

The British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) In The Great War



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This booklet forms part of the wider heritage project; *The British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) and The King's African Rifles (KAR) In The Great War*. A touring photographic exhibition visiting various locations across Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, as well as Talks and Workshops have supplemented the project which commemorates the Centenary of The Great War. The project has run across 2018-2019.

The booklet focuses on The British West Indies Regiment (BWIR). The information and archival material illustrates the sacrifices, contributions and courage of the soldiers who served on the side of The British Empire, serving as Soldiers, Porters and Carriers.

It is by no means an exhaustive literature on the subject.

This project has been made possible through the support provided by The Heritage Lottery Fund.

Introduction

The British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) played a significant role in the First World War. A separate black unit within the British Army, where no black soldier was to rise above the rank of Sergeant. The regiment was formed in May 1915 whereby small units of black soldiers were brought together at the North Camp in Seaford, Sussex.

Of the 15,204 men the BWIR had registered, 66% of these had come from Jamaica, however recruits came from most of the West Indies islands, British Guyana, British Honduras and from Caribbean communities in Panama, Canada and the USA.

Throughout its history, the regiment was involved in a number of campaigns in the West Indies and Africa, also taking part in the First World War where it served in the Middle East and East Africa. 86 medals for bravery were won.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions served mainly in Egypt and Palestine, the 3rd—7th Battalions served in France and Flanders, and the 5th Battalion acting as reserve draft unit. The 8th and 9th Battalions also served in France and Flanders, before being transferred to Italy in 1918, while the 10th and 11th Battalions also served in France and Italy.

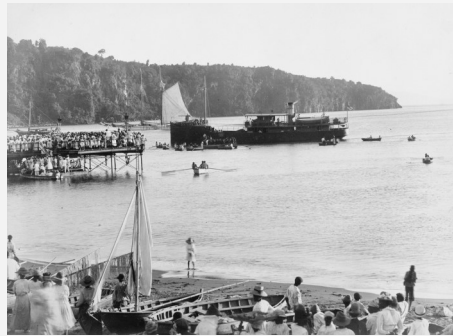
The Tower Hill Memorial, London cemetery contains the graves of 98 Jamaican Commonwealth war dead of the 1914-18 war.

Recruitment and Departure to The War Front



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A recruiting meeting held at
Port of Spain, Trinidad,
1916.



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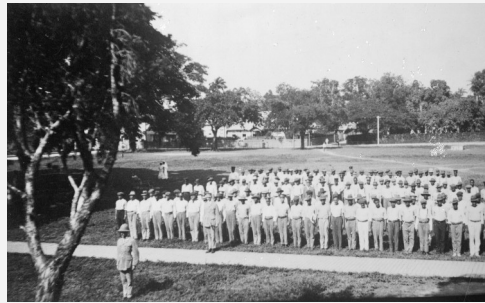
Departure of the St Vincent
contingent of the British
West Indies Regiment
during the First World War.



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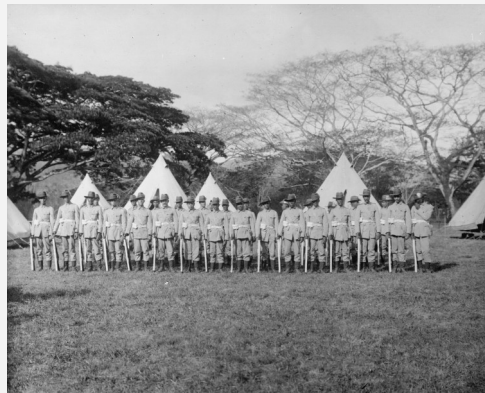
The departure of the first
merchants contingent of
West Indian troops,
Kingston, Jamaica,
8 November 1915.

Recruitment and Departure to The War Front



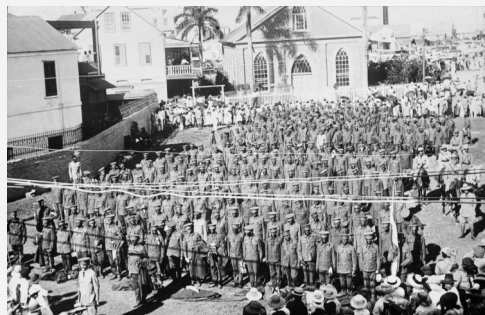
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The Trinidad Light Infantry
enrolled in the British West
Indies Regiment.



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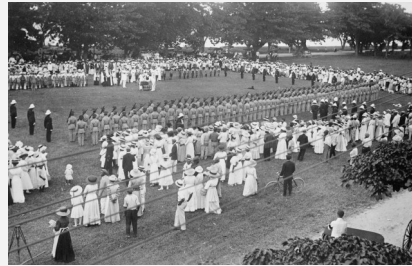
Trinidad artillery volunteers
on parade, 1916.



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An inspection of West
Indian troops prior to their
departure, Kingston,
Jamaica, January 1916.

Recruitment and Departure to The War Front



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The presentation of colours to the second Bahamas contingent, Nassau, November 1915.



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A contingent of West Indian troops marching through Kingston, Jamaica on the way to the harbour, 1916.



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The second Bahamas contingent marching through Nassau, November 1915.

Battle Front



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The second Bahamas
contingent depositing their
colours at Government
House, November 1915.



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Troops of the West Indies
Regiment cleaning their
rifles on the Albert -
Amiens road, September
1916



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Troops of the West Indies
Regiment in camp on the
Albert - Amiens road,
September 1916.

Battle Front



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West Indian troops
stacking 8 inch shells at a
dump on the Gordon Road,
Ypres. October 1917.



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Trinidad artillery volunteers
undergoing gun drill, 1916.



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Troops of the West Indies
Regiment in camp on the
Albert - Amiens road,
September 1916.

Porters, Carriers and Auxiliaries



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A country cart carrying oranges to be shipped to the Empire. West Indian people provided many essentials during WW1.



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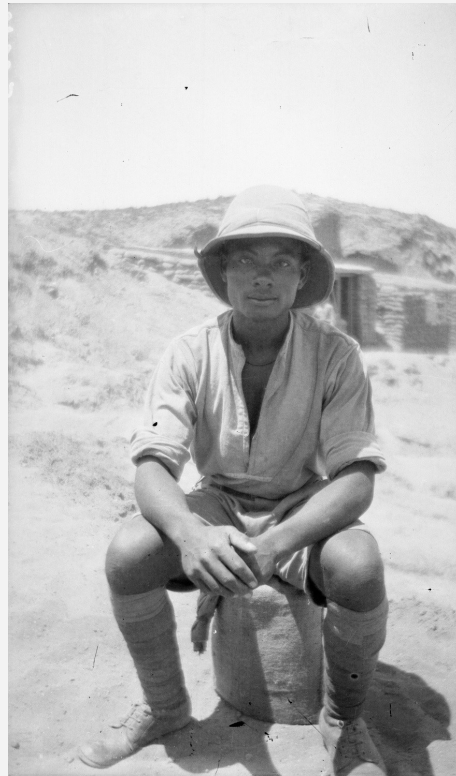
Men of the Egyptian Labour Corps and British West Indies Regiment digging dugouts for near Deir-el-Belah, Palestine.



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British West Indies Regiment creating dugouts on the cliffs, near Deir-el-Belah, Palestine.

Porters, Carriers and Auxiliaries



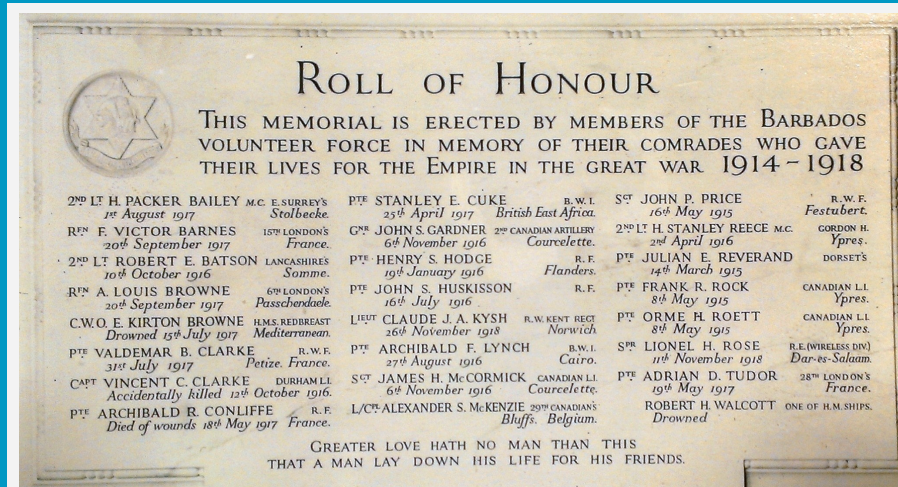
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A British West Indies soldier rests during the digging of a new headquarters on the cliffs near Deir-el-Belah, Palestine.



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Cooks of the British West Indian Regiment, near Deir-el-Belah, Palestine.



Roll of Honours in memory of Barbados VF who fought in The Great War

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Heritage Lottery Fund

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Milton Keynes Central Library



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