



## **Daphne Steele**

**Guyanese nurse and midwife who was a pioneering Black matron in the NHS.**

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Daphne Steele (1927 to 2004), described as a ‘quiet revolutionary’, made history by becoming the first Black matron in the National Health Service in 1964.

Born in Essequibo County in Guyana (then British Guiana), South America, she arrived in the UK in 1951 (only 3 years after the NHS was formed) and trained in Balham, South London. After spending some time in the United States, she returned to the UK and worked in the NHS.

Daphne has been honoured with a blue plaque on Hillside Court in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, formerly known as St Winifred’s Nursing Home.



## Honouring Daphne

In 2001, Daphne received official recognition of her professional achievement when presented with an award from the Guyanese High Commission, a moment which she described as ‘smashing’.

In 2002, she carried the Queen’s Jubilee relay baton in Shipley to mark Queen Elizabeth II’s Golden Jubilee. Daphne commented that she was ‘mainly doing it for my community, but the fact that I come from a Commonwealth country is good’ (Ilkley Gazette, 27 June 2002).

Official recognition of her achievements from the Guyanese government meant a great deal to her and the Association of Guyanese Nurses and Allied Professionals (AGNAP) instituted an annual memorial lecture in her honour in 2014.

Over the last decade, Steele's role as a pioneering member of the Windrush Generation has become even better known. A plaque was erected by the [Nubian Jak Community Trust](#) at the site of St James's Hospital in Balham in 2018, and the new Health and Wellbeing Academy at the University of Huddersfield will be named after her, opening in 2024. An annual Daphne Steele Day has been inaugurated at St George's Hospital, Tooting, on her birthday.

Daphne's name was put forward for a Historic England Blue Plaque by Bradford Civic Society and Bradford Metropolitan District Council after local people named her as one of several inspirational local women through a community-led project called 'Bradford Lasses'.

