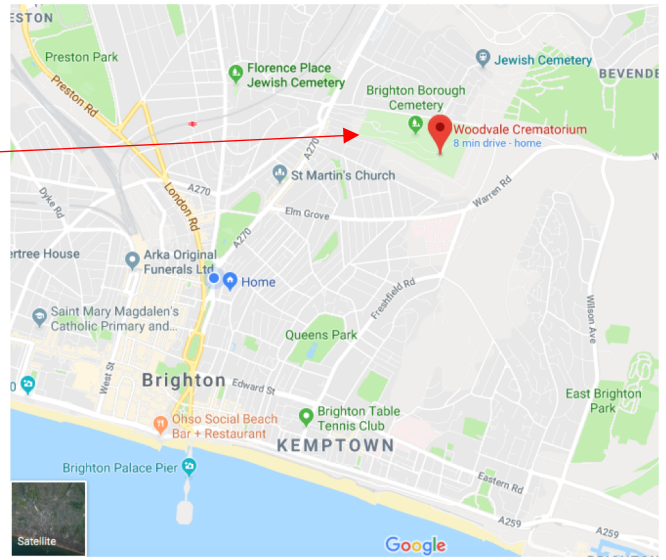
How should we remember this boy who mysteriously died in Brighton?



It all started when a council worker discovered a grave in Woodvale cemetery, Brighton



In Memory of Tom M.S. Highflyer.
Rescued from a slave dhow August 24, 1866
Baptised by his own request at Brighton March 30, 1870.
Died at Brighton June 20, 1870.
Supposed to be about 12 years old.
Jesus said Him that cometh unto me will be no wise cast out



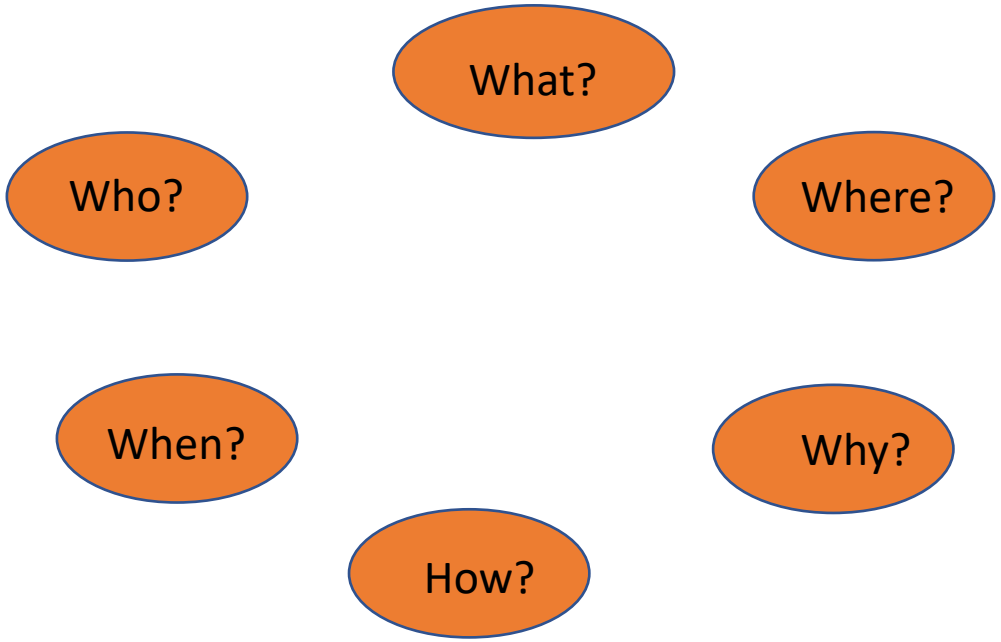
This is an expensive headstone and goes to the trouble of writing a lot about his life

- ***What can you infer from this headstone?***

Asking the right questions

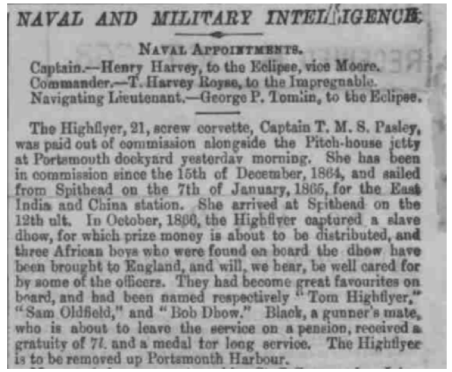
The death of a 12 year old is tragic

There are also many mysteries about this boy



- *Write down some questions you would ask about Tom Highflyer?*

Researching Tom's life



NAVAL AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.

NAVAL APPOINTMENTS.

Captain.—Henry Harvey, to the Eclipse, vice Moore.
Commander.—T. Harvey Royse, to the Impregnable.
Navigating Lieutenant.—George P. Tomlin, to the Eclipse.

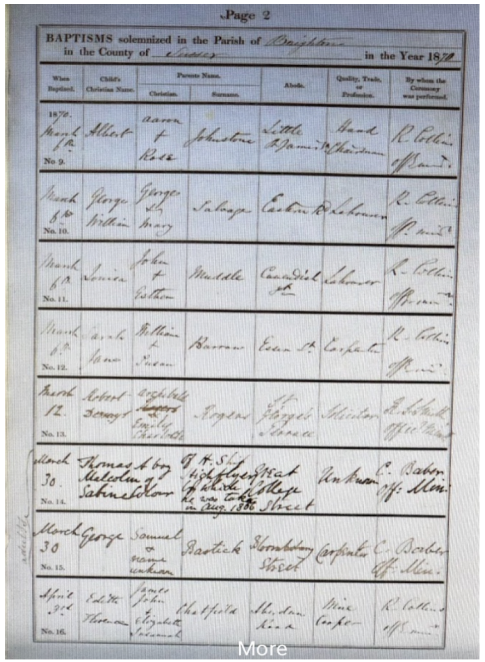
The Highflyer, 21, screw corvette, Captain T. M. S. Pasley, was paid out of commission alongside the Pitch-house jetty at Portsmouth dockyard yesterday morning. She has been in commission since the 15th of December, 1864, and sailed from Spithead on the 7th of January, 1865, for the East India and China station. She arrived at Spithead on the 12th ult. In October, 1866, the Highflyer captured a slave dhow, for which prize money is about to be distributed, and three African boys who were found on board the dhow have been brought to England, and will, we hear, be well cared for by some of the officers. They had become great favourites on board, and had been named respectively "Tom Highflyer," "Sam Oldfield," and "Bob Dhow." Black, a gunner's mate, who is about to leave the service on a pension, received a gratuity of 7*l.* and a medal for long service. The Highflyer is to be removed up Portsmouth Harbour.

Ordinary people often do not leave many records behind when they die and can be forgotten by history.

Brighton and Hove Black History group worked hard to uncover what they could about Tom Highflyer

- *Write down some places they could look for information about him. Try to be specific, for instance*:

"They could look in a newspaper for an account of his rescue from a slave dhow"



Page 2

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of Brighton in the County of Sussex in the Year 1870

When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Name. Christian.	Surname.	Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
1870. March 6th No. 9.	Albert	aaron & Rose	Johnstone	Little Dames Place	Hawker	R. Cobbin Officiating Minister
March 6th No. 10.	George William	George & Mary	Salvage	Eastern Road	Labourer	R. Cobbin Officiating Minister
March 6th No. 11.	Louisa	John & Esther	Maddle	Canterbury Place	Labourer	R. Cobbin Officiating Minister
March 6th No. 12.	Sarah Ann	William & Susan	Barrow	Essex St	Carpenter	R. Cobbin Officiating Minister
March 12. No. 13.	Robert Bennett	[illegible]	Rogers	Ship Street	Mariner	R. Cobbin Officiating Minister
March 30. No. 14.	Thomas Malcolm Sabine Nelson	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	Innkeeper	C. Baker Officiating Minister
March 30 No. 15.	George	Samuel & Hannah	Bastick	Homeleigh Street	Carpenter	C. Baker Officiating Minister
April 3rd No. 16.	Edith Florence	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	Wine Cooper	R. Cobbin Officiating Minister

More

Activity

Use the sources in the pack and watch the video clips to find out more about the boy. Try to answer all the questions you came up with.

A brief history of Tom's life

Born in East Africa possibly around 1857

Captured by slavers

Rescued with 152 others from a slave dhow probably in August 1866

Was 'adopted' by an officer and taught to be a servant

Travelled to Madagascar and Aden

Arrived in Portsmouth 1868 – possibly in poor health

Sent to live in Brighton with Henry and Eliza Thompson

Attended St Marks School and may have learned cricket

Was apparently proud to have a 'master' and wear servant's clothes

Baptised 30th March 1870

Died of Dropsey and tubercular liver 19th June 1870 at Great College Street

Interpretations

The past has gone so we need to study it using evidence

History books and articles are someone's best **interpretation** of the past based on the evidence they have.

There are many other ways in which people represent the past such as writing novels, making statues, films, paintings and other ways to remember what happened

Every time someone creates a version of the past it is an **interpretation**.

When we study interpretations we often want to know how valid they are. It can also help to know something about the person who created them, and what there purpose was.

An Interpretation of Tom Highflyer



Look at this life-size model of Tom Highflyer

- ***Discuss how the artist has represented Tom***

(Consider his expression, clothes, colours, how he is standing)





Image from an anti-slavery pamphlet



Purpose and contextual knowledge





The artist is Josef Cabey. He is part of Brighton and Hove Black History Project.
This is what he says in his website:

My practice has always been concerned with human relationships framed by my own personal identity. Childhood, black, LGBTQ experience… The work often has a playful element to it but invariably investigates deeper themes.

- What is the overall impression of Tom in this interpretation? (brave, scared, dignified, victim, hero, healthy, strong?)
- ***Give reasons why you think Josef represented Tom Highflyer like this***
- ***From your own research how valid do you find this interpretation about what Tom was like and how he felt***

How to remember Tom Highflyer

Brighton & Hove Sanctuary on Sea

Tom was just a boy but he is part of Brighton's history.

- ***Discuss reasons why he might be significant***

You can visit some of the places he lived and imagine what it was like for him to arrive here from East Africa without any friends or family



Brighton & Hove has always embraced and thrived on difference and is famed for celebrating the diversity of its residents.

It is a City of Sanctuary which means it celebrates the skills, arts, food and culture, that enrich our city from people who arrive as asylum seekers and refugees.

- ***Create your own interpretation of Tom's life to remember him as part of Brighton's history***