list of sources for Caribbean family history
- The Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership database covers plantations, owners and the legacy of slavery, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>
- The Caribbean Surname Index has an online guide to West Indian family research <https://www.candoo.com/surnames/index.html>

Our **Exploring Surrey's Past** website features a series of Black History theme pages which include stories covering all aspects of Black History in Surrey, from slavery and abolition to industry and literature. The stories are accompanied by research resources and a Black History bibliography. They can be found online at https://www.exploringsurreyspast.org.uk/themes/subjects/black_history/

Collections at Surrey History Centre



Surrey was home to freed slaves, slave owners and a number of leading abolitionists. The collections at Surrey History Centre hold their stories in the records of slave-owning families, the papers of abolition committees and the slaves themselves. Not all records of Black people in Surrey relate to slavery; records of education, work and everyday life record their place in the county's history. Surrey's hospitals thrived as a result of nursing staff from the British Empire; and the Surrey regiments, stationed in far-flung places, photographed the Black cultures that they came into contact with. Our archive collections are freely accessible to all and our Local Studies Library contains many guides and

publications to help trace Black British ancestors. Our online guide to tracing Black History will also help you <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/culture-and-leisure/history-centre/researchers/guides/tracing-black-history>.

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