

Discover Devon's diversity: past and present



A self-guided walking tour through Tiverton's multicultural past

**TIVERTON
MUSEUM**
of Mid Devon Life

A Devon Development Education project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Images shared courtesy of the Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, Devon Archives and Local Studies and project participants.





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Welcome to the Tiverton Telling Our Stories walking tour.

"As people who have come to the UK, we have sat here, we have a child here. We are settled here. We make a contribution to the community. We decided long ago: 'I'm an immigrant'. I have lived outside Kenya more than I have lived in Kenya. And I have decided that wherever I go, I will seek the welfare and the success of that community. For in its success, there too, I shall be successful. That is the mantra in - from which we work."

Anthony Nderitu, Teacher of Religious Studies, Tiverton High School.

To hear more of Anthony's story, scan here:



Introduction

The tour will take about around 60 - 90 mins to complete, with two optional extensions of approximately 15 mins (Bartows Causeway) and 30 mins (Collipriest House).

There is a map on the inside cover. This shows the walking route, and stops. Optional extensions are marked in _____. After each stop is a set of written directions in a **blue box**, like the one below. These describe the route to the next stop.

Along the way, you will also uncover the experiences and stories of people living in Tiverton today. Look out for **teal quote boxes** like the one on the left. These contain extracts from oral history interviews with local people.

Scan the QR code using a smartphone camera to listen to the story.

DIRECTIONS:

Start at the museum.

Proceed towards the town centre, through the carpark, passing by the ticket machine and through a narrow passageway. As you come out onto Fore St turn right towards Gold St.

Look for New Look and WH Smiths (on your left).

Photo: Heathcoat's workers leaving the factory, c.1900 (Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)

1. Restaurants

Look up. In front of you, above the shops, is the site of two past important restaurants: the Mui Kong, and The Gate of India.

1969: Mui Kong opens

In 1969 Mr Li Fang Sang and Mr Tony Lee opened the first Chinese restaurant in Tiverton: the Mui Kong.

The two men were from Hong Kong, and the restaurant opened to great fanfare, as reported in the Devon and Somerset News.

"I say to my husband: 'I need my own business', and then I went to Petroc, I do the English, my course. I get my British passport and thanks to my husband, he doing very hard... I do my curry business, open all my curry business: Ceylon Curry House. And most the time, be honest, I'm cooking. My husband do the other things very well."

*Kumari Northam, owner of Ceylon Curry House.
To hear more of Kumari's story, scan here:*



Photo: Tiverton's new Chinese restaurant, c.1963.
(Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)

Gate of India opens

Some years later the Mui Kong was replaced by the Gate of India: the first Indian restaurant to be opened in the town.



DIRECTIONS:

Continue to Gold Street.
You will also see Bampton Street to your left.

15th and 16th centuries: European cloth merchants

Today, Gold Street is the cultural quarter of the town, but 400 years ago it would have been filled with cloth merchants.

The area between Gold Street and the River Lowman was known as 'Little Germanie'.

As early as 1524 there are records of people from Europe coming to Tiverton. Names such as John Agaunt, Simon Bylhole, Michael Chaundeler, John Cleve and John Frenshman are listed.

2. Gold Street

1815: French Prisoners of War

Gold Street was also the place of work of John Rivron, a French captain's servant who came to Tiverton as a prisoner during the Napoleonic Wars.

He married local woman Mary Marshall in 1815. He was still working in Tiverton in 1844. He is recorded as being a 'Boot and Shoe Maker' living in Gold Street, whilst his son Domonique joined the British Army.

DIRECTIONS:

Continue towards the clock tower and cross the river. Look right to see where the watermills once stood. The River Lowman was used for processing wool, which made the town rich.

As you continue downhill look to your right to see the old Blundell's School building.

Photo: Looking up Gold Street, c.1900 (Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)

3. Blundell's School

Global students through the ages

Blundell's School has educated pupils from around the globe.

Some of the earliest records are of boys from the Channel Islands, with French heritage.

By the end of the 19th century, pupils included the Liesching family, who are listed as from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and Mahomed Yoonus Sait, from Bangalore.

Throughout the early and mid 20th century, pupils' homelands expanded to include Brazil, Bombay (now Mumbai), Patna and Singapore.

The school roll also includes Tewfik Fahmy, whose father held the title 'His Excellency Director of the Egyptian State Railways'.

Refugees from World Wars

During the First World War, Blundell's also acted as a home for 5 Belgian refugees.

At the beginning of World War Two, at least 3 Jewish children were placed in the school.

Image: Old Blundells
School building, c.1910
(Tiverton Museum of
Mid Devon Life)



"There are different words for different things. And as a child, coming to a completely new country, or even a country you've been to before, you spot things that are confusing. And, you know, you quickly pick things up. But it's like being a fish out of water, I suppose."

Ana Lodge, on acclimatising to new countries as a child.

To hear more of Ana's story, scan here:



DIRECTIONS:

Retrace your steps, heading back towards the town centre.

Turn right on Bampton St.

You will pass the entrance to the Pannier Market on your left. Continue to the end of the road.

Turn left and walk down Newport Street.

Look right to Castle Street.



At the very end of Castle Street is Bartows Causeway, the site of a large house called Rosebank.

It is believed to have been built by French Prisoners of War (POWs) during the Napoleonic Wars.

If you'd like to find Rosebank, follow the 'Optional walking extension' directions below.

It will take about 15 mins extra to walk there and return.



Optional walking extension (10-15 mins)

Continue along Castle Street until it turns into Bartows Causeway. You will pass Silver Street on your right.

Look out for a big white building (Rosebank) which has now been divided into flats.

4. Rosebank, Bartows Causeway

18th Century:

French Prisoners of War help out

In 1797 Mayor William Jenkins received a letter to say that French POWs held at Ashburton were to be moved to Tiverton. 176 men arrived in September.

They caused no trouble during their stay. When a fire broke out on 24th November 1797, the men quickly came to support, helping to limit the damage.

The Mayor offered them 15 guineas to repair their damaged clothes, but they refused.

The first group left Tiverton for Bristol at the beginning of December, shortly to be replaced by others. By the end of 1798, 329 POWs had passed through the town.

DIRECTIONS:

Continue on Newport Street.

At the end of the street, you will see St Peter's Church in front of you.

Explore the Church, looking out for stone carvings on the outside of the Greenway Chapel.

5. St Peter's Church

18th century: Baptisms and burials of Black men

Church records provide important evidence for the presence of Black men in the town in the 18th century.

The records refer to:

"Tiverton (St Peter), burial of John, a Negro, 17 4 1743"

"Bretton, a native of Africa now resident in the town of Tiverton, servant, 21 7 1813"

"Tiverton (St Peter), baptism of "Thomas Gallen, aged 18 years, a black boy living with Mrs Hamilton of Bristol, 4 5 1780"



Thomas Gullen (spelt in various ways in historical documents) is likely to have been a young man enslaved in North America. He was brought to England by a Dr Millegen, and came to Tiverton with the Hamilton family.

In Mrs Hamilton's will, Thomas is granted protection as a "faithful honest good servant".

To read more about his story, scan here:

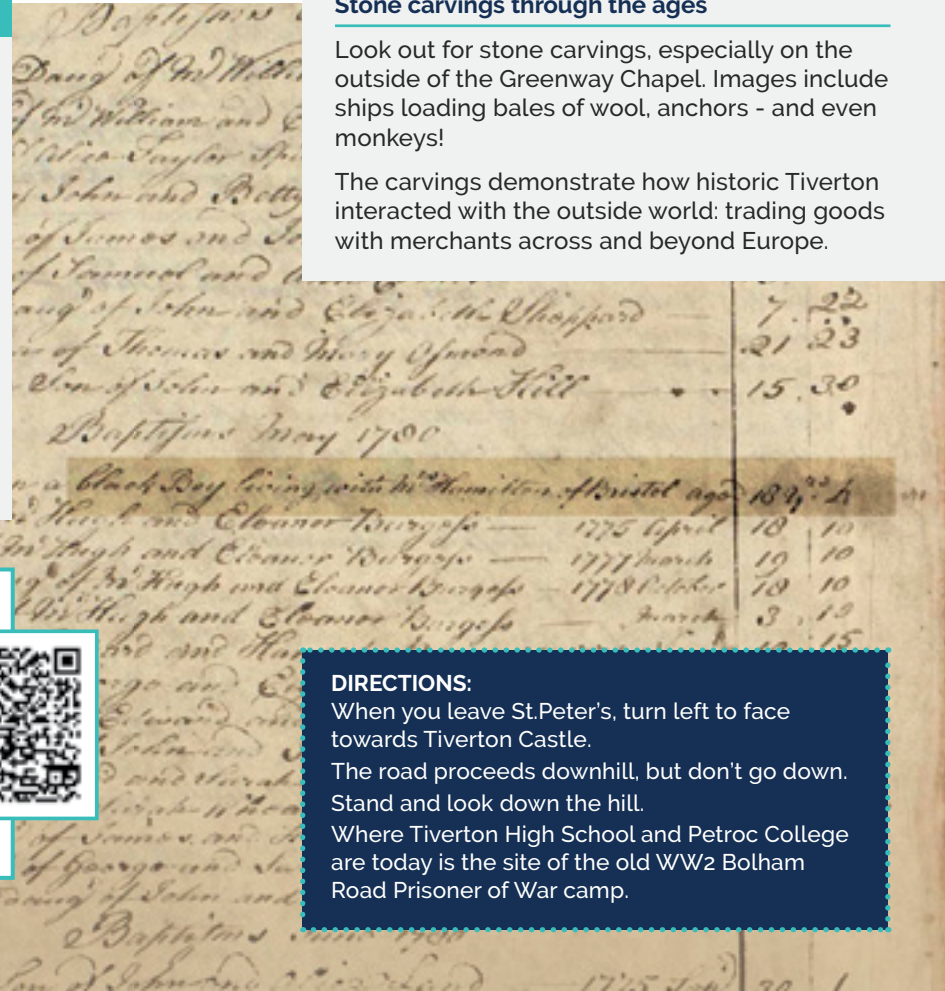


Image: Baptismal record for Thomas Gullen (St Peter's Church / Parochial Church Council; Devon Archives and Local Studies DHC 2167A/PR/1/2)

Stone carvings through the ages

Look out for stone carvings, especially on the outside of the Greenway Chapel. Images include ships loading bales of wool, anchors - and even monkeys!

The carvings demonstrate how historic Tiverton interacted with the outside world: trading goods with merchants across and beyond Europe.



DIRECTIONS:

When you leave St. Peter's, turn left to face towards Tiverton Castle.

The road proceeds downhill, but don't go down. Stand and look down the hill.

Where Tiverton High School and Petroc College are today is the site of the old WW2 Bolham Road Prisoner of War camp.

Tiverton surnames reveal a hidden diversity stemming from people who stayed after World War II: Schnur, Duric, Maglov, Rozic, Meffe, Wojewoda, Debicki, Rapo - amongst many more.



WW2 – Prisoner of War camp

During WW2, it is estimated that 400,000 Prisoners of War were placed in Britain, most of whom were put to work locally, including on farms.

In Tiverton, Working Camp 92 was set up on Bolham Road. The camp was initially intended for Italian POWs, but was later also occupied by German prisoners.



Photos, left to right: Inside the Bolham Road camp; POW's at the camp; the camp (all Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)

6. Bolham Road Prisoner of War Camp

Post WW2 - Resettlement Camp

At the end of the war, Britain experienced a major labour shortage. Farms and industry came to rely on a variety of groups, including European Voluntary Workers (EVWs).

EVW's were usually Europeans made homeless by war and in need of work. They came from camps in British-controlled territories or were picked up across Europe by British forces, before being moved to places of work around the UK.

Initially, EVWs movements were restricted and they had to work where placed. By the early 1950s though, the scheme had ended, and people were free to live and work anywhere. Many applied for settled status in the UK.

DIRECTIONS:

From the Church, turn right, and walk down St.Peter's Street.

At the end of the street the road bends round to the right, onto a bridge.

Cross the bridge. Whilst crossing, pause and look left towards West Exe South.

This is the site of the old Roller Mills Factory.

7. West Exe (Roller Mills Factory)

In the distance, on the southern edge of the town, you would once have seen a series of tall chimney stacks.

These belonged to the old Roller Mills factory, which was situated roughly where Carpenter's Close is today.

This picture shows a group of workers in the late Victorian period, standing in front of the factory.

Amongst the workers, front and centre, is a Black man.

His name is not known, and all records of the workers are now lost, but this photo offers a small, important piece of evidence that Victorian Tiverton was more diverse than may typically be assumed.

Photo: A group of workers at Roller Mills c.1900 (Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)



DIRECTIONS:

After crossing the river, turn right at the roundabout, onto West Exe North. Continue until you reach Heathcoat Factory.

8. Heathcoat Factory

Post WW2: European labour powers the factory

The immediate post-war period saw Heathcoat Factory increase its exports, due to new demand for its fabrics. Local labour could not meet the demand.

Derick Heathcoat Amory was involved in the United Europe Movement and was no doubt influential in the firm's decision, in November 1947, to give work to refugees and European Voluntary Workers (EVW's).

Heathcoat primarily recruited from the hostel in Bolham Road. There was also a hostel for agricultural workers, mostly Yugoslavians, at Waterlooville Cross.

Records show seven Polish-Ukrainian ladies arriving to work at Heathcoat Factory in December 1947. They were housed in Tiverton.



Photo (main): Heathcoat Factory c.1910. Photo (inset): Heathcoat factory after the major fire of 1936 (both Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)

An EVW's story: Danilo Maglov

Danilo Maglov was born in 1919 in the village of Polaca (present day Croatia).

After WWII, Danilo was held in a displaced people's camp in British-occupied Germany, before coming to Britain as an EVW.

He spent three years living in various camps before moving to Tiverton in 1951, where he became a worker at Heathcoat Factory.

In 1952 he married Joyce Baker. The couple had four children and lived in Tiverton for the rest of their lives. He is remembered as a hard-worker and a practical joker, and was very popular in the town.



"He was very smart, very particular about his hair and the way he dressed. He even dressed up to go to the doctors. Thick head of hair, very well known for his hair. A bit of a joker. Had grandkids, just two granddaughters. He would help anybody out."

Angela and Milena, Danilo's daughters.

To hear more scan here:



Photos (left to right): Danilo Maglov and Joyce Baker on their wedding day (Maglov family archive); Franc Rozic (Dale Snow)

An EVW's story: Franc Rozic

Franc Rozic was born in 1928 in the village of Otovec, Slovenia, (previously Yugoslavia). He grew up during both a Civil and a World War, leaving home as a young man.

Franc was picked up as a refugee in Italy by the British Navy (who he went on to work for) before coming to Britain.

He lived in a number of displaced person's camps before arriving at Bolham Road, and starting work at Heathcoat Factory.

Franc found a permanent home in Tiverton. He married, started a family, and lived in the town until his death.



"He'd work as much as he could. I think he only had one day off a week because he wanted to work for his family... He worked in Redland Roof Tiles where he was a machine operator and there was a Yugoslav there that he knew well. He used to go to work with them in the car."

Dale Snow, Franc Rozic's daughter.

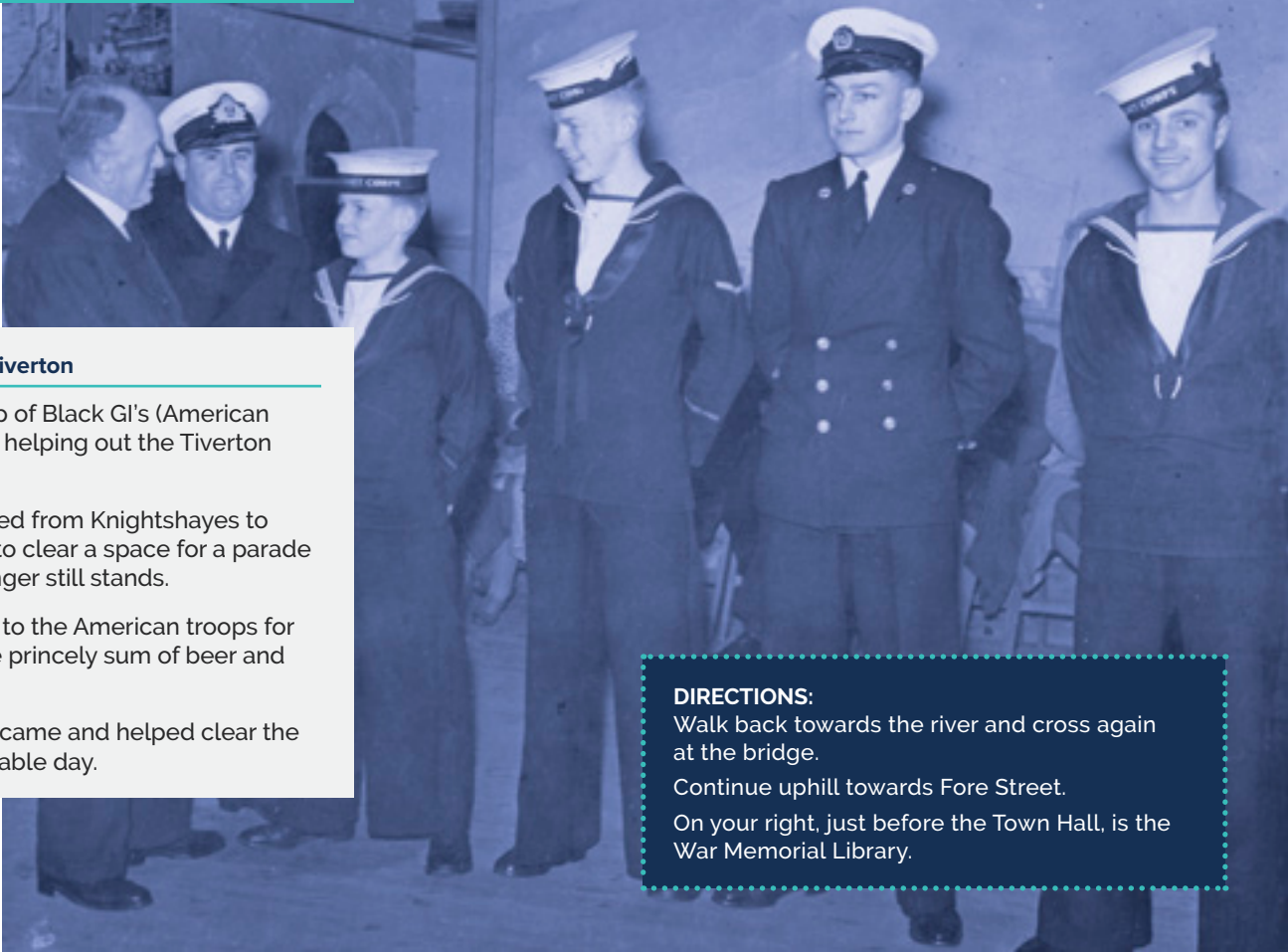
To hear more scan here:



DIRECTIONS:

The road you are standing on is Leat Street. Pause here to discover more about this area.

9. Leat Street



WW2 - Black GI's in Tiverton

During WW2, a group of Black GI's (American soldiers) spent a day helping out the Tiverton sea cadets.

The cadets had moved from Knightshayes to Leat St and needed to clear a space for a parade ground, which no longer still stands.

A request was made to the American troops for help, in return for the princely sum of beer and sandwiches.

5 to 8 Black soldiers came and helped clear the site in a single, enjoyable day.

Photo: Tiverton Sea Cadets
being inspected, c.1947
(Tiverton Museum of Mid
Devon Life)

DIRECTIONS:

Walk back towards the river and cross again at the bridge.

Continue uphill towards Fore Street.

On your right, just before the Town Hall, is the War Memorial Library.

This library was opened in 1929 as a memorial to those who died during the First World War.

The War Memorial Library replaced another important historic building: the Angel Hotel.

10. War Memorial Library

1797 – 1815: Angel Hotel hosts Prisoners of War

During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, French officers were sent to lodge in provincial parole towns such as Tiverton.

The government made a payment of 10/6 a week for their lodgings. Prisoners seem to have been made welcome, and often joined in the social life of the town.

There were some restrictions on their correspondence and movements (prisoners were not allowed more than a mile from the town) but most lived a fairly comfortable life.

Some had complaints however...



*"The house is high,
The walls are thin,
There's an angel without,
But a devil within."*

Admiral Dumanoir, writing about the Angel's landlady.



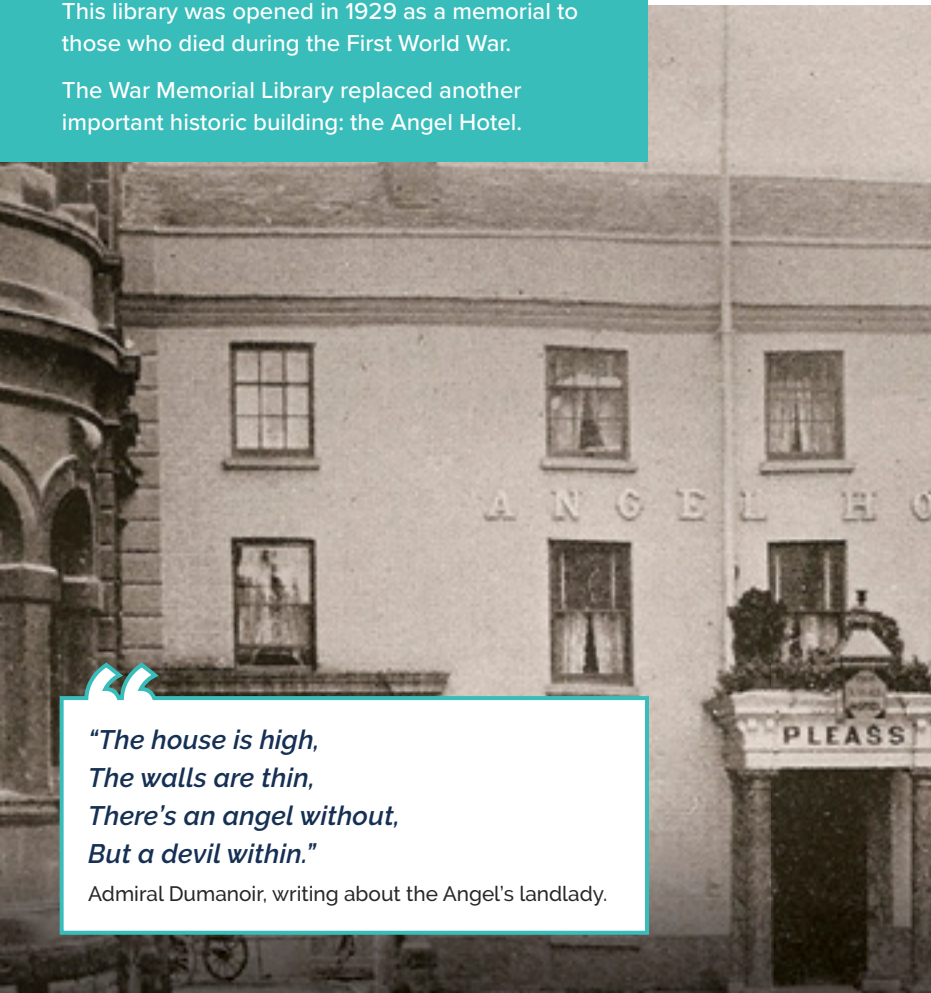
"A pleasant little town, but which struck me as particularly monotonous after the exciting life to which I was accustomed..."

Lieutenant Gicquel des Touches

DIRECTIONS:

Return back to the town centre.

Photo: The Angel Hotel, c.1910
(Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)



11. Town Centre

"I've been living in the U.K. since 1998. So that's a long time – like twenty years now? Isn't it? Over twenty years... I moved to Tiverton in last July, in 2019, just to open up a business... It's been a good year I've been living in Tiverton, and I'm kind of enjoying it here. I'm meeting new people and making new friends, and through my restaurant I'm getting to know more people."

Mac Mudabbir Ahmed, owner of the Nawab restaurant.

To hear more of Mac's story, scan here:



Photo: Town Centre Fore Street to Town Hall c.1900 (Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)

The town centre has been a hub of activity for many centuries.

Over the years it would have been frequented by Black servants during the 18th century, soldiers from various countries during the Second World War, global students of Blundell's, and a wide range of traders and merchants.

One such entrepreneur was Phuman Singh - a silk merchant from India - who lived in the town in 1933, and is recorded in the Western Morning News.

DIRECTIONS:

The main tour ends here.

For the extension (0.5 miles / 30 mins max) continue on St Andrews Street.

Go over the main road via a small footbridge.

Turn right onto Collipriest Road.

12. Collipriest House

WW2 – Comanche Code Talkers in Tiverton

During the Second World War Collipriest House was the headquarters of the US Army's 4th Division.

This included a covert group: 14 Native Americans, members of the Comanche tribe.

These soldiers brought with them a secret code, constructed out of their tribe's own language, and decipherable only by them.

The Comanche men trained as radio operators and repair line men, but were also given free rein to develop code words for military terms no-one outside their group could understand.

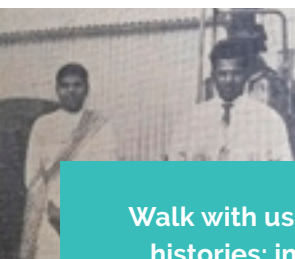
The code was deployed during the D-Day landing, saving many lives. The 'Code Talkers' were rewarded with official honours from the French and US governments.

There was no Comanche equivalent for many Western military words. Finding alternatives involved creative associations:

<i>tank</i>	=	<i>"turtle"</i>
<i>machine gun</i>	=	<i>"sewing machine"</i>
<i>a bomber</i>	=	<i>"pregnant airplane"</i>
<i>Hitler</i>	=	<i>"crazy white man"</i>



Photo (large): Group of Comanche soldiers in Fort Benning c.1941 (public domain).
Photo (inset): Collipriest House, c.1890 (Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life)



Walk with us to discover Tiverton's hidden histories: important stories of diversity, multiculturalism, and global connections.

Along the way, you will also uncover the stories of local people living in Tiverton today, recorded through oral history interviews.

Telling Our Stories is a community-led oral history and heritage project. Our aim is to find, share and celebrate the hidden histories of Devon's diverse and multicultural communities – past and present.

Visit our website for a full historical timeline and to listen to the oral history archive.

www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk

Images: All Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life. Top left: European Prisoners of War worked on local farms. Bottom left: a British Guianan couple spent a working holiday at Stenners factory. Graffiti letter art front cover: Jaz Rogers.