

= Mary Seacole =

Mary Jane Seacole ( née Grant ; 1805 ? 14 May 1881 ) was a Jamaican woman of Scottish and African descent who set up a " British Hotel " behind the lines during the Crimean War . She described this as " a mess @-@ table and comfortable quarters for sick and convalescent officers " , and provided succour for wounded servicemen on the battlefield . She was posthumously awarded the Jamaican Order of Merit in 1991 . In 2004 she was voted the greatest black Briton .

She acquired knowledge of herbal medicine in the Caribbean . When the Crimean War broke out , she applied to the War Office to assist but was refused . She travelled independently and set up her hotel and assisted battlefield wounded . She became extremely popular among service personnel who raised money for her when she faced destitution after the war .

After her death , she was forgotten for almost a century , but today is celebrated as a woman who successfully combatted racial prejudice . Her biography , *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* ( 1857 ) , is one of the earliest autobiographies of a mixed @-@ race woman , although some aspects of its accuracy have been questioned . It has been claimed that Seacole 's achievements have been exaggerated for political reasons . The erection of a statue of her at St Thomas ' Hospital , London on 30 June 2016 , describing her as a " pioneer nurse " , has generated controversy . Further controversy broke out in the United Kingdom late in 2012 over reports of a proposal to remove her from the country 's National Curriculum .

= = Early life , 1805 ? 25 = =

Mary Seacole was born Mary Jane Grant in Kingston , Jamaica , the daughter of James Grant a Scottish soldier in the British Army , a Lieutenant , and a free Jamaican woman . Her mother was a " doctress " , a healer who used traditional Caribbean and African herbal remedies . She ran Blundell Hall , a boarding house at 7 East Street , considered one of the best hotels in all Kingston . Here Seacole acquired her nursing skills . Seacole 's autobiography states that her early experiments in medicine were based on what she learned from her mother while ministering to a doll , then progressing to pets , before helping her mother treat humans .

Seacole was proud of her Scottish ancestry and called herself a Creole , a term that was commonly used in a racially neutral sense or to refer to the children of white settlers with indigenous women . In her autobiography , *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole* , she records her bloodline thus : " I am a Creole , and have good Scots blood coursing through my veins . My father was a soldier of an old Scottish family . " Legally , she was classified as a mulatto , a multiracial person with limited political rights ; Robinson speculates that she may technically have been a quadroon . Seacole emphasises her personal vigour in her autobiography , distancing herself from the contemporary stereotype of the " lazy Creole " , She was proud of her black ancestry , writing , " I have a few shades of deeper brown upon my skin which shows me related - and I am proud of the relationship - to those poor mortals whom you once held enslaved , and whose bodies America still owns . "

The West Indies were an outpost of the British Empire in the late 18th century , and in the 1790s one @-@ third of Britain 's foreign trade was with the British West Indies . Britain 's economic interests were protected by a massive military presence , with 69 line infantry regiments serving there between 1793 and 1801 , and another 24 between 1803 and 1815 .

Seacole spent some years in the household of an elderly woman , whom she called her " kind patroness " , before returning to her mother . She was treated as a member of her patroness 's family and received a good education . As the educated daughter of a Scottish officer and a free black woman with a respectable business , Seacole would have held a high position in Jamaican society .

In about 1821 , Seacole visited London , stayed for a year , and visited relatives , the merchant Henriques family . Although London had a number of black people , she records that a companion , a West Indian with skin darker than her own " dusky " shades , was taunted by children . Seacole herself was " only a little brown " , nearly white according to Ramdin . She returned to London approximately a year later , bringing a " large stock of West Indian pickles and preserves for sale " .

Her later travels would be as an " unprotected " woman , without a chaperone or sponsor ? an unusual practice . Seacole returned to Jamaica in 1825 .

= = In the Caribbean , 1826 ? 51 = =

After returning to Jamaica , Seacole nursed her " old indulgent patroness " through an illness , finally returning to the family home at Blundell Hall after the death of her patroness a few years later . Seacole then worked alongside her mother , occasionally being called to assist at the British Army hospital at Up @-@ Park Camp . Dure Caribbean , visiting the British colony of New Providence in The Bahamas , the Spanish colony of Cuba , and the new republic of Haiti . Seacole records these travels , but omits mention of significant current events , such as the Christmas Rebellion in Jamaica of 1831 , the partial abolition of slavery in 1834 , and the full abolition of slavery in 1838 .

She married Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole in Kingston on 10 November 1836 . Her marriage , from betrothal to widowhood , is described in just nine lines at the conclusion of the first chapter of her autobiography . His middle names are intriguing : Robinson reports the legend in the Seacole family that Edwin was an illegitimate son of Horatio Nelson , 1st Viscount Nelson and his mistress Emma , Lady Hamilton , who was adopted by Thomas , a local " surgeon , apothecary and man midwife " ( Seacole 's will indicates that Horatio Seacole was Nelson 's godson : she left a diamond ring to her friend , Lord Rokeby , " given to my late husband by his godfather Viscount Nelson " , but there was no mention of this godson in Nelson 's own will or its codicils . ) Edwin was a merchant and seems to have had a poor constitution . The newly married couple moved to Black River and opened a provisions store which failed to prosper . They returned to Blundell Hall in the early 1840s .

During 1843 and 1844 , Seacole suffered a series of personal disasters . She and her family lost much of the boarding house in a fire in Kingston on 29 August 1843 . Blundell Hall burned down , and was replaced by New Blundell Hall , which was described as " better than before " . Then her husband died in October 1844 , followed by her mother . After a period of grief , in which Seacole says she did not stir for days , she composed herself , " turned a bold front to fortune " , and assumed the management of her mother 's hotel . She put her rapid recovery down to her hot Creole blood , blunting the " sharp edge of [ her ] grief " sooner than Europeans who she thought " nurse their woe secretly in their hearts " . She absorbed herself in work , declining many offers of marriage . She later became widely known and respected , particularly among the European military visitors to Jamaica who often stayed at Blundell Hall . She treated patients in the cholera epidemic of 1850 , which killed some 32 @,@ 000 Jamaicans . Seacole attributed the outbreak to infection brought on a steamer from New Orleans , Louisiana , demonstrating knowledge of contagion theory . This first @-@ hand experience would benefit her during the next five years .

= = In Central America , 1851 ? 54 = =

In 1850 , Seacole 's half @-@ brother Edward moved to Cruces , Panama , which was then part of New Granada . There , approximately 45 miles ( 72 km ) up the Chagres River from the coast , he followed the family trade by establishing the Independent Hotel to accommodate the many travellers between the eastern and western coasts of the United States ( the number of travellers had increased enormously , as part of the 1849 California Gold Rush ) . Cruces was the limit of navigability of the Chagres River during the rainy season , which lasts from June to December . Travellers would ride on donkeys approximately 20 miles ( 32 km ) along the Las Cruces trail from Panama City on the Pacific Ocean coast to Cruces , and then 45 miles ( 72 km ) down @-@ river to the Atlantic Ocean at Chagres ( or vice versa ) . In the dry season , the river subsided , and travellers would switch from land to the river a few miles farther downstream , at Gorgona Most of these settlements have now been submerged by Gatun Lake , formed as part of the Panama Canal .

In 1851 , Seacole travelled to Cruces to visit her brother . Shortly after her arrival , the town was struck by cholera , a disease which had reached Panama in 1849 . Seacole was on hand to treat the

first victim , who survived , which established Seacole 's reputation and brought her a succession of patients as the infection spread . The rich paid , but she treated the poor for free . Many , both rich and poor , succumbed . She eschewed opium , preferring mustard rubs and poultices , the laxative calomel ( mercuric chloride ) , sugars of lead ( lead ( II ) acetate ) , and rehydration with water boiled with cinnamon . While her preparations had moderate success , she faced little competition , the only other treatments coming from a " timid little dentist " , who was an inexperienced doctor sent by the Panamanian government , and the Roman Catholic Church .

The epidemic raged through the population . Seacole later expressed exasperation at their feeble resistance , claiming they " bowed down before the plague in slavish despair " . She performed an autopsy on an orphan child for whom she had cared , which gave her " decidedly useful " new knowledge . Towards the end of the epidemic , Seacole herself sickened but survived . Cholera was to return again : Ulysses S. Grant passed through Cruces in July , 1852 , on military duty ; a hundred and twenty men , a third of his party , died of the disease there or shortly afterwards en route to Panama City .

Despite the problems of disease and climate , Panama remained the favoured route between the coasts of the United States . Seeing a business opportunity , Seacole opened the British Hotel , which was a restaurant rather than an hotel . She described it as a " tumble down hut , " with two rooms , the smaller one to be her bedroom , the larger one to serve up to 50 diners . She soon added the services of a barber .

As the wet season ended in early 1852 , Seacole joined other traders in Cruces in packing up to move to Gorgona . She records a white American giving a speech at a leaving dinner in which he wished that " God bless the best yaller woman he ever made " and asked the listeners to join with him in rejoicing that " she 's so many shades removed from being entirely black " . He went on to say that " if we could bleach her by any means we would [ ... ] and thus make her acceptable in any company [ , ] as she deserves to be " . Seacole replied firmly that she did not " appreciate your friend 's kind wishes with respect to my complexion . If it had been as dark as any nigger 's , I should have been just as happy and just as useful , and as much respected by those whose respect I value . " She declined the offer of " bleaching " and drank " to you and the general reformation of American manners " . Salih notes the use of American pidgin , against Seacole 's clear English , as representational of a supposed white moral and intellectual superiority . Seacole also comments on the positions of responsibility taken on by escaped American slaves in Panama , as well as in the priesthood , the army , and public offices , commenting that " it is wonderful to see how freedom and equality elevate men " . She also records an antipathy between Panamanians and Americans , which she attributes in part to the fact that so many of the former had once been slaves of the latter .

In Gorgona , Seacole briefly ran a woman @-@ only hotel . In late 1852 , she travelled home to Jamaica . The journey was delayed and difficult when she encountered racial discrimination while trying to book passage on an American ship . She was forced to wait for a later British boat . In 1853 , soon after arriving home , Seacole was asked by the Jamaican medical authorities to minister to victims of a severe outbreak of yellow fever . She found that she could do little , because the epidemic was so severe . Her memoirs state that her own boarding house was full of sufferers and she saw many of them die . Although she wrote , " I was sent for by the medical authorities to provide nurses for the sick at Up @-@ Park Camp , " she did not claim to bring nurses with her when she went . She left her sister with some nurses at her house , went to the camp ( about a mile , or 1 @.@ 6 km , from Kingston ) , " and did my best , but it was little we could do to mitigate the severity of the epidemic . "

Seacole returned to Panama in early 1854 to finalise her business affairs , and three months later moved to the New Granada Mining Gold Company establishment at Fort Bowen Mine some 70 miles ( 110 km ) away near Escribanos . The superintendent , Thomas Day , was related to her late husband . Seacole had read newspaper reports of the outbreak of war against Russia before she left Jamaica , and news of the escalating Crimean War reached her in Panama . She determined to travel to England to volunteer as a nurse , to experience the " pomp , pride and circumstance of glorious war " as she described it in Chapter I of her autobiography .

= = Crimean War , 1854 ? 56 = =

The Crimean War lasted from October 1853 until 1 April 1856 and was fought between the Russian Empire and an alliance of the United Kingdom , France , the Kingdom of Sardinia , and the Ottoman Empire . The majority of the conflict took place on the Crimean peninsula in the Black Sea and Turkey .

Many thousands of troops from all the countries involved were drafted to the area , and disease broke out almost immediately . Hundreds perished , mostly from cholera . Hundreds more would die waiting to be shipped out , or on the voyage . Their prospects were little better when they arrived at the poorly staffed , unsanitary and overcrowded hospitals which were the only medical provision for the wounded . In Britain , a trenchant letter in The Times on 14 October triggered Sidney Herbert , Secretary of State for War , to approach Florence Nightingale to form a detachment of nurses to be sent to the hospital to save lives . Interviews were quickly held , suitable candidates selected , and Nightingale left for Turkey on 21 October .

Seacole travelled from Navy Bay in Panama to England , initially to deal with her investments in gold @-@ mining businesses . She then attempted to join the second contingent of nurses to the Crimea . She applied to the War Office and other government offices , but arrangements for departure were already underway . In her memoir , she wrote that she brought " ample testimony " of her experience in nursing , but the only example officially cited was that of a former medical officer of the West Granada Gold @-@ Mining Company . She also applied to the Crimean Fund , a fund raised by public subscription to support the wounded in Crimea , for sponsorship to travel there , but she again met with refusal .

Seacole finally resolved to travel to Crimea using her own resources and to open the British Hotel . Business cards were printed and sent ahead to announce her intention to open an establishment , to be called the " British Hotel " , near Balaclava , which would be " a mess @-@ table and comfortable quarters for sick and convalescent officers " . Shortly afterwards , her Caribbean acquaintance , Thomas Day , arrived unexpectedly in London , and the two formed a partnership . They assembled a stock of supplies , and Seacole embarked on the Dutch screw @-@ steamer Hollander on 27 January 1855 on its maiden voyage , to Constantinople . The ship called at Malta , where Seacole encountered a doctor who had recently left Scutari . He wrote her a letter of introduction to Nightingale .

Seacole visited Nightingale at the Barrack Hospital in Scutari , where she asked for a bed for the night , because she intended to travel to Balaclava the next day to join her business partner . In her memoirs , she reported that her meeting with Nightingale was friendly , with Nightingale asking " What do you want , Mrs. Seacole ? Anything we can do for you ? If it lies in my power , I shall be very happy . " Seacole told her of her " dread of the night journey by caique " and the improbability of being able to find the Hollander in the dark . A bed was then found for her and breakfast sent her in the morning , with a " kind message " from Mrs. Bracebridge , Nightingale 's helper . A footnote in the memoir states that Seacole subsequently " saw much of Miss Nightingale at Balaclava , " but no further meetings are recorded in the text .

After transferring most of her stores to the transport ship Albatross , with the remainder following on the Nonpareil , she set out on the four @-@ day voyage to the British bridgehead into Crimea at Balaclava .

Lacking proper building materials , Seacole gathered abandoned metal and wood in her spare moments , with a view to using the debris to build her hotel . She found a site for the hotel at a place she christened Spring Hill , near Kadikoi , some 3 ½ miles ( 5 @. @ 6 km ) along the main British supply road from Balaclava to the British camp near Sevastopol , and within a mile of the British headquarters .

The hotel was built from the salvaged driftwood , packing cases , iron sheets , and salvaged architectural items such as glass doors and window @-@ frames , from the village of Kamara , using hired local labour . The new British Hotel opened in March 1855 . An early visitor was Alexis Soyer , a noted French chef who had travelled to Crimea to help improve the diet of British soldiers .

He records meeting Seacole in his 1857 work *A Culinary Campaign* and describes Seacole as " an old dame of a jovial appearance , but a few shades darker than the white lily " . Seacole requested Soyer 's advice on how to manage her business , and was advised to concentrate on food and beverage service , and not to have beds for visitors because the few either slept on board ships in the harbour or in tents in the camp .

The hotel was completed in July at a total cost of £ 800 . It included a building made of iron , containing a main room with counters and shelves and storage above , an attached kitchen , two wooden sleeping huts , outhouses , and an enclosed stable @-@ yard . The building was stocked with provisions shipped from London and Constantinople , as well as local purchases from the British camp near Kadikoi and the French camp at nearby Kamiesch . Seacole sold anything -- " from a needle to an anchor " ? to army officers and visiting sightseers . Meals were served at the Hotel , cooked by two black cooks , and the kitchen also provided outside catering .

Despite constant thefts , particularly of livestock , Seacole 's establishment prospered . Chapter XIV of *Wonderful Adventures* describes the meals and supplies provided to officers . They were closed at 8 pm daily and on Sundays . Seacole did some of the cooking herself : " Whenever I had a few leisure moments , I used to wash my hands , roll up my sleeves , and roll out pastry . " When called to " dispense medications , " she did so . Soyer was a frequent visitor , and praised Seacole 's offerings , noting that she offered him champagne on his first visit . The Special Correspondent of *The Times* newspaper wrote approvingly of her work : " ... Mrs. Seacole ... doctors and cures all manner of men with extraordinary success . She is always in attendance near the battle @-@ field to aid the wounded , and has earned many a poor fellow 's blessings . "

To Soyer , near the time of departure , Florence Nightingale acknowledged favourable views of Seacole , consistent with their one known meeting in Scutari . Soyer 's remarks ? he knew both women ? show pleasantness on both sides . Seacole told him of her encounter with Nightingale at the Barrack Hospital : " You must know , M Soyer , that Miss Nightingale is very fond of me . When I passed through Scutari , she very kindly gave me board and lodging . " When he related Seacole 's inquiries to Nightingale , she replied " with a smile : ' I should like to see her before she leaves , as I hear she has done a deal of good for the poor soldiers . ' " Nightingale , however , did not want her nurses associating with Seacole , as she wrote to her brother @-@ in @-@ law .

Seacole often went out to the troops as a sutler , selling her provisions near the British camp at Kadikoi , and attending to casualties brought out from the trenches around Sevastopol or from the Tchernaya valley . She was widely known to the British Army as " Mother Seacole " .

Apart from serving officers at the British Hotel , Seacole also provided catering for spectators at the battles , and spent time on Cathcart 's Hill , some 3 ½ miles ( 5 @.@ 6 km ) north of the British Hotel , as an observer . On one occasion , attending wounded troops under fire , she dislocated her right thumb , an injury which never healed entirely . In a dispatch written on 14 September 1855 , William Howard Russell , special correspondent of *The Times* , wrote that she was a " warm and successful physician , who doctors and cures all manner of men with extraordinary success . She is always in attendance near the battle @-@ field to aid the wounded and has earned many a poor fellow 's blessing . " Russell also wrote that she " redeemed the name of sutler " , and another that she was " both a Miss Nightingale and a [ chef ] " . Seacole made a point of wearing brightly coloured , and highly conspicuous , clothing ? often bright blue , or yellow , with ribbons in contrasting colours . While Lady Alicia Blackwood later recalled that Seacole had " ... personally spared no pains and no exertion to visit the field of woe , and minister with her own hands such things as could comfort or alleviate the suffering of those around her ; freely giving to such as could not pay ... " .

In late August , Seacole was on the route to Cathcart 's Hill for the final assault on Sevastopol on 7 September 1855 . French troops led the storming , but the British were beaten back . By dawn on Sunday 9 September , the city was burning out of control , and it was clear that it had fallen : the Russians retreated to fortifications to the north of the harbour . Later in the day , Seacole fulfilled a bet , and became the first British woman to enter Sevastopol after it fell . Having obtained a pass , she toured the broken town , bearing refreshments and visiting the crowded hospital by the docks , containing thousands of dead and dying Russians . Her foreign appearance led to her being stopped by French looters , but she was rescued by a passing officer . She looted some items from

the city , including a church bell , an altar candle , and a three @-@ metre ( 10 ft ) long painting of the Madonna .

After the fall of Sevastopol , hostilities continued in a desultory fashion . The business of Seacole and Day prospered in the interim period , with the officers taking the opportunity to enjoy themselves in the quieter days . There were theatrical performances and horse @-@ racing events for which Seacole provided catering .

Seacole was joined by a 14 @-@ year @-@ old girl , Sarah , also known as Sally . Soyer described her as " the Egyptian beauty , Mrs Seacole 's daughter Sarah " , with blue eyes and dark hair . Nightingale alleged that Sarah was the illegitimate offspring of Seacole and Colonel Henry Bunbury . However , there is no evidence that Bunbury met Seacole , or even visited Jamaica , at a time when she would have been nursing her ailing husband . Ramdin speculates that Thomas Day could have been Sarah 's father , pointing to the unlikely coincidences of their meeting in Panama and then in England , and their unusual business partnership in Crimea .

Peace talks began in Paris in early 1856 , and friendly relations opened between the Allies and the Russians , with a lively trade across the River Tchernaya . The Treaty of Paris was signed on 30 March 1856 , after which the soldiers left Crimea . Seacole was in a difficult financial position , her business was full of unsalable provisions , new goods were arriving daily , and creditors were demanding payment . She attempted to sell as much as possible before the soldiers left , but she was forced to auction many expensive goods for lower @-@ than @-@ expected prices to the Russians who were returning to their homes . The evacuation of the Allied armies was formally completed at Balaclava on 9 July 1856 , with Seacole " ... conspicuous in the foreground ... dressed in a plaid riding @-@ habit ... " . Seacole was one of the last to leave Crimea , returning to England " poorer than [ she ] left it " .

Her contribution to the welfare of the British troops in the Crimea is summed up by sociology professor Lynn McDonald :

" Mary Seacole , although never the ' black British nurse ' she is claimed to have been , was a successful mixed @-@ race immigrant to Britain . She led an adventurous life , and her memoir of 1857 is still a lively read . She was kind and generous . She made friends of her customers , army and navy officers , who came to her rescue with a fund when she was declared bankrupt . While her cures have been vastly exaggerated , she doubtless did what she could to ease suffering , when no effective cures existed . In epidemics pre @-@ Crimea , she said a comforting word to the dying and closed the eyes of the dead . During the Crimean War , probably her greatest kindness was to serve hot tea and lemonade to cold , suffering soldiers awaiting transport to hospital on the wharf at Balaclava . She deserves much credit for rising to the occasion , but her tea and lemonade did not save lives , pioneer nursing or advance health care . "

= = Back in London , 1856 ? 60 = =

After the end of the war , Seacole returned to England destitute and in poor health . In the conclusion to her autobiography , she records that she " took the opportunity " to visit " yet other lands " on her return journey , although Robinson attributes this to her impecunious state requiring a roundabout trip . She arrived in August 1856 , and considered setting up shop with Day in Aldershot , Hampshire , but nothing materialised . She attended a celebratory dinner for 2 @, @ 000 soldiers at Royal Surrey Gardens in Kennington on 25 August 1856 , at which Nightingale was chief guest of honour . Reports in The Times on 26 August and News of the World on 31 August indicate that Seacole was also fêted by the huge crowds , with two " burly " sergeants protecting her from the pressure of the crowd . However , creditors who had supplied her firm in Crimea were in pursuit . She was forced to move to 1 , Tavistock Street , Covent Garden in increasingly dire financial straits . The Bankruptcy Court in Basinghall Street declared her bankrupt on 7 November 1856 . Robinson speculates that Seacole 's business problems may have been caused in part by her partner , Day , who dabbled in horse trading and may have set up as an unofficial bank , cashing debts .

At about this time , Seacole began to wear military medals . These are mentioned in an account of her appearance in the bankruptcy court in November 1856 . A bust by George Kelly , based on an

original by Count Gleichen from around 1871 , depicts her wearing four medals , three of which have been identified as the British Crimea Medal , the French Légion d'honneur and the Turkish Order of the Medjidie medal . Robinson says that one is " apparently " a Sardinian award ( Sardinia having joined Britain and France in supporting Turkey against Russia in the war ) . The Jamaican Daily Gleaner stated in her obituary on 9 June 1881 that she had also received a Russian medal , but it has not been identified . However , no formal notice of her award exists in the London Gazette , and it seems unlikely that Seacole was formally rewarded for her actions in Crimea ; rather , she may have bought miniature or " dress " medals to display her support and affection for her " sons " in the Army .

Seacole 's plight was highlighted in the British press . As a consequence a fund was set up , to which many prominent people donated money , and on 30 January 1857 , she and Day were granted certificates discharging them from bankruptcy . Day left for the Antipodes to seek new opportunities , but Seacole 's funds remained low . She moved from Tavistock Street to cheaper lodgings at 14 Soho Square in early 1857 , triggering a plea for subscriptions from Punch on 2 May .

Further fund @-@ raising kept Seacole in the public eye . In May 1857 she wanted to travel to India , to minister to the wounded of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 , but she was dissuaded by both the new Secretary of War , Lord Panmure , and her financial troubles . Fund @-@ raising activities included the " Seacole Fund Grand Military Festival " , which was held at the Royal Surrey Gardens , from Monday 27 July to Thursday 30 July 1857 . This successful event was supported by many military men , including Major General Lord Rokeby ( who had commanded the 1st Division in Crimea ) and Lord George Paget ; over 1 @,@ 000 artists performed , including 11 military bands and an orchestra conducted by Louis Antoine Jullien , which was attended by a crowd of circa 40 @,@ 000 . The one @-@ shilling entrance charge was quintupled for the first night , and halved for the Tuesday performance . However , production costs had been high and the Royal Surrey Gardens Company was itself having financial problems . It became insolvent immediately after the festival , and as a result Seacole only received £ 57 , one quarter of the profits from the event . When eventually the financial affairs of the ruined Company were resolved , in March 1858 , the Indian Mutiny was over .

A 200 @-@ page autobiographical account of her travels was published in July 1857 by James Blackwood as *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* , the first autobiography written by a black woman in Britain . Priced at one shilling and six pence ( 1 / 6 ) a copy , the cover bears a striking portrait of Seacole in red , yellow and black ink . Robinson speculates that she dictated the work to an editor , identified in the book only as W.J.S. , who improved her grammar and orthography . In the work Seacole deals with the first 39 years of her life in one short chapter . She then expends six chapters on her few years in Panama , before using the following 12 chapters to detail her exploits in Crimea . She avoids mention of the names of her parents and precise date of birth . A short final " Conclusion " deals with her return to England , and lists supporters of her fund @-@ raising effort , including Rokeby , Prince Edward of Saxe @-@ Weimar , the Duke of Wellington , the Duke of Newcastle , William Russell , and other prominent men in the military . The book was dedicated to Major @-@ General Lord Rokeby , commander of the First Division ; and William Howard Russell wrote as a preface , " I have witnessed her devotion and her courage ... and I trust that England will never forget one who has nursed her sick , who sought out her wounded to aid and succour them and who performed the last offices for some of her illustrious dead . "

= = Later life , 1860 ? 81 = =

Seacole had joined the Roman Catholic Church circa 1860 , and returned to a Jamaica changed in her absence as it faced economic downturn . She became a prominent figure in the country . However , by 1867 she was again running short of money , and the Seacole fund was resurrected in London , with illustrious new patrons , including the Prince of Wales , the Duke of Edinburgh , the Duke of Cambridge , and many other senior military officers . The fund burgeoned , and Seacole was able to buy land on Duke Street in Kingston , near New Blundell Hall , where she built a

bungalow as her new home , plus a larger property to rent out .

By 1870 , Seacole was back in London , and Robinson speculates that she was drawn back by the prospect of rendering medical assistance in the Franco @-@ Prussian War . It seems likely that she approached Sir Harry Verney ( the husband of Florence Nightingale 's sister Parthenope ) Member of Parliament for Buckingham who was closely involved in the British National Society for the Relief of the Sick and Wounded . It was at this time Nightingale wrote her letter to Verney insinuating that Seacole had kept a " bad house " in Crimea , and was responsible for " much drunkenness and improper conduct " .

In London , Seacole joined the periphery of the royal circle . Prince Victor of Hohenlohe @-@ Langenburg ( a nephew of Queen Victoria ; as a young Lieutenant he had been one of Seacole 's customers in Crimea ) carved a marble bust of her in 1871 that was exhibited at the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1872 . Seacole also became personal masseuse to the Princess of Wales who suffered with white leg and rheumatism .

Seacole died in 1881 at her home in Paddington , London , the cause of death was noted as " apoplexy " . She left an estate valued at over £ 2 @,@ 500 . After some specific legacies , many of exactly 19 guineas , the main beneficiary of her will was her sister , ( Eliza ) Louisa . Lord Rokeby , Colonel Hussey Fane Keane , and Count Gleichen ( three trustees of her Fund ) were each left £ 50 ; Count Gleichen also received a diamond ring , said to have been given to Seacole ? s late husband by Lord Nelson . A short obituary was published in The Times on 21 May 1881 . She was buried in St. Mary 's Roman Catholic Cemetery , Harrow Road , Kensal Green , London .

= = Recognition = =

While well @-@ known at the end of her life , Seacole rapidly faded from public memory . Her work in Crimea was overshadowed by Florence Nightingale 's for many years . However , in recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in her and efforts to properly acknowledge her achievements . Seacole has become a case study of racial attitudes and social injustices in Britain in the nineteenth century . She was cited as an example of " hidden " black history in Salman Rushdie 's The Satanic Verses , like Olaudah Equiano : " See , here is Mary Seacole , who did as much in the Crimea as another magic @-@ lamping lady , but , being dark , could scarce be seen for the flame of Florence 's candle . "

She has been better remembered in the Caribbean , where she was posthumously awarded the Jamaican Order of Merit in 1991 . The headquarters of the Jamaican General Trained Nurses ' Association was christened " Mary Seacole House " in 1954 , followed quickly by the naming of a hall of residence of the University of the West Indies in Mona , Jamaica . A ward at Kingston Public Hospital was also named in her memory . Her grave was rediscovered in 1973 ; a service of reconsecration was held on 20 November 1973 , and her impressive gravestone was also restored by the British Commonwealth Nurses ' War Memorial Fund and the Lignum Vitae Club . The centenary of her death was celebrated with a memorial service on 14 May 1981 . An English Heritage blue plaque was erected by the Greater London Council at her residence in 157 George Street , Westminster , on 9 March 1985 , but it was removed in 1998 before the site was redeveloped . A " green plaque " was unveiled at 147 George Street , in Westminster , on 11 October 2005 . However , another blue plaque has since been positioned at 14 Soho Square , where she lived in 1857 .

By the 21st century , Seacole was much more prominent . Several buildings and entities , mainly connected with health care , were named after her . In 2005 , Boris Johnson ( former Mayor of London , then editor of The Spectator ) wrote of learning about Seacole from his daughter 's school pageant and speculated : " I find myself facing the grim possibility that it was my own education that was blinkered . " In 2007 Seacole was introduced into the National Curriculum , and her life story is taught at many primary schools in the UK alongside that of Florence Nightingale .

She was voted into first place in an online poll of 100 Great Black Britons in 2004 . The portrait identified as Seacole in 2005 was used for one of ten first @-@ class stamps showing important Britons , to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the National Portrait Gallery .



British buildings and organisations now commemorate her by name . One of the first was the Mary Seacole Centre for Nursing Practice at Thames Valley University , which created the NHS Specialist Library for Ethnicity and Health , a web @-@ based collection of research @-@ based evidence and good practice information relating to the health needs of minority ethnic groups , and other resources relevant to multi @-@ cultural health care . There is another Mary Seacole Research Centre , this one at De Montfort University in Leicester , and a problem @-@ based learning room at St George 's , University of London is named after her . Brunel University in West London houses its School of Health Sciences and Social Care in the Mary Seacole Building . New buildings at the University of Salford and Birmingham City University bear her name , as does part of the new headquarters of the Home Office at 2 Marsham Street . There is a Mary Seacole ward in the Douglas Bader Centre in Roehampton . There are two wards named after Mary Seacole in Whittington Hospital in North London .

An annual prize to recognise and develop leadership in nurses , midwives and health visitors in the National Health Service was named Seacole , to " acknowledge her achievements " . An exhibition to celebrate the bicentenary of her birth opened at the Florence Nightingale Museum in London in March 2005 . Originally scheduled to last for a few months , the exhibition was so popular that it was extended to March 2007 .

A campaign to erect a statue of Seacole in London was launched on 24 November 2003 , chaired by Clive Soley , Baron Soley . The design of the sculpture , which is planned to be erected in the grounds of St Thomas ' Hospital , was announced on 18 June 2009 . There was significant opposition to the siting of the statue , but it was unveiled on 30 June 2016 . A feature film is being made of her life by Seacole Pictures . A short animation about Mary Seacole was adapted from a book entitled Mother Seacole , published in 2005 as part of the bicentenary celebrations . Seacole is featured in BBC 's Horrible Histories , where she is portrayed by Dominique Moore .

A two @-@ dimensional sculpture of Seacole was erected in Paddington in 2013 .

= = = Controversies = = =

Seacole 's recognition has provoked a reaction . It has been argued that she has been promoted at the expense of Florence Nightingale , and in an attempt to promote multiculturalism . Professor Lynn McDonald has written that " ... support for Seacole has been used to attack Nightingale 's reputation as a pioneer in public health and nursing . " There was opposition to the siting of a statue of Mary Seacole at St Thomas ' Hospital on the grounds that she had no connection with this institution , whereas Florence Nightingale did . Dr Sean Lang has stated that she " does not qualify as a mainstream figure in the history of nursing " , while a letter to the Times from the Florence Nightingale Society and signed by members including historians and biographers asserted that " Seacole 's battlefield excursions ... took place post @-@ battle , after selling wine and sandwiches to spectators . Mrs Seacole was a kind and generous businesswoman , but was not a frequenter of the battlefield " under fire " or a pioneer of nursing . " An article by Lynn McDonald in the Times Literary Supplement asked " How did Mary Seacole come to be viewed as a pioneer of modern nursing ? " , comparing her unfavourably with Kofoworola Pratt who was the first black nurse in the NHS , and concluded " She deserves much credit for rising to the occasion , but her tea and lemonade did not save lives , pioneer nursing or advance health care " .

Seacole 's name appears in an appendix to the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum , as an example of a significant Victorian historical figure . There is no requirement that teachers include Seacole in their lessons . At the end of 2012 it was reported that Mary Seacole was to be removed from the National Curriculum . Opposing this , Greg Jenner , historical consultant to Horrible Histories , has stated that while her medical achievements have been exaggerated , removing Seacole from the curriculum would be a mistake . While Peter Hitchens has argued that Seacole 's accomplishments have been exaggerated because anybody who put a contrary view was afraid to be accused of racism , both Jenner and Hugh Muir have asserted that this is not the case . Susan Sheridan has argued that the leaked proposal to remove Seacole from the National Curriculum is part of " a concentration solely on large @-@ scale political and military history and a fundamental shift away

from social history . " In The Daily Telegraph , Cathy Newman argues that Michael Gove 's plans for the new history curriculum " could mean the only women children learn anything about will be queens " .

In January 2013 Operation Black Vote launched a petition to request Education Secretary Michael Gove to drop neither her nor Oludah Equiano from the National Curriculum Rev. Jesse Jackson and others wrote a letter to The Times protesting against the mooted removal of Mary Seacole from the National Curriculum . This was declared successful on 8 February 2013 , after approximately 35 @ , @ 000 signatures forced Michael Gove to concede .