

Blacks in Britain
(Part Three)

The 1700's

London had several pedestrian thoroughfares named for African Peoples: ***Black Boy Alleys, Black Boy Court, Blackamoor's Head Yard, Blackamoor Street and many more Blackamoors' Alleys.*** Sometimes the street names reflected the nature of the businesses found there; other times the people living there. Slaves were sold at auctions and Africana decorations (Busts of 'blackamoors') were popular. African servants, freedmen and fugitive slaves were common in seaside towns, and Bristol, Liverpool and Cardiff had black communities. Freedmen and runaway slaves created vibrant free black communities.

In London, the possession of young black slaves as pages, the darker the better to contrast with artificially-enhanced whiteness of their owners, had become both a fad and a badge of elitism. Given classical Roman and Greek names and dressed in silks and satins, black slave pages paraded behind their owners, especially women carried their owners' small dogs and attended the whims of their masters and mistresses. Their likenesses also appeared in their masters' portraits to show their owner's status level and wealth. Such badges of prosperity were not confined to the aristocracy and elite, however. In a 1765 publication, ***The Character of a Town Misse***, the author states that the "town misse" or "*the fashionable high-class whore of the period hath always two necessary Implements about her, a Blackamoor, and a little dog; for without these, she would be neither Fair nor Sweet.*"

Interracial marriages were the norm, since the numbers of black men far outpaced the black female population. Cultural evidence abounds – from paintings, prints and engravings to popular novels and plays – that working class white women during the eighteenth century, at least were not adverse to marrying black men.