



REMEMBERING WINDRUSH

CONTEXT

On Wednesday June 23, 1948, The Times newspaper reported the arrival of the ship Empire Windrush under the headline 'Jamaicans arrive to seek work.' The article said: 'Of the 492 Jamaicans who arrived at Tilbury on Monday to seek work in this country, 236 were housed last night in Clapham South Deep Shelter. The remainder had friends to whom they could go and prospects of work. The men had arrived at Tilbury in the ex-troopship Empire Windrush. Among them are singers, students, pianists, boxers and a complete dance band. Thirty or forty had already volunteered to work as miners.'

The report was not entirely correct. According to the passenger List there were 1027 passengers on board, of whom just 539 gave Jamaica as their last place of permanent residence, so did 139 from Bermuda, 73 from Trinidad and 44 from British Guiana. Many came from other countries of the Caribbean. Many of them served Britain in the Royal Air Force (RAF) during WWII and were either returning to their jobs in the UK or coming to seek employment because workers were needed to help rebuild the country.

When Britain needed a helping hand during her war with Nazi Germany in 1939, the British appealed to the Caribbean people who responded positively. Thousands of men and women volunteered to come to this country to join the fight against Hitler, and many others served as merchant seamen. The Royal Air Force gained more recruits from the Caribbean than any other part of the British Empire, with around 400 flying as air crew, other volunteers served on the home front in a diversity of roles. © Windrush Foundations 2018