

Caribbean and African History: More books about Caribbean and African history can be found in the Central Library.
From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969 (1970) – Eric Williams
From Occupation to Independence: A Short History of the Peoples of the English-speaking Caribbean Region (1998) – Richard Hart
The Story of Africa (1984) – Basil Davidson
The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440 – 1870 (1997) – Hugh Thomas

Resources for researching African-Caribbean life in Leeds itself:

On the Move: An Introduction to the Migration and Settlement of the Black Communities in Leeds (1993) – Max Farrar
'Strangers in our Midst': Report of a Conference Convened to Study the Relations of White and Coloured People in Leeds (1955) – Leeds International Council
A Journey Through Our History: The Story of the Jamaican People in Leeds (2003) – Melody Walker
Land of Hope and Glory? The Presence of African, Asian and Caribbean Communities in Leeds (1993) – ed., Mohsin Zulfikar
'A Brief History of the African-Caribbean Community in Leeds' (2016) – available at secretlibraryleeds.net/local-history/leeds-black-history/

Opening times

Monday – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Tuesday – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Weds – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm
Friday – 9.00 – 5.00pm
Saturday – 10.00am – 4.00pm
Sunday - Closed

For more information

Local and Family History

**Leeds Central Library, Calverley Street,
Leeds, LS1 3AB**

T: 0113 378 6982

E: localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk

W: www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries

Blog: secretlibraryleeds.net

Tickets:

ticketsource.co.uk/Leedslibraryevents



African-Caribbean Family History

There are many genealogical resources available for researchers in African-Caribbean family history. This leaflet lists the most useful, along with some suggestions for further reading in the Library stock and resources.

Image is from Leodis and shows Dr. B's Caribbean Restaurant, Chapeltown, 1989.



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First Steps - Useful websites

BBC Family History – <http://ow.ly/WI7QQ> This is a very useful article on researching your African-Caribbean ancestry, with contact details of many register offices in the Caribbean. (no longer updated)

The First Four Steps

(1) Start with yourself!

(2) Decide which side of the family you want to begin your research – your mother's or father's side

(3) Talk to relatives; gather as much information about your ancestors, particularly:

- **Dates of birth, marriage and death (or approximate dates/years)**
- **Places of birth, marriage and death**
- **Try to find out people's official names; many people from the Caribbean use family and pet names**, which are different from their official names used by employers and the State. You will need to know the official names in order to gather further information from religious, employment or government documents.
- **Name of parents, spouses, siblings**
- **Try to discover where events happened**; this is important because there are 20 Caribbean countries and each have their own records and record offices/archive offices
- **The period when your ancestors arrived in Britain** - this will determine how much research you can do using British records – GRO Index, Census records, electoral registers, burial records, employees records, land records, criminal records, hospital or workhouse records, newspapers, etc.
- **Collect or copy** photographs, birth, marriage & death certificates, parish records, family letters, information written in family bibles and family trees; listen to family tales and oral traditions, which if not totally accurate may have some truth in them.

(4) **Plot information on a 'tree'**. This helps visualise what pieces of information you have and what information you need to find.

www.familyecho.com is a useful free family tree plotter.

Things to keep in mind

(1) When did your ancestors arrive in Britain? The answer to this question will determine what records you can use here in Britain

(2) How did they arrive – boat, plane or train? Boat passenger lists are kept at the National Archives in London and some of these records can be viewed online via the Ancestry website. For those records not available online, you can request a paid search to be carried out via the National Archive's website (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) or you can write to or email them (contact details available on the website).

(3) What country did your ancestors came from, e.g. which Caribbean Island, an African country, USA, etc? Once you locate the country where a particular ancestor came from then you will need to contact the record office(s) in that respective country (see BBC website on page 1)

(4) Having some knowledge of the history of the country from which your ancestors came will help you pin point where you need to look for the records and what types of records to look for.

(5) Records may not survive for many reasons, e.g. in the early 1980s there was a fire in the court house of St Kitts, which destroyed many records.

(6) If you can't visit a country, you may be able to employ a local researcher to undertake the work on your behalf – archives and record offices in the respective countries may have lists of researchers.

(7) But before you do this, it is always worth checking if any records are available to access here in Britain.

Once you've worked through these first-steps, you're well-placed to get stuck into the research – and the best place to start will be **Civil Registration** and **Parish Records** for the Caribbean Island (see next page). The further back you can get with those records, the closer you are to discovering African, African Creole, European, Asian and slave ancestors, as well as others connected to Caribbean properties – such as wealthy or influential persons, whose activities may be recorded in further publications.

Further searching may lead you to the National Archives, in the UK and abroad, and a reconstruction of plantation life through literature and land surveys (including maps). Then, details of plantations owners may lead to knowledge of particular merchants operating specific slave routes from Africa to the Caribbean – and if you have ancestors who retained their African names, you may possibly locate the region and then the village from which they came. – *This paragraph is adapted from page 79 of Paul Crooks' A Tree without Roots (see bibliography below).*

Family history resources websites

Caribbean Family History – www.caribbeanfamilyhistory.org

This site has transcripts of tombstones and burial records in Barbados and Antigua, together with other useful links.

Family Search – www.familysearch.org (registration required)

Mixed group of resources covering Civil Registration and Parish Records for various **Caribbean Islands** between 17th and 20th-centuries. The dates range for each country and there are gaps, omissions and errors throughout. It's not always possible to work out what's included in a record just from the title. Stephen Morse's website provides a useful overview of the content of those records: <http://ow.ly/WHtz2>

There are two main types of records:

Civil Registration

Government recording of births, marriages and deaths. Each Caribbean Island started the Civil registration process at a different time, though most date from the mid or late 19th-century (e.g. Jamaica enacted in law, 1878; and in practice, 1880). Available England and Wales records consist of an index to the actual certificates, but some Caribbean records on the IGI allow you to see the certificate information. As with England and Wales, not everyone registered these events.

Parish records

Church records of baptisms, marriages and burials. Can be used alongside the Civil Registration records, when there are gaps in the latter or to confirm information found there. Prior to the start of Civil Registration, however, these are the only sources of information following the abolition of slavery in 1834.

Note: Many of the records available on Family Search are now replicated on Ancestry.com (see next section)

Ancestry – www.ancestrylibrary.com

This site contains databases such as Slavery Registers (1813-1834) and Passenger Lists as well as UK births, marriages, deaths and the UK census collection 1841-1911. This site is available to access free in any Leeds library using the above address or from home with a paid subscription via www.ancestry.co.uk.

Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813 – 1834

In 1807 The Abolition of Slave Trade Act came into force. The act made the trade in slaves from Africa to the British colonies illegal. To combat illicit transportation following this act many of the British Colonies began keeping registers of black slaves who had been so-called “lawfully enslaved”. In 1819 the Office for the Registry of Colonial Slaves was established in London and copies of the slave registers kept by the colonies were sent to this office. Registration generally occurred once every three years. The registers continue through to 1834 when slavery was officially abolished.

This database contains the slave registers for the following colonies and years:

- Antigua (1817-1818, 1821, 1824, 1828, 1832)
- Bahamas (1822, 1825, 1828, 1831, 1834)
- Barbados (1817, 1820, 1823, 1826, 1829, 1832, 1834)
- Berbice (1818-1819, 1822)
- Dominica (1817, 1820, 1823)
- Grenada (1817-1834)
- Honduras (1834)
- Jamaica (1817, 1820, 1823, 1826, 1829, 1832, 1834)
- Mauritius (1817, 1819, 1822, 1826, 1830, 1832, 1835)
- Nevis (1817, 1822, 1825, 1828, 1831)
- Sri Lanka (Ceylon) (1818-1832)
- St Christopher (1817, 1822, 1825, 1827-1828, 1831, 1834)
- St Lucia (1815, 1819)
- St Vincent (1817, 1822, 1825, 1828, 1831, 1834)
- Tobago (1819-1834)
- Trinidad (1813, 1815-1816, 1819, 1822, 1825, 1828, 1831, 1834)
- Virgin Islands (1818, 1822, 1825, 1828, 1831, 1834)

Some registers record all slaves owned by the landowner but others only show names for those who have left or joined the landowner for whatever reason i.e. birth, death, runaway, or bought from another landowner.

You will normally see the name of the slave but bear in mind that there may not be a surname listed or the surname may be that of the landowner. You will normally receive an age and possibly colour and whether the slave is African or Creole. Also, there is space for additional remarks on many registers.

UK Incoming Passenger Lists 1878 – 1960

This database records the details of people entering at a port in England during these years. This database **may not include all passengers** from the British colonies or later the Commonwealth.

You can search by name, year, port of arrival and departure. Information found in these lists include: name of passenger, date of birth/age, port of departure & arrival. Sometimes the occupation and intended address in the UK will also be recorded.

England, Alien Arrivals, 1810-1811, 1826-1869

This database records the details of all non-British subjects entering at a port in England during these years.

Some natives from the Caribbean Islands appear on these lists but many do not – it depends on whether they were deemed British Subjects or not, but it is still worth checking the database, just in case. The information found in these records include: name of the person, date of arrival and possible details of their profession.

Archives, Libraries and Useful Websites:

The National Archives, London – www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

The National Archives keeps naturalization records, passenger lists plus some slavery and estate records. Importantly for Caribbean family history, they also hold the records belonging to the Colonial Office. The website has four useful research guides: **American and West Indian Colonies before 1782; British Transatlantic Slave Trade; How to use the Calendar of State papers; Colonial, America and West Indies, 1573-1739; Slavery and Slave Owners.**

British Library – www.bl.uk

The British Library has a good collection of Caribbean resources. For an overview of the whole collection: www.bl.uk/collection-guides/caribbean-collections. To browse some rare digitised materials from the Colonial eras: eap.bl.uk. Contact the British Library for further details of access to their collection of Caribbean newspapers: www.bl.uk/subjects/news-media

Legacies of British Slave-ownership - www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/

Project from the University College London, this is a wide-ranging database exploring the myriad ways colonial slavery affected Britain. Primarily a resource for researching slave-owners.

Digital Library of the Caribbean – www.dloc.com

Wide-ranging resource containing digitised materials covering the history, geography and people of the Caribbean. Includes historical maps and some newspaper content.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database - www.slavevoyages.org

Comprehensive site offering an overview of the slave trade, including ship names, captains, ports of origin and destination. The related database **African Origins** gives details of Africans liberated from slave ships and is a useful tool for researching African names and places of origin: www.slavevoyages.org/past/database/african-origins

Leeds Libraries online resources - www.leeds.gov.uk/onlineresources

Search Britannica, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and 19th Century British Newspapers for free with a Leeds library card...

Useful genealogy guidebooks:

- *A Tree Without Roots: The Guide to Tracing British, African and Asian Caribbean Ancestry* (2008) – Paul Crooks
- *Tracing Your Caribbean Ancestors: A National Archive Guide* (2012) – Guy Grannum
- *Immigrants and Aliens: A Guide to Sources on UK Immigration and Citizenship* (2004) – Roger Kershaw & Mark Pearsall