



JOHN KENT: BRITAIN'S FIRST BLACK POLICEMAN

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John Kent's police career ran between 1835 to 1846 during the reign of Queen Victoria.

His father Thomas was a slave in Calder Abbey. Thomas was eventually freed, got married and settled in Carlisle. John was the youngest of three children. He was brought up in Carlisle and was employed as a constable at Maryport.

John distinguished himself as a police officer, rising in stature due to his diligence. At Maryport John was noted several times for saving the life of his police colleagues. On one occasion he was threatened by three men, one wielding a knife. John singularly disarmed and arrested all three.

Policemen also served as the fire service. John was reputed to have earned more reward money than his peers as a firefighter – a clear sign of the commitment to his duty.

He was referred locally in the streets as 'Black Kent' and was well known to the community in Carlisle. John died at the age of 81 years of peritonitis. The local newspapers printed eulogies, one headed: 'The Death of a Carlisle Notable'.