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There are over 900 years of immigration records available for research here at The National Archives. Over the next three episodes, we're exploring the rich history of migration in the 20th century.

This first episode begins with the story of an English woman losing her citizenship because of who she chooses to marry, and a British citizen arrested because of his country of birth. Then, we uncover the lesser-told story of people leaving Britain for a better life.

Documents from The National Archives used in this episode: [MEPO 35/28/7](#); [HO 334/243/2267](#); [HO 405/2103](#); [HO 334/135/4902](#)

You can read about Frank Berni and other Italian internees in our blog: [Internment of enemy aliens in 1940: The fate of Italians resident in a Britain at war](#).

Find out about the Migration Museum and their podcast series 'Departures: 400 years of Emigration from Britain' [via their website](#).

If you're interested in finding out more about records covered in this episode take a look at our research guides to [Aliens' registration cards 1918-1957](#) and [Internees](#). For help navigating our catalogue you can watch our [top level tips on using Discovery](#).

Listeners, we need your help to make this podcast better! We need to know a bit more about you and what themes you're interested in. You can share this information with us by visiting smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ontherecord/

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Transcript:

[Teaser clips, montage from episode interviews]

Paul Dryburgh: This is On the Record at The National Archives: uncovering the past through stories of everyday people. I'm Paul Dryburgh.

Katherine Howells: And I'm Katherine Howells.

Paul and I are both historians at The National Archives in Kew, West London, where we research, look after, and help our audiences better understand the Archives' collections of historical government and public records.

Over the next three episodes, we're exploring the rich history of migration in the 20th century.

Paul: We've organised this series around three major sets of legislation passed in 1914, 1948, and 1962. Each set of laws represents a shift in policy around migration and citizenship that would have a profound and lasting impact on citizens and non-citizens alike throughout Britain, its Empire, and the Commonwealth.

Katherine: In this first episode, you'll hear the story of a British woman who lost her citizenship because of who she chose to marry and the story of a British citizen arrested because of his country of birth. Then we'll chat with the storyteller behind a new podcast series from the

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Migration Museum that shines a light on the lesser-told story of emigration: people leaving Britain for a better life.

Paul: In episode 2, you'll hear details about the arrival of the S.S. Empire Windrush...then we'll move on to the adventure-filled migration story of a young man in the 1960s--as told by his son, who's also a specialist at The National Archives.

Katherine: And finally in episode 3, you'll hear about the rise of anti-immigrant movements in the 1960s, the rise of anti-racist activism, and how Black historians and archivists in the 1980s started an organisation to preserve and share the long story of Black community-building and activism in Britain.

Katherine: The word "Alien" is used occasionally in this series--starting with our first story--because that is the legal term used in so many of our records. It describes a non-naturalised individual in Britain, no matter their ancestry. However, today, it is less common to use this term as it is seen as dehumanising. So, when we are not talking about specific acts and laws, we'll be using terms like migrants or non-nationals.

Paul: Now let's get to our first story, which requires reading between the lines of a yellowed 1920s identification card, onto which has been glued a black and white photo of a woman in her 30s.

Roger: My name's Roger Kershaw and I'm the migration record specialist at The National Archives.

Katherine: The document you have for us today is an identification card from the Metropolitan Police's Alien Registration Office, and it's for a woman named Hilda Emily Toyokawa. We've got her

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date of birth as 1892 and her nationality as Japanese. Can you tell us: who was Hilda and why is this record worth a closer look?

Roger: Yes this is an Alien Registration Card, and the information provided on these cards is very rich and it includes things such as the full name, date of birth, employment history, address, marital status, and date of naturalisation. So what we have, unusually, is an alien registration card for somebody who was born in Britain. She was born in Britain in 1892, and her name on birth was Hilda Futter.

Katherine: So she's born, as far as we know, to parents of European descent in Britain....

Roger: But she became Japanese upon marriage. So she married somebody called Chokieki Toyokawa. And on doing so, she lost her British nationality, and she became Japanese. So she took her husband's nationality as that was the rule governing the Act in 1914.

Katherine: Do we know anything about Hilda's husband? How did they meet?

Roger: The card tells us that he and Hilda married on the 18th of January 1922 in Epsom, Surrey. It's not clear how they met, but the 1921 census should tell us where Chokieki was living in the UK at that time. And perhaps that will tell us more about how they met and got to know each other.

Katherine: And the 1921 Census is of course closed to researchers until 2022, something we discuss in much greater detail in our previous episode of the podcast. So that means the most recent census records available are from 1911.

Roger: There is no trace of Chokieki in the 1911 census, so we must assume he arrived in the UK after then.

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Katherine: Right. Were the rules the same for British men marrying foreign women? Would they have lost their citizenship as well?

Roger: No. The rules at this time only applied to women marrying "alien" or foreign subjects. So the 1914 British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act allowed women to apply for naturalisation to reclaim their status as a British national and not an alien. That said, the act made it clear that while there was likely to be no barrier in most cases of readmission, it wasn't automatic and widows and divorced women whose husbands had been foreigners still had to apply for readmission to British nationality.

Katherine: And what was the government reasoning for this rule?

Roger: Well, men or husbands, they didn't lose their British nationality on marriage because of the old legal idea that a woman as a wife was legally in many respects subsumed under her husband. By the 20th century, married women did have a legal entity, but for many things, they still needed their husband's permission to do certain things. So the old legal—so we're talking before the mid-19th century— the old legal idea was that a single woman was a *feme sole*, however, a young woman would be under her father's control and a married woman, a *feme covert*, that is under the control of her husband. And legally, a wife was one legal entity with her husband and had no separate identity. Remember the Dickens lines from Oliver Twist where Mr Bumble is told he is more guilty of the two because the law supposes his wife acts under his direction. And he says, "The law is an ass and the law is a bachelor and his eyes should be opened by experience."

Katherine: Oh, brilliant. Wow. Going back to the Toyokawa family, do we know what happened to them, Hilda and her husband?

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Roger: To a degree, we do. Using a combination of other records, we know that Hilda and Chokieki had two daughters, one born in 1922 and the other in 1930. We also know that both Hilda and Chokieki moved to the United States in the 1920s, and Hilda returned to the UK alone in 1929. Her occupation on the passenger list is recorded as a housewife. The last entry I could find for Chokieki was on a passenger list, travelling from Philadelphia to Los Angeles. Now his occupation was recorded as a cook. And in the US Archives, there is an entry for the internment of somebody with the name Toyokawa later that year, following the UK and US governments' declaration of war on Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on the 8th of December, 1941. But thereafter, at some point, we know Hilda reapplies for British nationality. And this is granted and a certificate of naturalisation is issued on the 2nd of March 1943. We don't know the full story as the background papers pertaining to the application were not selected for permanent preservation, but we do have a duplicate copy of her naturalisation certificate. But it doesn't state that her husband is deceased, so we must assume he is likely to be still living in the United States. The last entry I could find for Hilda was an entry of her death on the 28th of August 1960 in Thorpe, Norfolk, where she was born 68 years earlier. Her name upon death is still recorded as Hilda Emily Toyokawa.

Katherine: I guess we'll have to wait and see if the 1921 census has any more clues to their story.

So, how long did this automatic de-naturalization last? When did things change so British women kept their citizenship if they married a man from another country?

Roger: It was the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1933 that allowed women to file to retain their British Nationality. They had to fill-in a form to say that they didn't want to lose it, but many women weren't aware of this option. So, it wasn't until the 1948 British Nationality Act that

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the law was fully changed so that women did not lose their British nationality upon marriage to a foreigner.

Katherine: Okay. So, Roger, you've mentioned the 1914 British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act as it relates to Hilda Toyokawa's story, but what is the significance of this act? What changes did it bring for citizens and non-nationals born outside of Britain?

Roger: The act brought a greater degree of control over foreigners resident in the UK. Whereas before the police reviewed applications for naturalisation, increasingly the newly formed security service or the MI5 kept files on suspected foreigners, and they played an increasing role in assessing applications for naturalisation.

So we've learned through Hilda's story that the loss of nationality for women at marriage was possible on the adoption of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914. And we also know that the act introduced a Central Register of aliens, as of the outbreak of the First World War, all aliens over the age of 16 were required to register at local police stations. And this was partly due to a fear of spies. And the act also made some changes with regards to applying to become British through naturalisation. In many ways, it made it much harder. For example, for the very first time, an applicant had to demonstrate a good knowledge of the English language in order to become British.

Katherine: Right, I see. So prior to 1914, what kind of regulation was there around non-nationals living in Britain?

Roger: Well, there had been some regulation for over a hundred years. We know that from the Napoleonic Wars aliens arriving in Britain needed to register their alien status with Justices of the Peace and certificates of arrival were issued routinely to aliens upon arrival. But the 1914 act went

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one step further by requiring aliens to carry with them an alien registration book and report to the police any change with regards to their marital status, place of residence, and employment. And failure to do so would result in fines.

Katherine: And how popular or accepted was the act within Britain?

Roger: Well, during wartime, the act was generally accepted and it was deemed appropriate by most. For a long time, there had been close ties between say Britain and Germany, and many Germans had settled here. But they now found themselves in a very uncomfortable position, including those with German-sounding names, even if their families had been settled here for generations. It's a well-known fact that the royal family chose to change their name from Saxe-Coburg to the more patriotic sounding Windsor at this time.

And women's activism in the inter-war period focused on a number of issues important to women's lives such as equal pay, legislation for unmarried mothers, and a woman's nationality upon marriage, which we heard about earlier. So throughout the early 20th century, various women's rights organisations sought to address the lack of international laws recognising married women's rights of national citizenship. And a memoranda, which was sent to the home office by the Nationality of Married Women's committee in 1943, noted that "unlike other disabilities affecting women, which have come down from a remote past, the disability with respect to nationality have been imposed upon them within the last century." And these feminists sought to restore the rights women previously had to recognise the independent nationality of married women. They saw the early 20th-century position on women and nationality as a step backwards that removed women's agency saying "it is to continue to treat a married woman as a chattel and not as a person in her own right." And after the winning of the vote on equal terms, it was issues like this that were key to women's lives and advocating for a more equal future.

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Katherine: So besides Hilda's story, I believe you have another story from the archives about a British citizen impacted by the 1914 act. So who is Francesco Berni, and how does he fit into this history?

Roger: That's right. Well, Francesco, who was also known as Frank, was an Italian national who became British upon naturalisation under the 1914 Act in 1934. And what's interesting about Frank, however, is that despite being British, he found himself eligible for internment following Italy's declaration of war on Britain and France on the 10th of June, 1940. Regardless of their nationality, those Italians or those people of Italian descent who were known to be members of the Italian fascist party were also ordered to be interned. And as such Frank Berni who was born in Bardi in the Italian province of Parma but had moved to Ebbw Vale in Wales with his parents in 1919, was arrested on the 10th of June under the Emergency Powers Defense Act for being 'a person of hostile associations'. So he wasn't an alien, he was British, but he was deemed to be a person of hostile associations. He was detained in Liverpool Prison and later he spent some time at the internment camp in nearby Huyton and in prison at Bristol. And at the time of his arrest, he was a successful businessman owning many cafes in Exeter, Plymouth and Bristol.

Katherine: Right, I see. Do we know what happened to Frank in the end?

Roger: Well, we know that his case was heard on the 10th of December, 1940, so six months after his arrest. And the committee considered that Berni was rooted to this country, that any sympathy he had for Italy had for some time been moribund, and that his connection with the fascist party was little more than superficial. And the committee also recommended his release from detention. And Berni, he went on with his brother Aldo to establish the first Berni Inn Steakhouse in 1955, remaining in England until his death in the year 2000 at the age of 96.

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Katherine: That's such an incredible story. Roger, if our listeners take away a few key points about migration to and from Britain in the first half of the 20th century, what would you want them to know?

Roger: Well, that's a good question, Katherine. It's important to know that the vast majority of foreign nationals settling in the UK didn't apply for naturalisation in the 20th century. It was relatively expensive and it was beyond the reach for most as you needed to have your character and your respectability vouched for by a number of British referees. And you also needed a good knowledge of English, both written and verbal. For many, however, naturalisation was considered essential in order to further business interests, as without British nationality, you could not own or inherit land. And it's also important to understand the impact war had on the status of foreign nationals living in the UK in the 20th century and the process for becoming British as our case studies have shown.

[Musical break/transition]

Paul: There are over 900 years of immigration records available for research here at The National Archives. But around 90% of the enquiries we get about these records relate to migration to the UK in the last 200 years.

And this is why our series focuses on the 20th century. Because while there has always been migration to Britain, it just so happens that British migration before the 20th century actually involved a lot more people leaving than arriving.

That's what we learned from an ambitious new podcast commissioned by the Migration Museum in London. Departures tells the story of the millions who left Britain over the centuries—by choice and by force.

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Katherine: Before we get into our conversation with the show's presenter, Mukti Jain Campion, let's listen to a clip from Departures- 400 years of Emigration from Britain. This clip comes from the beginning of episode 1: "The Swarming of the English."

Departures Clip:

Mukti Jain Campion: What would it take for you to leave your home? To leave everything and everyone you know to move to another country and start again. Over the past 400 years, that's exactly what millions of British people have been doing. Today, the news headlines are full of stories of migrants trying to come to Britain. But for most of this country's history, it's actually been the other way round.

Voice 2: You go back to the 17th Century and people were much more worried about emigration than they were about immigration because by and large people didn't want to come here, they wanted to get out of here.

Mukti: The late Eric Richards, eminent historian of British migration, described how in the 19th century the British Isles created the prototype for mass migration that's since been emulated across the world. Yet this history isn't well-remembered today.

Voice 3: To talk about migration today and the numbers of people coming to Britain, without recognizing that Britain was the biggest exporter of people in the 19th century is...is wrong.

Voice 4: We often think that British emigration is a thing of the past. I think fact that most people won't know is that even in the present day, Britain has an emigration rate that is one of the highest in the world.

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Mukti: So why has a small island nation produced so many migrants and how have they shaped the world we live in today?

Paul: Mukti, hi. Could you please introduce yourself and tell us what you do?

Mukti Jain Campion: My name is Mukti Jain Campion. I am the founder of an independent production company called Culture Wise and for over 25 years, we were producing radio documentaries for the BBC, and now increasingly making podcasts for museums and NGOs.

The Departures podcast series was commissioned by the Migration Museum in London early last year to accompany an exciting new exhibition that they were planning on the history of British emigration over the past 400 years. That's right from the 17th-century settlers in America through to the present day. The exhibition was obviously delayed by the pandemic but it is now open to visitors, and I highly recommend a visit. But I did go ahead and make the podcast and they've been available since the beginning of the year, really. And we've had a fantastic response.

Paul: So why did the Migration Museum want to focus on that particular story?

Mukti: Today migration is almost always talked about in relation to immigration of people into Britain and we really very rarely hear about the very large flows going out of the country and to all parts of the world for 400 years. Yet one is profoundly shaped by the other. And you really can't have an informed debate about immigration or citizenship today without understanding that very long history of British emigration.

Paul: As an aside, at TNA, we have the passenger lists and of course, they're outgoing as well as incoming so we over the desk lots of lots of questions on both sides of that particular set of records. But I do agree the immigration story is much bigger across the desk, if you see what I

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mean, than the emigration. But it's such an important part of the story that we at The National Archives are able to tell as much as you're telling it at the Migration Museum.

Mukti: And actually, what you're describing those passenger lists are really very largely the documents that enable us to put any sense of the scale of British emigration because nobody needed a passport in those days. There was nobody even today measuring the number of people leaving and asking them why they were leaving. So, the actual hard data we have is very limited to things like the passenger lists of the big liners and earlier on just the records kept by individual shipping companies as to who was actually on their ships.

You have to be very clever to follow different sorts of trails, and some of the people I interviewed had been fantastic at that. There's episode two which is about the women who went out seeking husbands. They were sent by shipping companies to America in the very early 17th century. And the research into who was on that ship, who they were, involved going through parish records looking at the descriptions that were in the correspondence. All sorts of sideways angles to just try and pick out who these individuals were and what we could actually learn about them. You do need to be quite a serious detective to unpick the story of British emigration and I suspect that's another reason why we don't hear so much about it.

Paul: And of course, you are starting to reliant in some senses on the archives of those nations to which British people would have moved still being in a reasonably good state or having sufficient depth and extent.

Mukti: And that obviously depends on the country that we're talking about, it depends on why people are going, and whether the records actually give you the data you think you're getting as well.

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Paul: Mmm, absolutely. Why did people leave Britain? And how many people can you estimate would have left over the centuries?

Mukti: There has been some really interesting work done to try and put numbers to the immigration story if you like. James Evans wrote a very interesting book and he's one of the people I interviewed in the first episode and he talks very graphically about the sort of people who were leaving in the 17th century. And the sort of figures that are estimated are around 400,000 people leaving England—and I'm talking about England rather than Britain generally at that time—just across the Atlantic. We're not even talking about the people who are going off to India with the East India Company or going elsewhere in the world. And when you think of 400,000—I mean, that is a lot of people—but when you think about it in the context of the population at that time, which was probably about four to four and a half million, you can see that as an emigration rate, as a proportion of the population, it was huge.

By the 19th century, when the population I think grew over the course of the 19th century to about 40 million in Britain, there were estimated 10 million British people who left the shores to settle largely in North America but also Australia, South Africa... all over the world really.

And when you say why were people leaving, they were probably leaving for the same reasons that people leave countries today which is poverty, desperation, sometimes religious persecution, sometimes because they were lured by the promise of gold, and wealth, and land, all of those sorts of things. And over the course of the 17th century, it was largely poor, desperate people leaving a country that felt more and more overpopulated where it's harder to earn a living, get a job, and find a husband. All of those sorts of things motivated people. And obviously, we don't have because it wasn't common amongst people of that era to write about their experiences, so we have to find out their motivations indirectly.

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And we do have some evidence. In the first episode, we have a very poignant letter of a 12-year-old—we think, child who describes the abject misery in which he's living having been sent presumably by his family who were probably unable to look after all their children and I believe the propaganda that was being espoused at the time that there was all this possibility of wealth and riches and easy food for the picking and so on in America.

We don't know what went on inside people's heads. But certainly, you can extrapolate from the conditions that people were trying to live in England at the time. And remember, this is something that I've often thought about since I came across it...most people living in England, in fact, the British Isles, are never very far away from the coastline. So, once you start to make that move to get away from the village where you live to try and find work, to try and find food and opportunities, and you find yourself gravitating towards London in particular but other coastal cities, it's then not such a big leap to become indentured, get your passage paid to go somewhere else. And that seems to be as much about motivation as opportunity. There were places and people willing to pay for you to get there. And how many people actually lived out their indenture level actually benefited from the promise of land and freedom and so on. It's probably very tiny, but it was enough to motivate people to think life is so dreadful here - maybe there is hope if I go elsewhere.

Paul: I mean, obviously, we hear about the Irish diaspora, the Scottish diaspora, particularly to North America and Canada...but yeah, the English diaspora, I'm not suggesting that they are any more valid and different to the others, but it's not something you hear about at all.

Mukti: You're right, we hear about the people leaving because of the Irish famine. What we don't always appreciate is that famines also were taking place in Wales, across England, all parts of England, Scotland for various reasons. But because of the enclosure acts that we're basically

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making common land restricted to ordinary people who used to be able to farm and feed themselves.

In the 19th century particularly, the national conversation-- whether it was in newspapers, whether it was in emigration propaganda literature so-called booster literature - there were articles, guide books, parliamentary debates, church sermons, songs, poems, paintings, all talking about emigration because this was how people saw the way to change their fortunes. And because it was such a big deal, I would say that virtually every family across the country was touched by migration, either because they themselves were contemplating it or because members had already gone.

And obviously, that's partly driven by poverty and persecution, war, all of those sorts of things, but it was also driven by opportunity. Because one of the big differences between migration today and British emigration in the past is a very large proportion of British emigration has been about colonising other parts of the world. It's not just about going and living according to the rules of the local people. It's about going to other lands, killing or subjugating indigenous people and taking over their land and exploiting resources. And whether you call that progress or development or civilization or whether you just call it downright exploitation, it certainly had a very profound impact on the political geography, on racial hierarchy...on you know, the way that we understand what is development and progress today have been profoundly shaped by this form of British emigration in the past.

So, when we talk about emigration history and we talk about a lot of the expectations of people, those were made possible because Britain had created an empire. There were places to go to.

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Paul: You've given us a really powerful perspective on historic emigration from Britain, but this National Archives series on migration is focused on the 20th century. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about the trends in emigration from Britain in the 20th century?

Mukti: Again, that's a huge question. But I think most people have a better understanding of 20th century emigration because most people living in Britain today will have direct family experience of that. They will have grandfathers, great-grandparents who were part of that migration to places like Australia or Canada or to work in the then still empire countries of India, for example, countries across Africa. So, certainly, for the first half of the 20th century, that emigration was still about the legacy of empire and colonisation.

When we look at post-war migration, obviously, with a lot of the countries that previously had been part of the empire becoming independent, some of that emigration changed. But even to this day, we can still see that British emigration rates are amongst the highest in the world and probably the highest bar a couple of other countries in the developed world. So, we still have hundreds of thousands of people leaving the shores every year for at least 12 months and often permanently to go and settle in other parts of the world and a lot of the choices that they make are directly related to that emigration history of the past. So, why is the top choice likely to be Australia or New Zealand or Canada? These are countries that are English speaking. They have a familiarity about them.

Today, the people who leave are probably not poor and desperate in the way that they were in the 17th or even up to the 19th and early 20th century. They are people who are leaving because they want adventure, because they want better opportunities and a better lifestyle. So there are themes of continuity. There are themes which are very different.

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The way that a lot of people who experienced forced migration and this is a feature of lots of emigration stories but certainly British emigration history is that not everybody went voluntarily. British emigration was responsible for the forced migration of hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans, for example, and indentured servants who were not far behind the way they were treated, who were also taken from parts of Asia, particularly India, what we know now as the Indian subcontinent - to the Caribbean to take over the jobs that African slaves were no longer doing.

There are many, many stories which carried on into the 20th century. And I would argue and I think many people would argue we're still seeing the legacy of those forced migrations today.

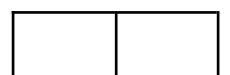
But there are also, as ever, lots of very positive stories of cultural exchange, of positive human encounters, of the exchange of information of ideas, all of that as well. So we shouldn't only see it in terms of exploitation. We should also be aware that whenever two people from different communities come together, there is a possibility of something positive and creative coming out of that. And that is just as interesting to explore in this history.

[Outro music]

Katherine: Thanks for listening to On the Record, a production of The National Archives at Kew.

For more stories about migration, check out our earlier episode, "Refugee Stories," and of course, make sure to listen to the entire Departures series from the Migration Museum, which you can find wherever you get your podcasts by searching for 'Departures 400 years of British Emigration from Britain.'

Paul: In the next episode of our series on migration, we'll hear about two different migration experiences shaped by the British Nationality Act of 1948. First, we'll use our records to learn more



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about the arrival of the S.S. Empire Windrush and the early years of the Windrush generation. Then we'll hear a later migration story from the 1960s, of a young man who leaves Pakistan for England searching for adventure and freedom.

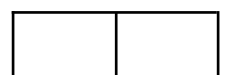
Katherine: If you're interested in locating records on immigration in our collection, you can start with our research guide, which can be found with our other research guides on our website, nationalarchives.gov.uk. Just select "Help with your research" at the top of our homepage to start browsing our set of research guides.

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Paul: Thank you to all the experts who contributed to this episode, with special thanks to Mukti Jain Campion, Presenter and Producer of the Departures podcast. This episode was written, edited, and produced by Hannah Hethmon for Better Lemon Creative Audio.

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