

# Passenger Stories

Using one of the stories below, write a diary extract from a passenger on board The Empire Windrush. The passage could be written before or after their arrival. Try to focus on the emotions and anxieties they may have been feeling at leaving Jamaica or arriving in England, as well as including anecdotes about the situation they are now in; have they met other passengers? What will they miss from home? What are they most looking forward to?

## Mr Oswald 'Columbus' Denniston

Word went round that this boat was taking passengers for a cheap fare £28.10 shillings to go to Britain. It was common knowledge that there was work in Britain, just after the war. The war ended 3 years earlier. So there was a lot of scope. It took me a week to wind things up to travel.

I had no ties I wasn't married or anything like that I come from Montego Bay, Jamaica. I knew no one in England, I had travelled before to America and Panama. I had no idea what I was coming to.

## Vince Reid

My parents brought me on the Windrush - I had no choice in the matter. They didn't have to - it was obvious they came in search of a better life, better opportunities. It was quite a devastating experience. I was thirteen when I arrived so I wasn't a man, I was a boy. Most of the people on the Windrush were men. I had never been out of Kingston same as for anybody, to go on this big ship, for all those days it was quite an experience

## Lucile Harris

I came here in 1948 my husband sent for me. He and his brother came up a year before. I reached here the 22nd June, it was a lovely day, beautiful, and they were all at the dock waiting for me. I think it was Tilbury, I was very excited. The journey took 22 days, and that was a very long time. We enjoyed the journey, I was coming up to meet my husband, I was very anxious to come and meet him, because when he left we were just married, we got married and he left the following day. Imagine how exciting it was for me.

When I came to England I live in Brixton, near the market. I tell you when I came here there were hardly any buildings standing and far as you can look it bomb and burn outright through and through. My husband sorted out a place to live, before he sent for me.

Well I am glad that my husband sent for me, here anybody come to this country they can make a good life, its a nice country, it cold, it's different, but you can live happily; that's all I'm saying, I'm only sorry he is not around.

## Clinton Edwards

I first came to England during the war, in the RAF. When I went back home there was no work so I decided to come back. There was a boat coming back, by the name of Windrush and it was only £28, so I paid my fare and come back. I was in the war for 3 years and came back in 1948 on the Windrush as the opportunity for jobs in this country was better than back home in Jamaica.

When I came back it was a bit more difficult I was a civilian then, I had to find work. The first job I got as a welder, instead of doing welding they gave me a wheelbarrow and a shovel. After a couple of weeks my arms (laughter) were sore. So I packed it in and re-enlisted in the RAF. I knew what to expect in the RAF.

My life in England has been very good, I enjoy my work, and my work mates and they treat me nice. I have been back home several times on holiday. I still call Jamaica home, although I lost my parents you know. the home is still there, my relatives live there, and I have to keep up with the repairs, but I prefer to live here. I am married, my family is here, my children, my grandchildren. I am quite happy here, you know.

