

Project introduction

Volunteer researcher Helen Booth conducted a comprehensive research process using primary and secondary sources. This is the initial research done for the project to try to determine evidence of diversity throughout Tiverton's history. Included is some background information to set the context. Much of the material is drawn from the various histories of Tiverton which have been published, especially from *A History of Tiverton* by Mike Sampson (Tiverton War Memorial Trust, 2000). Newspaper reports and many online sources were also consulted.

England's Immigrants 1330-1550

This is a fully-searchable database containing over 64,000 names of people known to have migrated to England during the period of the Hundred Years' War and the Black Death, the Wars of the Roses and the Reformation. The information within this database is drawn from a variety of published and un-published records – taxation assessments, (there were a series of taxes levied on first-generation immigrants between 1440 and 1487, known collectively as the 'alien subsidies'); letters of denization and protection (these record the people to whom the Crown granted specific rights that we would today associate with the notion of citizenship.). In this database there are several references to Tiverton.

The tax assessment of 1524 lists 289 households in Tiverton parish. ... There were three categories of assessment: land, wages and goods. ...At least four men paying tax in Tiverton may be termed foreigners; probably all involved in Tiverton's cloth trade. They were John a Gaunt, possibly of Ghent in Belgium; John Cleve, perhaps from the town of Cleves or Kleve, on the Dutch-German border; John Frenshman; and Bartholomew Nove who is specifically termed 'Dutchman'. (Sampson, *History*, p.59-60)

| Name | | Nationality | Date | Residence |
|-------------|------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| John | Agaunt | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| Simon | Bylhole | | 28th April 1524 | Bampton |
| Peter | Carver | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| Michael | Chaundler | | 2nd October 1441 | Tiverton hundred |
| John | Cleve | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| John | Frenshman | French | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| Janyn | Fuster | | 2nd October 1441 | Tiverton hundred |
| Peter | Harris | Breton | c 1524 | Tymerton |
| Garot | Hugons | Fleming | 20th July 1484 | Cove |
| Laurence | Iryssh | Irish | 2nd October 1441 | Tiverton hundred |
| John | Lymyngcote | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| Bartholomew | Nove | Dutch | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| John | Pyrse | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| Jeffray | Rowland | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| Evan | Tayllour | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| John | Whete | | 28th April 1524 | Tiverton |
| | | Fleming | 20th July 1484 | Cove |

The data in this table can be found at <https://www.englishimmigrants.com/> by searching for Place of Residence: Tiverton.

French and Low Countries asylum seekers

'Huguenots' is the name given to French Protestants from the 16th century onwards who were persecuted by the ruling Catholics and fled abroad. Many came to south west England, entering through Plymouth and spreading to other parts of Devon. Richard Cosway 1742-1821, the artist, was born in Oakford near Tiverton. His family was originally Flemish.

Extracts from two of the histories of Devon explaining this migration are given below:

(i) 'The tyrannical conduct of Philip 2nd of Spain having driven hundreds of artisans from the Low Countries to seek asylum in England, it not only favoured Elizabeth's political views, but was a source of considerable commercial advantage to afford them every protection. Of this circumstance, Tiverton derived its full share of benefits and the town once more shone forth in all its commercial prosperity.' *'History of Tiverton in the County of Devon, Volume I, William Harding, 1845, (now published in paperback by Gregg Press, 2012).*

(ii) 'The bigotted and cruel policy of Philip II. of Spain, towards the inhabitants of the Low Countries, had driven many of the most industrious of them to seek an asylum in England. They were gladly received by the queen's government, dispersed into various parts of England, and encouraged to resume their occupations. The manufactures of Brabant, Flanders, &c. were consequently almost annihilated, and the demand for English manufactures greatly increased. Tiverton had a large share of this additional trade; so that the state of the town at the commencement of the 17th century was very prosperous. The clothiers settled in their new habitations, went on successfully. The population increased so fast, by the additional number of the workmen, who were daily required in the different branches of the manufacture, that the inhabitants amounted in the year 1600 to about 3600; nearly three fourths of the number before the fire and the plague; so that, the remembrance of those great calamities began to be obliterated.' *'Historical memoirs of the town and parish of Tiverton in the County of Devon. Collected from the best authorities with Notes and Observations', Martin Dunsford, Printed by J.Brice (1790), (now available in a publication by Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2018)*

Cloth trade (end 17th century)

No one questions the strong trade links with Holland. There was at Tiverton, as at Exeter and Topsham, a flourishing colony of Dutch merchants as well as a few Germans. Documentary evidence of them is elusive, but a marriage license was sought in August 1700 for Balthazar Vanhulthen of Tiverton, a name hardly Devonian. (Sampson, *History*, p.42)

In the latter half of the 18th century two men of German origin, John Duntze and John Baring, were important in Tiverton both as merchants/traders (bringing employment to the town) and political figures.

Sir John Duntze

John Duntze stood to be a burgess in c 1765 and Receiver-General of the Land and Window Tax. Standing against him was John Baring. Both of them were of German origin.

Duntze is thought to have been born c1735 and was the son of John Duntze, merchant of Exeter, and his wife Elizabeth Hawker, daughter of James Hawker or Hawkes of Luppitt, Devon. The Duntze family had come from Bremen in north Germany, (Sampson, *History*, p.172).

Duntze was a clothier, a wealthy woollen and general merchant at Exeter. He married Frances Lewis (c1740-1801), daughter of Samuel Lewis, on 28 April 1757 in Westminster. Children -

Elizabeth, Samuel, John (2nd Bt), Charlotte, Frances, James. He served as MP for Tiverton from 1768 until his death in 1795. He was created baronet in 1774.

He may have been wealthy but he certainly had health issues:

Leeds Intelligencer Tues 17 January 1786, 'A correspondent says, he can from the best authority assure all those who suffer from the gout, that Sir John Duntze, Bart. of Exeter and scarce any man has suffered more from that disorder, has been under a course of hemlock and aconite pills the same which affected the cure of Abbe Man, for nearly a whole year, and that they have had the desired effect. Sir John has often taken in five days 354 pills, 43 of wolfsbane and 311 of hemlock.

John Baring

John Baring was the son of Johann Baring 1697-1748 who was born in Bremen in northern Germany. His mother's family was one of Bremen's leading wool merchants. At the age of twenty Johann was sent to England to learn the wool trade in Exeter. He married Elizabeth Vowler, the daughter of a prosperous Exeter grocer, who brought with her a large dowry of £20,000. The family was to become one of the wealthiest in the West Country.

Black History project

In 1999 the Friends of Devon Archives requested researchers using the county's archives to note any references in Devon's documents to people of colour. In the four years after that several dozen researchers found more than 120 references. In total 80 African servants/slaves were found in 32 places including Tiverton. This includes some men and women listed as Indians, East Indians and Asiatic Blacks.

Tiverton does have records of Black residents.

From parish registers:

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

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

Tiverton (St Peter), baptism of Bretton, a native of Africa now resident in the town of Tiverton, servant, 21 7 1813

Bretton – is Thomas Bretton. Father's occupation given as servant, but no name – just says 'son of' - native of Africa.

Thomas Gallen/Gullan and John Gabriel Steadman

The parish register had recorded the baptism in 1780 of Thomas Gallen, 'a black boy'. The entry states that he was living with Mrs Hamilton of Bristol, who had inherited Gotham House from her father George Davey, so it is possible that Thomas was actually living in the town. (Sampson, *History*, p.182)

John Gabriel Stedman lived with his wife and two sons in Hensleigh (House). One of the sons, Johnny, had been born in Surinam to Stedman's first wife, a half caste and the boy of mixed race attended Francis Gloyns' school in Saint Peter Street. (Sampson, *History*, p.185)

Tiverton's Slavery connections

The comparative lack of references in financial papers indicates Tiverton's local economy was never built on slavery, a supposition confirmed by published histories of the sixteenth to eighteenth

centuries. Nevertheless wealth created by slavery was used in the town but to a lesser degree than port towns and cities such as Bristol. Individual merchants as well as members of the middle and upper classes had estate interests in the West Indies. This is proven in records of reparations made to individuals after the abolition. Details can be seen on the data base of the Legacies of British slavery – UCL (www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs).

In the terms of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, the UK government agreed to pay a total of £20m - about £2bn in today's money in compensation for the loss of their "property in men", some of which was paid to those with Tiverton connections. The list of slave owners included teachers and sometimes clergy who invested in the trade. Research suggests that at least one of those gentlemen had links to the Trans Atlantic slave trade. Beneficiaries of compensation with Tiverton connections can be identified on the UCL database.

(Another given as a source was - 3740M/E9, Conveyance of messuages and lands in Tiverton, 1828, containing reference to marriage settlement re plantation and estate in the parish of Saint Thomas in Pear Tree Grove, Jamaica, together with slaves, utensils and appurtenances, 1818)

French prisoners of war and emigres

During the Napoleonic Wars a large number of French prisoners of war were billeted in Tiverton. A few stayed in the town after the war. Once thought to have been one of the prisoners, it is now certain that Alexander Lamotte was here as a refugee. (See also The Lamotte family in French Prisoners of War at <https://www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk/tiverton-archive/1815/napoleonic-wars-and-french-pows>)

Belgian refugees WWI

During WWI over one million Belgian refugees left their country to flee the German occupation, going to France, the Netherlands and Britain. Over 250,000 Belgian refugees fled to Britain. The British government offered 'victims of war the hospitality of the British nation.'. While a good many of them returned home after the war, others established themselves in their new country. By the end of WWI 8,000 Belgians had been assisted and cared for by the people of Devon.

Of the quarter of a million people to enter Britain, there were about 500 Belgian refugees in Tiverton (probably not all at the same time). Refugees had to register and notify authorities of a change of address. A few got into trouble for not doing this. Authorities were worried in case there were any Germans or Austrians amongst them.

Pieter Verlaecke, aged 7 did not survive the rough crossing of the Channel and his arrival in Devon. He is buried in Tiverton cemetery. His family returned to Belgium after the war to Ostend, to resume their family fishing business.

Jan Gommers-Vaillant a ropemaker (born 1858) and his wife Augusta Gommers (nee Vaillant) lived in Tiverton. Jan died in London on 18th February 1917. Augusta returned to Courtrai in Belgium in 1919.

Local children became actively involved in the war effort; making sandbags, knitting socks, and making jam for the troops. Girls from the Heathcoat School collected 2s 6d each week towards the rent and coal for a Belgian family who had been allocated one of the newly completed Council Gardens houses. The first group of Belgians had arrived in the previous November and by March 1915 there were over 100 in the district. (Sampson, *History*, p.292)

Some of the boys from Belgian families went to Blundell's School.. The register contain such names as Pierre and Maurice van der Meer, Roger Schittecatte and Alfred van Velsen. (Sampson, *History*, p.197)

There does not appear to be evidence that any of the refugees stayed in Tiverton after the war.

German POWs WWI

'... there was a great shortage of manpower in the countryside. The lowering of the school leaving age to 12 eased the situation....boys were released to work on the land, where the workforce was further increased in 1917 by the appearance of prisoners of war. Local farmers were allocated a handful of German and Austrian captives. (*Western Times* 22.2 18)' (Sampson, *History*, p.292)

In 1917 600 POWs are known to have been working on Devon farms. Special categories of prisoners were able to live and work on farms. In 1917 80 POWs were billeted on Devon farms. (Public Records Office say official records of Great War prisoners in Devon have been lost.)

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 8th May 1918 reported that the Tiverton Board of Guardians (they administered the workhouse) discussed housing German POWs. 'It was decided to accommodate 40 German prisoners, with a guard of ten, at the workhouse, for work on the land'. The Local Government Board then approved this. However, when prisoners arrived the following month, it seems to have been decided by the War Office that the workhouse was not suitable.

Western Times 25 June 1918 reported that 36 German POWs had arrived in Tiverton and were to be quartered in Park Villa, a spacious detached residence standing in its own private grounds, about two acres in extent, adjoining the Tiverton People's Park.

A couple of months later *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 12th September 1918 reported that at a meeting of the Tiverton War Agricultural Committee it was stated that prisoners were being used freely and giving every satisfaction. It also reported that 40 prisoners had been sent to Tiverton. That eight were living on farms and the remainder went out to work daily, with the exception of one interpreter and another who did the cooking. That the committee said, 'They were strong lusty fellows, and were doing useful work.' That there had been a report that they might be moved elsewhere and that it was decided to make representation to the authorities that they should remain.

History of Blundell's School

There have obviously been many pupils at Blundell's from overseas (as is still the case).

By 1770 Blundell's was serving the needs of the county of Devon and not just of Tiverton. The out of county boys came from Cornwall, Bristol, London and Somerset. By the later 18th century several sons of colonial officers and traders attended the school. Among these were Robert Hamilton the son of a physician on the West Indian island of Grenada, Edward Darvell whose father lived in Machilipatnam in India, the son of John Short of Bengal and Montague James whose father resided in Jamaica. (Sampson, *History*, p.72)

In the second half of the 18th century, the islands of the West Indies held potential as markets for Tiverton goods and Tiverton already had some links with them. Blundell's admission registers began in 1770 and reveal two boys, John Audain junior and John Esdaile (the son of Archibald Esdaile soon to become governor of Saint Christopher) from Saint Christopher (St Kitts). (Sampson, *History*, p.175)

Then there were the Belgian refugees during WWI, as previously stated.

Towards the end of the 1930s Nazi persecution of Jews was forcing many parents to look for ways of getting their sons out of harm's way. The mother of a boy already at Blundell's, Dorothea Waley Singer, was part of a group, of mainly Jewish and Quaker women, intent on placing refugee boys in public schools. This is almost certainly how Walter Cohen the son of a Jewish merchant escaped Germany and found sanctuary in Petergate (a house) where French (a master) was happy to waive his boarding fees. He was soon joined by an Austrian boy, Hans Schidlof, who was already a prodigious musical talent. (Sampson, *History*, p.232)

World War II

Americans in Tiverton

As the war went on Tiverton began to feel the effects of a growing American presence. To begin with the US Navy established a small store at Collipriest, with many of the men housed at Howden. For ease of communication (and, probably to keep the troops out of the town as much as possible) a temporary bridge was put up across the Exe between the two camps. Later, when the U.S.^{4th} Infantry arrived in Britain in January, 1944, Collipriest became their headquarters in the south west; the Divisional Signals and Cavalry Reconnaissance troops were encamped here (and visited by Patton and Eisenhower. Also stationed there was J D Salinger.) (Sampson, *History*, p.319)

U.S Forces were scattered across the south west from Braunton to Plymouth and the South Hams, eg the 29th Field Artillery Battalion was stationed at Axminster. Newton Abbot and South Brent are also mentioned as places where there were troops.

The presence of American troops sparked a wide range of emotions, actions, and reactions....Dances were popular and the Tivoli and Electric Theatre cinemas were much in demand. The American appetite for 'movies' and abundant female company persuaded the Borough Council early in 1944 to agree to open the town's cinemas on Sundays (though admission was to be confined to men and women from the services accompanied by one friend only). ... Shortly before the Normandy landings most Americans had left Tiverton. (Sampson, *History*, p.319)

Children of American GIs

Around 2000 babies were born to black American servicemen and white British women during WWII. Possibly a third to a half of them ended up in children's homes – a number of homes were established specifically to house these children. The British government forbade most attempted adoptions by the putative fathers. Many of them grew up in areas almost exclusively white such as East Anglia and the South West. At the time there was probably only a population of about 20,000 black people in the country – largely concentrated in Liverpool, Cardiff and London. Children of black GI's and white women were sometimes known in the press as 'Brown babies'.

Charles Noon reports in his book on Tiverton that a black GI was murdered by white GIs for dating a local white woman. (*The Book of Tiverton: At the Heart of Devon*, Charles Noon, Halsgrove, 2008)

Prisoner of War Camp WWII

A former military camp of Second World War date is visible as a range of structures on aerial photographs of 1946 and 1947, off Bolham Road, Tiverton. The camp occupies an area of approximately 9.88 hectares of level ground bounded by the River Exe to the west and Bolham

Road to the east, from which the camp was accessed. It comprises a cluster of nissen huts within the main body of the camp, with running track and sports field to the southwest, all of which are enclosed by probable fencing. A range of additional huts, possibly for administration and accommodation for guards is visible outside of the main compound, on the northeast side of the camp and adjacent to the main entrance. Possible fenced compounds are also visible to the southwest of the site. The extent of the camp is largely confined within historic field boundaries to the south and west, but with additional fencing defining the northern extent of the camp. The camp remains largely unaltered on aerial photographs of 1947, although by 1966 the former camp has been completely cleared and the site occupied by a school and what is now Tiverton High School. Below ground evidence of this former camp, for example, hut bases may, however, still survive in areas unaffected by development. (National Archives Reference FO 939/172 and *East and Mid Devon River Catchments National Mapping Programme Project 2016* prepared by: Cain Hegarty, Stephanie Knight and Richard Sims p117)

A Prisoner of War camp was established in 1943 on the Old Race Course where the first inmates were Italian. (There were also Germans here later). At first security seems to have been lax. The *Western Times* reported in October 1944 that the POWs who were allowed 'to exercise within defined limits' in the town, had been abusing this privilege and were distributing 'crude pamphlets bearing Fascist slogans'. (We do not know the category of men detained in this camp but the newspaper suggested on 24.11.44 that they had been taken from other camps 'because of their subversive tendencies'.) (Sampson, *History*, p.320)

Birmingham Mail 16th November 1944 reports that a question has been asked of the Secretary of War in the Commons as to what action he has taken as regards the bad behaviour of Italian POWs in the Tiverton area. Whether any disciplinary action has been taken against the men involved in an incident in Tiverton on October 25th.....and that the prisoners be prevented from wandering around the countryside and frightening respectable women, particularly near Tiverton and Sampford Peverell. He replied that the camp housed POWs who had been removed from other camps because of their subversive tendencies. He had no information of an incident on October 25th, but an incident did take place on the night of October 27-28 when crude pamphlets bearing Fascist slogans were distributed in a small area of the town.

The last of German POWs left the camp in December 1948. Four stayed in Tiverton as they had married local women. (Sampson, *History*, p.324)

Post war - Polish, Ukrainian, Yugoslavs

The immediate post war saw Heathcoats increase its exports and on a few occasions 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. The company advertised for local people willing to provide board and lodgings for seven Polish-Ukrainian girls. (Sampson, *History*, p.324)

Tiverton also became the home of a much larger group of refugees a little later, victims of the Cold War. After the POWs had left, the camp was used as an agricultural hostel run by the Devon Agricultural Executive Committee. The men accommodated there included a group of 74 Yugoslavs who had escaped the Communist take-over of their homeland. They were immediately made welcome, and became a much-respected and integral part of the town's population. In January 1949 they held an Orthodox Christmas celebration in Saint Peter's Church. A Wedding service conducted by a priest of the Orthodox Church took place there in the following May between one of their number to a Ukrainian girl working in the factory.

The Independent 12 April 1995. 'Serbing the Community', Helen Rumbelow
Article about Serbian refugees living in London.

'When we arrived in Britain in 1947 the government gave us £1 to put in our pockets. That is all we had,' says Alex Petrovic, the President of the Church Committee and therefore Mr Big around the Serbian Orthodox Church and Community Centre in Ladbrook Grove, West London....
'It was hard to integrate at first,' says Alex. 'I remember being stationed in Tiverton in Devon, and going to a dancehall with 20 other huge, tall Serbs, all unsmiling. The girls were terrified. They ran away'.

London Gazette Naturalisation Certificates 1949-1981 (all down as Resident in Tiverton)

This is a list of aliens to whom certificates of naturalisation have been granted by the Secretary of State and whose Oaths of Allegiance have been registered in the Home Office diary. Date shown is date of naturalisation.

Carlo Meffe from Italy 3 Aug 1955 Bulldozer driver 15 Lime Close Cowley Moor
Salamo Pasquale from Italy 13 Sept 1956 Textile worker 5 Lime Close, Cowleymoore
Angelo Meffe from Italy 21 May 1959 Farm worker Battens Cottage Sampford Peverell

Herbert Wilhelm Blum from Germany 29 April 1954
Karl Domnik from Germany 14 May 1954 Farmer Gloyns Farm, Oakford near Tiverton
Karl Heinrich Trippler from Germany 27 Jan 1956 Labourer Sydeham Farm, Rackenford, Tiverton
Robert Ebi from Germany 15 Oct 1958 Farm worker Middle Curham, Ash Thomas, Halberton, Tiverton
Karl Richard Paatz from Germany 22 June 1964
Franz Joseph Becks from Germany. 6 April 1970
Gerhard Arthur Stricker from Germany. 30 Oct 1970

Savo Djuric from Yugoslavia 13 March 1962 Known as Savo Duric Textile worker (Plastic Coverer) 28 Broad Lane
Danilo Maglov from Yugoslavia 9 March 1966
Franc Rozic from Yugoslavia 12 March 1973 13 Blackmore Road
Milan Petar Rapo from Yugoslavia. 4 November 1974

Andrzej Wieslaw Debicki from Poland 3 Oct 1953 Gaiter overlooker (Textiles) 86 Cotteylands
Kamimierz Klepanda from Poland 29 April 1954 Bricklayer and mason. 13 Martins Lane, Barrington Street.
Henryk Wojewoda from Poland 24 Nov 1954 Textile worker (lace) 1 Heathcoat Bungalows Bolham Road
Stefan Dutko from Poland 15 April 1955
Lukas Lachno from Poland 10 May 1955 Agricultural worker Hone Hill Cottage
Zygfryd Ludwik Schmidt from Poland 9 May 1960
Jakob Medwid from Poland. Formerly Hilariy Medwid. 10 Jan 1966 Assistant weaver (Shuttle loader) 14 Branscombe Road
Joseph Grzenkowitz from Poland 30 Nov 1967 Bricklayer 88 Chapel Street. Changed name by deed poll 14 Feb 1968 to Joseph Grant

Istvan Kiss from Hungary. 6 Nov 1975 10 Leat Street

Wasył Tkachuk from Russia. 15 Sept 1959 Textile operator 30 Cotteylands
Maria Tkachuk from Russia. 15 Sept 1959 Textile operator 30 Cotteylands

Antonio Nunez from Spain. 21 May 1979 24 Coleridge Road

George Gulko of uncertain nationality 31 July 1953

Dilip Kathuradas Popat British protected person. 27 Sept 1979