

National Windrush Monument Unveiling Ceremony

22 June 2022





WINDSOR CASTLE

It gives me pleasure to extend my congratulations on the creation of the National Windrush Monument.

The unveiling at Waterloo Station on Windrush Day serves as a fitting thank you to the Windrush pioneers and their descendants, in recognition of the profound contribution they have made to the United Kingdom over the decades.

It is my hope that the memorial will serve to inspire present and future generations, and I send you my warmest good wishes on this historic occasion.

ELIZABETH R.

22nd June, 2022.

Message from Baroness Benjamin DBE, DL Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee



The National Windrush Monument has been a labour of love for me since 2018 when I was asked to chair the Windrush Commemoration Committee.

We were charged with delivering a significant national monument which would encapsulate the past, the future, as well as the present and convey the full multi-generational story of the Windrush pioneers, who came to Britain during the decades after the Second World War.

The resilience, pride and dignity of the Windrush generation is personified by the beautiful figurative monument Basil Watson has created which truly evokes deep emotion and admiration in all those who see it.

As Britain moves towards what I call '*diversity nirvana*', it's our deepest wish that the monument will be a focal point for the millions of visitors who will come to see it and absorb the story, as well as finding out more about this part of our British history.

The Committee and I are extremely proud of what has been achieved and are deeply grateful to everyone who demonstrated steadfast commitment and dedication to bring this unique national legacy project home.

I sincerely hope the nation will be inspired by the Windrush Monument on this special day of celebration. Keep smiling.

Baroness Floella Benjamin, DBE DL
Chair - Windrush Commemoration Committee



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Message from Secretary of State Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

It is an honour to join the unveiling of the National Windrush Monument. I am grateful to Baroness Floella Benjamin and the Windrush Commemoration committee and all those who have contributed such effort to produce this piece.

The Monument, unveiled on Windrush Day 2022, is profoundly moving – not just for Caribbean communities and those connected to the Windrush story, but for the whole country. Basil Watson has created a sculpture which speaks to the strength, resilience and hope of the Windrush Generation, and that will inspire the thousands who see it as they pass through Waterloo station every day.

The Monument will stand testament to the vigour of our communities in their diversity, and recognise a significant moment in our nation's history.

I am immensely proud of the support that the Government has provided to bring this Monument to fruition, and hope it serves to strengthen our communities and bring them ever closer together.

Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Message from Andrew Haines Chief Executive of Network Rail



"We are deeply honoured to be able to host this wonderful National Windrush Monument at London Waterloo station – a place that has a very proud and rich connection to the Windrush generation. After arriving in Britain at Southampton port, thousands upon thousands of Caribbeans travelled to Waterloo before they started their new life across the country. Many of course then went on to work and become part of our railway family, supporting the efforts to build new railways and connect communities.

"Basil Watson's design has poignantly captured the spirit of the Windrush pioneers, it gives us real joy to be able display it on one of our stations concourses.

"Waterloo is one of the capitals biggest transport hubs, with millions of passengers passing through this station every year. To have this permanent monument displayed in this easily accessible station that is right in the heart of London, is a real privilege. Passengers and visitors to Waterloo will now have a touching reminder of the rich heritage at this station as well as the remarkable contribution from the Windrush generation.

"I am very proud of the relationship Network Rail has built with Baroness Floella Benjamin as well as the Windrush Commemoration Committee."

Andrew Haines, Chief Executive of Network Rail

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Haines".

Programme

Opening speech	Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE, DL, Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee
Ministerial speech	Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Poem “You Called... And We Came”	Written by Prof. Laura Serrant OBE Read by Doña Croll
Musical performance – Psalm to Windrush	Nadine Benjamin MBE Accompanied by The Decus Ensemble String Quartet
Prayer	The Bishop of Dover, The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, CD, MBE
Unveiling	The National Windrush Monument will be unveiled by Windrush Pioneers Alford Gardner and John Richards in the presence of Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. They will be assisted by descendants of the Windrush Generation. Gabrielle Billy Age 8, Christopher Enwood-Graham Age 8, Amira Francis Age 6, Zachary Grenado Age 6, Gabrielle Harris Age 14, Nathaniel Hibbert Age 7.
Close	Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE, DL

Following the ceremony, you are invited to continue the celebrations at the Southbank Centre until 9 pm

You Called... And We Came

By Prof. Laura Serrant OBE

You called... and we came.

*In ships bigger than anything we had seen,
dwarfing our islands and covering them
in the shadows of smoke and noise.*

*Crowded, excited voices filled the air,
travelling to the 'motherland'.*

*- over weeks, over oceans that threatened
to engulf us.*

*Driven by a wish, a call to save, to rebuild
and support efforts to establish 'health for
all'
in the aftermath of war.*

You called... and we came.

*Women and men of position in our
homelands;*

*nurses with a pride in the excellence of our
care.*

*With experience of management,
organisation*

and a sense of duty.

We appeared.

*Smiling and eager to work on the wards,
communities and clinics*

of this England.

You called... and we came.

*Our big hearts, skilful hands and quick
minds*

encased in our skins – of a darker hue.

*Which had shimmered and glowed
in our sunnier climes.*

*But now signified our difference
– our un-belonging.*

Matrons became assistants

Nurses became like chambermaids.

*All the while striving to fulfil our promise
- to succour, to serve, to care.*

You called... and we came.

The blue of the sister's uniform

seemed as far away from us as the moon.

*Unreachable by our dark hands in this cold
land.*

But we were made of sterner stuff.

*The hot sun, which once beat down on
our ancestors,*

*when they too left their lands,
shone within us.*

*Forging our hearts and minds
with the resistance of ebony.*

You called... and we came.

*Rising like the Phoenix,
from the heat of rejection.*

We cared, we worked and we organised.

*Until the quickness of our brains
and the excellence of our care
made it hard for you to contain us.*

*And slowly, so slowly,
the blue uniforms had dark and lighter
bodies beneath them.*

*The professional care in our touch
was valued despite the strangeness of our
speech
and the kinks in our hair.*

You called... and we came.

*A new millennium – new hopes spread
across this land.*

*New populations, engaging and reflecting
the varied, diverse and vibrant nature of
these shores.*

*Challenging and reflecting on leadership
for health.*

*Moves to melt the 'snow' at the peaks of
our profession.*

*Recognising the richness of our
kaleidoscope nation.*

*Where compassion, courage and diversity
are reflected*

in our presence and our contribution:

*Not only the hopes and dreams of our
ancestors.*

*- human values needed to truly lead
change... and add value.*

Remember... you called.

Remember... you called.

You called.

Remember, it was us, who came.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Based between Jamaica and Atlanta, USA, Basil Watson is a prolific artist and sculptor who has created a number of high-profile public monuments across the Caribbean and the USA.

In 2016, the Jamaican government awarded Basil the 'Order of Distinction' (Commander) in recognition of his artistic accomplishments. Since achieving international recognition, he has completed major commissions in China, Guatemala and in various states in the US.

He is known for his statues of sporting heroes, such as Usain Bolt and Merlene Ottey – and most recently he was commissioned and create a 12-foot-tall statue of Martin Luther King Jr. for the city of Atlanta, USA.

A passion for art flows through Basil's family – starting with his father who studied at the Royal College of Art in England during the 1950s, then his siblings Janis (painter) and Raymond (sculptor); and it also extends to his son Kai (painter) with whom he is often featured.

Basil is married to Donna Watson for 41 years and together they have 3 children and 4 grandchildren.



SYMBOLISM USED IN THE NATIONAL WINDRUSH MONUMENT

“I feel privileged to have this opportunity to express the aspirations, vision and courage of my parents, who took the long sea voyage to England in 1952 as part of that Windrush generation in search of a brighter future.” – Basil Watson

The suitcases

The suitcases are packed full of their belongings from back home – representing the people’s pride, dignity and whatever else was of value to them.

These ornate suitcases, secured with latches, straps and hinges – and reinforced with caps at the corners – came to prominent cultural recognition in the Jamaican radio drama “Dulcimina” of the 1960s - 1980s, in which the lead character’s suitcase came to be known as “Dulcimina’s grip”. It held within it everything that Dulcimina possessed from her humble rural background, and everything that she thought she needed in her new life.

The composition contains seven suitcases piled high on the floor as they might have been as the new arrivals landed; it’s on this iconic platform that the family proceeds to build. The suitcases bulge; they are twisted, battered and bruised – yet they provide the foundation that the family needs to forge ahead. Without them, the immigrants would be empty-handed and without the means needed for survival.

The number seven is of great significance. According to Christian scholars, seven is considered the number of completeness and perfection, both physical and spiritual. It derives much of its meaning from being tied directly to God’s creation of all things within seven days. The number seven also holds spiritual importance across Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. In the composition, there is a suitcase for every day of the week – and as such a solution for every eventuality that they may face.



The hands

The strong, graceful figures are united through their hands – illustrating the linkage of family, and demonstrating the importance of their inseparable bond and the aspiration of generational progress coming from home to the new land.

The hands highlight the togetherness and compassion, yet there is anxiety and tension within the family. It is significant that both the woman's hands are engaged with her family.



The figures

The three figures – man, woman and child – are ascending, climbing the mountain of suitcases.

The dynamic woman – a mother and wife – is the central figure in the composition. She is strong, hand in hand with the male, eyes fixed ahead as she supports and encourages the apprehensive but expectant child.

The prideful male looks out with optimism, reflecting hope and dignity, assured in his stance, and determined to progress.

The attire

The family's attire is what was known as their "Sunday best"; a jacket, tie and hat for the male; a jacket, pillbox hat and heels for the female; the girl in her shoes and socks, pleated skirt, little handbag and replete with plaits. This attention to dress was customary for the era, especially back in the Caribbean where immaculate attire was expected for special occasions. Their arrival in the "Mother Country" was certainly a special occasion.

The male figure, elements of the child, and the female's attire are inspired by photographs taken by Howard Grey at Waterloo Station in 1962.



JOURNEY TO PRODUCING THE MONUMENT

In 2018, the then Prime Minister tasked the Windrush Commemoration Committee with creating a permanent and fitting tribute to the Windrush generation and their descendants. The Committee is led by Baroness Floella Benjamin and is made up of influential voices within the UK's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

The Monument's location, Waterloo station, was chosen due to its significance in the Windrush story. Millions of people pass through Waterloo station every year and when they see the Monument, they will be reminded of the incredible impact that the Windrush generation has had on the UK and our British history.

The process for selecting an artist began in January 2021. After an extensive search, 16 national and international artists were longlisted, with a final 4 chosen to be shortlisted. Each of these artists was of Caribbean heritage. Following the shortlisting, 6 weeks of public engagement took place between July and August 2021. This phase sought to engage with the public to ascertain their thoughts on the shortlisted artists: Jeannette Ehlers, Valda Jackson, Basil Watson and Thomas J Price.

The WCC then reviewed each design alongside feedback from the public – ultimately awarding Basil Watson the commission.

Since then, Basil Watson has worked tirelessly alongside the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and the Windrush Commemoration Committee. Each group has been united by a single goal – to deliver a Monument worthy of those Windrush pioneers who played a vital role in shaping our country as it is known today.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE WINDRUSH GENERATION

Alford Gardner

Alford Gardner is just one of two surviving passengers who made the journey across oceans on the historic ship in search of a new life in the Mother Country after the Second World War. He was with his older brother, Gladstone, worlds away from their family in Jamaica.



“From what you saw in the pictures [about England], you build up a picture and you imagine what would happen if you were here. I just took everything in...All the houses had smoke coming from the chimneys. I just thought there is work to do.”

It wasn't Alford's first voyage to Britain. In 1944, he joined the Royal Air Force at just 18-years-old, serving as an engineer and motor mechanic. His older brother joined him just six months later and they both worked in factories until the end of the war a year later. He made Leeds his home before returning to St James in Jamaica in the winter of 1947. “I had every intention of coming back. It was just the job [at the time in Jamaica], but everything was all set. After meeting the family, I said to my mom, ‘I'm going back.’ Those were the days, I was footloose and free,”

And so he returned to Leeds and renewed friendships with his old RAF colleagues. He also rekindled his love with Norma, the woman who would go on to become his wife after they had met in the dancehalls across the city just a few years earlier.

“We got together again and the rest is history. I found myself a wife and life began,” he says. “We had a beautiful family, and I came from a big family and I'm a big family man. She had two sisters and a brother, so she had a big family as well. She said she would love a big family. So, we settled.”

After marrying in the spring of 1952, the young couple bought a house and went on to have eight children, three boys and five girls, and were the only mixed-race family in their neighbourhood at one period of time. Howard Gardner, Alford's eldest son, says he never noticed it until his younger years throughout school.

Their time at the local cricket club, where “all the mixed-race families” used to be, are just some of the fond memories from his childhood with his father. During his early years in Leeds, the Caribbean Cricket Club was something Alford set up with others, so they could find a sense of home while living in Britain.

Howard says that his father's contribution as part of the Windrush generation has been “terrific” decades on. “I think the West Indian people have changed this country so much with the culture, the music and it's still changing today,” he says. “I think the contribution has been terrific.”

After spending those early years writing to his family back in Jamaica, Alford has returned home on numerous occasions and hopes to go back again soon. Today, he still lives in Leeds and spends much of his time around family with his 16 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren and one great-greatgrandchild.

The love of his Jamaican culture hasn't been lost after all these years, and he can often be found still making some of his favourite foods like curry goat and ackee and saltfish. Since making the historical voyage to Britain, Alford says he's learnt some salient lessons along the way as he prepares to mark the Windrush generation's 74th anniversary. "Treat people how you would like to be treated...And keep out of politics and keep out of religion. That's me."

John Richards

As a young 22-year-old, Mr Richards arrived at Waterloo Station and was taken to a deep shelter in Clapham. "At the shelter we were given two weeks to find our own accommodation. That was when the 'No black, no Irish, no children, no dogs' was noticeable, which meant most of us couldn't find anywhere to live. But I got a room for two of us in the west end without any problems".

From the parish of Portland in Jamaica this reflective Windrush pioneer, known to many as "Big John", worked for British Railways for over 40 years, from the day he arrived. For him, the journey and life experiences have been pleasant. "I worked for British Rail doing bodywork, fitting and repairing damaged trains. I fitted and oiled the hinges on the doors, as in those days we had ordinary doors with hinges, not like those on the trains now. "The experience was good as the place (Orpington in Kent) where I worked had decent people; they were nice people."



John Richards, centre, with Winston Whyte, left, with the late Allan Wilmot, right, in 2018 at the service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey to mark the 70th Windrush anniversary. Below, John's cherished arrival card

He further added that at his workplace there was no form of racism. "I was treated good. Many of the people I worked with didn't know much about Jamaicans, they were the working class". Big John welcomes changes that he has seen over the years that have blended cultures. "Many years ago, there were no black people on TV. Now there are many. We were the first generation to come into Britain. We (Jamaicans) were strange to them, anything (work) that was degrading they gave it to us, but you must remember the people I worked with were decent people."

A fast bowler in the early days, Big John played for Range Park club and again his experience was glowing. "If there was anything bad, they didn't do it in front of me, so it was good". Big John was also a footballer and domino player, and was one of the founding members of the Learie Constantine West Indian Association in North West London named after Sir Learie Nicholas Constantine who was a West Indian cricketer, lawyer and politician who served as Trinidad and Tobago's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and became the UK's first black peer.

Big John was among many West Indians leading several campaigns in the fight against racial injustice and inequality. Talking about police stop and search, he said: "It is a good idea if they stop and search everybody equally. But for those that are black, if you have a decent car, decent shoes and clothes, they stop you and start searching your car; they pick on you."

Now 96-years-old, Big John will again relive the memories by going to Tilbury Docks by boat on the day of the monument's unveiling - "I have been back there before several times. It brings back good memories, but the place has changed and the memory is different".

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Acknowledgements

With thanks to

Windrush Commemoration Committee

Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE, DL, Chair

Paulette Simpson CBE, Deputy Chair

Sir Ken Olisa OBE, CStJ, FRSA, FBCS

The Bishop of Dover, The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, CD, MBE

Ansel Wong CBE

Tim Campbell MBE

Professor Geoff Thompson MBE FRSA DL

Simon Frederick

Co-opted Committee Members

Philomena Davidson PPRSS

Professor Steve Eichhorn

Keith Taylor JP

Ministers

Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
September 2021 - Present

Rt. Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local
Government July 2019 – September 2021

The Late Rt. Hon James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government April 2018 – July 2019

Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister of State for Equalities, Local Government, Faith and
Communities September 2021 – Present

Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, Minister of State March 2020 - Present

Viscount James Younger of Leckie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Faith and
Communities July 2019 – March 2020

Lord Nicholas Bourne of Aberystwyth, Under-Secretary of State for Faith and Communities
July 2016 – July 2019

Stakeholders

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