

MWA Home and Overseas Paper- June 2023

The ship HMT Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks in Essex on 22nd June 1948. The ship carried 1027 passengers and 2 stowaways. More than 800 of the passengers gave their last place of residence as somewhere in the Caribbean. The arrival of Windrush has become symbolic of the generation of Commonwealth citizens who came to live in Britain between 1948 and 1971. Many of the men who arrived that day were ex-servicemen, having fought with Britain in World War II. Pathe news described them thus: "They served this country well. In Jamaica they couldn't find work. Discouraged but full of hope, they sailed for Britain, citizens of the British Empire coming to the Mother Country with good intent." (<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/windrush-histories/story-of-windrush-ship>).

The 22nd June has become known as Windrush Day and has become a key symbolic moment in the story of the Black British contribution to this country and the broader post-war migration from across the Commonwealth and beyond that has helped to create the Britain of today. This year sees the 75th Anniversary of the ship's arrival. The Windrush 75 network (www.windrush75.org) aims to make this year a year of celebrations to mark this anniversary. The network helps to broaden public recognition of the contribution of the original Windrush Pioneers, as well as increasing public understanding of the history of race and migration to Britain across the decades

The Moravian Church in Britain was enriched by the arrival of Moravian Brothers and Sisters. The Provincial Synod of 1961 passed a resolution "That the Provincial Board be directed to set apart at the earliest opportunity a Brother to carry out the Ministry among West Indian Moravians in England" In August 1962 Br Spencer was assigned the task of working to find and welcome as many Moravians from Jamaica, E.W.I and British Guiana (now Guyana). By 1963 Br Spencer knew of 859 – excluding Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Hitching, Reading and Ipswich where he knew Moravians from the Caribbean were living.

There was no deliberate intention to create new Moravian Congregations; however, congregations were established from the societies at Birmingham (became Sparkhill and now Hall Green), Leicester and Blackbird Leys; and societies were established at Brixton, Leeds, Moss Side, and Stoke Newington. Other established congregations also grew - Hornsey, Brondesbury (formerly West London) which became Harlesden, Harold Road which was formerly Upton Manor.

An article from The Moravian Messenger in 1964, records the establishment of a "home" for the "Birmingham Group." Br Spencer rented a large house in Birmingham which could be used as a meeting place plus a space for Br Spencer to stay when he was in Birmingham. A family was installed in the house to be a contact point and if I have read the article correctly a past MWA Vice-president and current MWA member was a member of this family! I wonder if any of you can guess who that is?

The British Province of the Moravian Church is joining in the Windrush 75 celebrations by holding a community event including a service of thanksgiving in Leicester on Sunday 25th June. The committee organising the event has obtained funding to help with this celebration including money to subsidise transportation to and from the event. It would be lovely to see as many of you at this event as possible. When the narrative around migration has become rather negative of late, I think it is a real opportunity to celebrate the rich contribution of migrants to our country and to our church.

Sr Janet Cooper