

Settling in England

Family

Image kindly shared by a member of the Caribbean Social Forum and photographed by the National Maritime Museum. Image use reserved for the Memories of the Caribbean Project.

Many people came to England, leaving family including partners and children in the Caribbean. They hoped to bring them to England once they had settled and found work. For some children this meant years without seeing one or both parents.

This wasn't the case for everyone though. Many people came to England and met their partner, getting married and starting families in their new home.



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Women's fashion

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In the 1940s, fashion was very utilitarian due to wartime rationing, requiring outfits that didn't waste material. With the 1950s came synthetic materials, which made fashion more attainable.

Many British Caribbean people worked in lower-paid employment due to discrimination. This meant funds for keeping up with fashion were low. Blakey's/segs (protective metal covering over the toes and heels) became a popular choice, both to

extend the life of shoes and to create a fashionable sound as their owner walked.

By the 1960s knitting had become popular among British Caribbean women, and many created clothing for their family and themselves.

Women's magazines, such as Freemans, brought fashion to the masses.



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Men's fashion

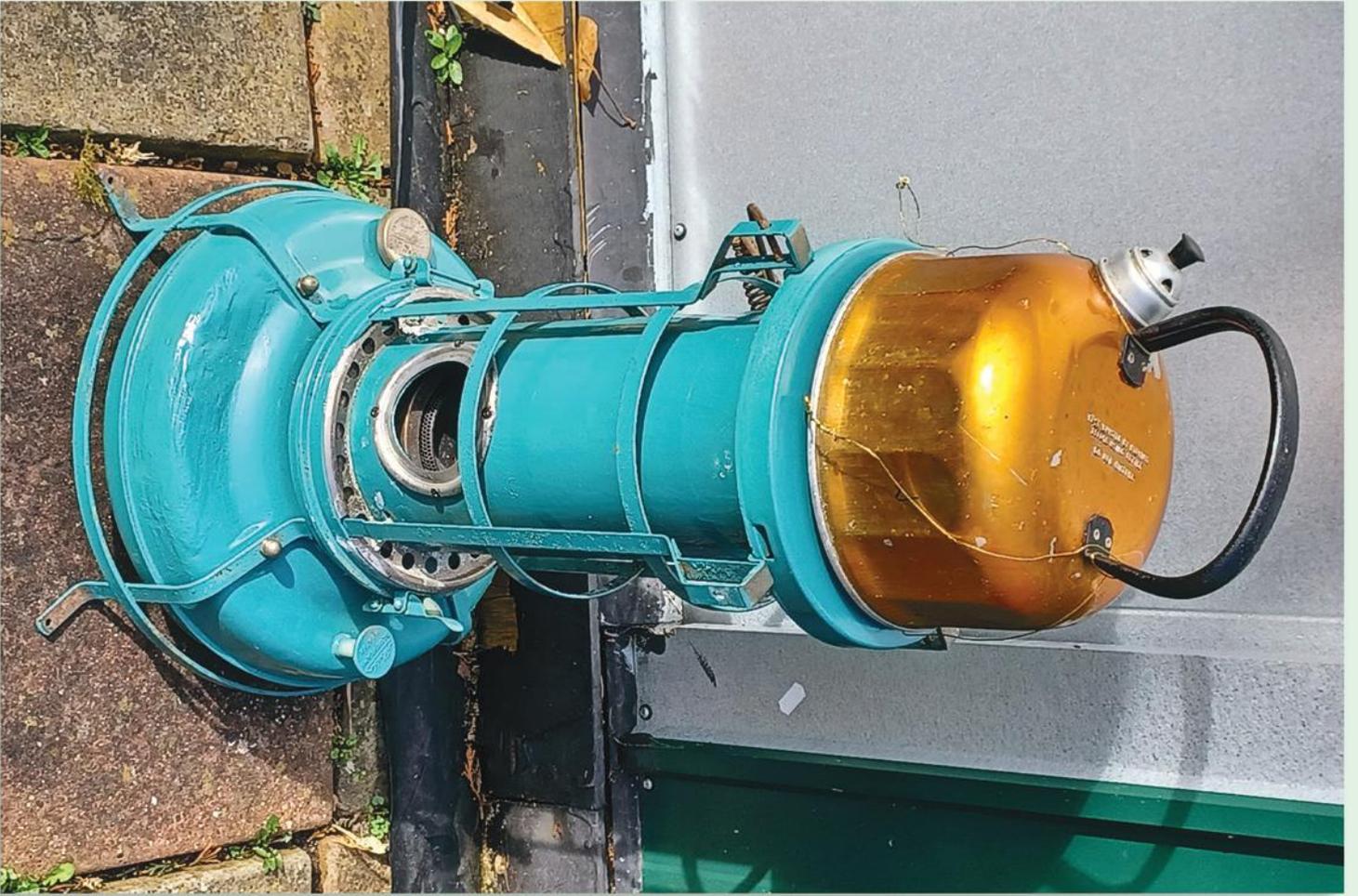
Image kindly shared by a member of the Caribbean Social Forum and photographed by the National Maritime Museum. Image use reserved for the Memories of the Caribbean Project.

In the 1940s, the Zoot suit was often worn by Caribbean men, inspired by African-American musicians. It consisted of high waisted, wide-legged trousers, worn with a long jacket. The racism and discrimination facing many Caribbean men led them to dress smart to show respectability.

The Trilby hat is often associated with the Windrush Generation due to its popularity in this period and was often paired with the Zoot suit.

Men's fashion was influenced by the cinema, an entertaining past time enjoyed by many British Caribbean men across the 1940s-70s.

"This hat is owned by my father ... who arrived in Brixton in 1955 from Portland Jamaica. As a young man who grew up in the Blue mountains travelling to England would have been quite an adventure for someone who spent most of his time in the rain forest. The way he looked was very important to him and was never seen without his trilby hat. Men wearing trilby hat is an important image of the historical picture of men leaving the Windrush looking very smart wearing trilby hats"



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Keeping a home

Image kindly shared by a member of the Caribbean Social Forum.

The paraffin heater was central in the homes of many Caribbean families newly arrived in England and not used to the damp chill. It was used for heating the room, for cooking and by hairdressers to heat the pressing comb. The paraffin man came at the weekends selling paraffin from the back of their van.

"I remember going out with the 5 gallon plastic container to fill it with the hope it would last a week until the paraffin man came again."

The indoor coal fire was another way of keeping warm that Caribbean families would not have been used to. Often they would place a big fire guard in front to keep the room safe, although often it would also be used to help dry clothes.

HOLY BIBLE

A close-up, slightly angled view of a vintage Holy Bible. The cover is made of dark, textured black leather with a pebbled grain. The words "HOLY BIBLE" are embossed in a gold, serif font near the top edge. The spine on the left shows signs of wear, with the leather chipped away to reveal the underlying board material. The edges of the pages are visible at the bottom, appearing aged and yellowed. The entire book is set against a plain, light-colored background.

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Church

JOD no.: RS5513

Church had been a big part of life in the Caribbean, but those attending Church in England found the the experience very different.

Few Caribbean people attending English Churches found them welcoming as white parishioners refused to acknowledge them. Church services themselves were also a different experience with different interpretations of scripture.

Many communities began to set up their own spaces to practice their beliefs. These often started as small groups in someone's home, but they quickly grew in size.



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Housing and Home

Image: © Nick Hedges / National Media Museum, Bradford.

"Leaving the Caribbean to come to England; how cold it was and the houses looked like factories".



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Television

Image: [istockphoto.com/Aliaksandr Litviniuk](https://www.istockphoto.com/Aliaksandr-Litviniuk)

Love thy Neighbour (1972–76)

- Based around a white couple and a black couple who were next-door neighbours.
- Starred Jack Smethurst, Rudolph Walker, Nina Baden-Semper and Kate Williams.

Rising Damp (1974–78)

- Starred Leonard Rossiter, Frances de la Tour, Richard Beckinsale and Don Warrington.

Coronation Street (1960–)

- "As children we all had to be quiet when Coronation Street came on. Do you remember the characters?"

Desmond's (1989–95)

- Created by St Lucia born writer Trix Worrell.
- The comedy moved away from the racial stereotypes seen in earlier sitcoms and instead highlighted differences within African-Caribbean society.
- Desmond Ambrose runs a barbershop in Peckham that is the hub of the community's social scene.



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Sports

Images: [istockphoto.com/robynmac/viastas/ImageDB](https://www.istockphoto.com/robynmac/viastas/ImageDB)

Famous sports personalities that are well known include:

Footballers

- Justin Fashanu.
- John Barnes.
- Howard Gayle.

Boxers

- Emile Griffith.
- Henry Cooper.

Cricket

- Sir Viv Richards.
- Clive Lloyd.

Athletics

- Don Quarrie.
- Arthur Wint.



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Personal grooming

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In the 1940s, hairstyles made use of hair rollers, curls, rolls, hair scarves and the use of snoods to create hairstyles inspired by Hollywood glamour.

In the 1950s women began wearing wigs and hair pieces to create pompadours.

In the 1960s the natural hair movements inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power meant many black women embraced the natural hairstyle.

Hair tongs and the hot comb are particularly recognisable hair styling tools.

For male grooming, bay rum is an important product, used as an aftershave, cologne and shaving soap.

Brylcreem was another important grooming product for men. It had a very wet texture so was suited to thick hair and was particularly good for afro hair. Also used was castor oil and petroleum jelly.



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Places

A lot of people coming from Caribbean struggled to find suitable places to live in England and ended up renting homes in the most rundown areas. As more people moved to England, they began to build communities around the country, living in areas with others from the same island. Over time, specific areas of the UK have become associated with specific islands:

Reading and Barbados – Reading has the largest Barbadian population outside the Caribbean.

High Wycombe and St Vincent – High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire has the largest population of Vincentians in the UK.

Brixton (London) and Jamaica – Brixton has become known as Little Jamaica and a place where Jamaican people can find spices, music and more that remind them of home.

Croydon (London) and Guyana – A vibrant Guyanese community exists in Croydon.

Bristol, Lewisham (London), Leeds, Liverpool, Cardiff, Northampton, Birmingham and others were also popular areas to settle.

In 1958 violent race riots broke out in areas where communities of Caribbean people had settled. This included riots in London and Nottingham, where white people attacked black people and their homes.

In 1959, Claudia Jones organised a 'Caribbean Carnival' (which later became the Notting Hill Carnival) in response to the riots.



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Games

JOD no.: S5745-005

Popular games played by the British Caribbean community include dominoes and ludo.

Jamaican dominoes is played using 28 pieces and four players. Play moves counter clockwise with each player adding their domino. Like values are always touching.

If you don't have a domino that corresponds to the ones on the layout, you must pass. Most Jamaican players will either lay down their dominoes to

show they "pass" or they will "click" two dominoes together twice to show they have passed.

Ludo (or Ludi) is a board game for 2-4 players using two dice and 16 counters. Taking turns, players race around the board, trying to get all their counters on the home base first.

FIRST FOLD HERE

Sender's name and address

An air letter should not contain
any enclosure; if it does it will be surcharged
or sent by ordinary mail.



Early English stained glass

Above: Adoration of the Shepherds, East Harling, Norfolk. 15th Century
Front: The Nativity, Great Malvern Priory Church, Worcestershire. 16th Century.
The Stamp: Angel, East Harling, Norfolk. 15th Century.
Designed by Peter Gaudl FSJA and printed by McConquodale & Co Ltd.

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AIR LETTER

BY AIR MAIL

PAR AVION AEROGRAMME



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TO OPEN SLIT HERE

Settling in England

Keeping in touch

Image taken by the National Maritime Museum as part of the Memories of the Caribbean Project.

Keeping in touch with family and friends in the Caribbean was important for those who had moved to England. Many people will recognise the distinctive air mail envelopes that allowed the individual to write their message inside before sealing and posting.

Many of those sending air mail letters back to the Caribbean would include money earned.