



NBPA Press Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:45AM ON MONDAY 12 MARCH 2018

Sgt Tola Munro, President of the NBPA, on John Kent, Britain's First Black Police Officer

"In the last week we have celebrated International Women's Day as well as Mother's Day. As the President of the National Black Police Association, it has struck me that despite the much later start for women in the force, the progress of female police officers - currently over 30% in places - has much exceeded that of black police officers - currently about 6%.

"There have been black police officers almost all the way back to that dawn of modern policing in 1829. The earliest, Constable 'Black' John Kent, policed Cumbria in the 1830s, over 180 years ago.

"Today I am delighted to join Raymond Greenhow here in Keswick to celebrate the launch of his book, 'Britain's First Black Policeman: The Life of John Kent: a Police Officer in Cumberland 1835-1846.'

"John's father, Thomas Kent, was a freed black slave described as being a negro in contemporary records. John was described in a letter written to the Carlisle Journal newspaper in July 1844 as 'Black' Kent, he was a person of colour. This is confirmed in Michael John Ewins' montage of the history of the Cumbria Constabulary through the ages in their Penrith headquarters, which portrays a black officer to the left of the picture.

"We have featured John for some time on the National Black Police Association website and continue to do so. He seemed to have policed in a time when what you did was more important than the colour of your skin. His contemporaries accepted him for the work that he did, despite the flawed end to his policing career.

"It seems that John, who Ray has discovered policed Maryport as well as Carlisle, was accepted as a good copper who was black - and a brave copper at that. Within weeks of starting he saved a senior constable's life, faced knife-wielding males, and disarmed a male with a blunderbuss. He dealt with the usual affair of thefts, counterfeiting, burglary and assaults, being assaulted himself and possibly suffering racial abuse (being 'ill-used') on another occasion. He was praised on numerous occasions by magistrates, being described as 'an active and intelligent policeman'. Even after his dismissal he was still known as 'Kent the Constable' and Ray has now

found new evidence that John Kent went on to resurrect his career in law enforcement as a Railway Police officer.

“I am glad to say that this book fleshes out this conscientious, fearless, respected police officer, universally known as Black Kent, who is commemorated by Cumbria Constabulary and black officers throughout the UK.”

Tola Munro, NBPA President
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Note to Editors:

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A new book by author Raymond Greenhow. "Britain's First Black Policeman: The Life of John Kent: a Police Officer in Cumberland 1835-1846." ISBN 978-1-912181-09-4 Published by Bookcase, 19 Castle St., Carlisle, CA3 8SY

The book, a soft back local history one, is launched today at a literature festival called 'Words By The Water' at Theatre by the Lake Keswick, Cumbria on 12th March. It will correct the timeline of John Kent from 1837 - 1844, to a new one of 1835 - 1846. It will encompass three towns, not just Carlisle, and include a new aspect of his policing career after his dismissal for drunkenness (not uncommon in his day).