



The West Indian Soldier: a brief history of the British Army and the Caribbean

By David A.J. Wells and The West India Committee

Introduction

In the popular imagination of Britain's military past, most people picture the fields of Waterloo or the horrors of the Battle of the Somme. Precious few give thought to the battles that were fought between the European Powers, not on their home continent but across the Atlantic Ocean. Some of these conflicts occurred in mainland North and South America but many took place in the Caribbean Sea, not only in the form of great naval battles but in military actions fought by the British Army in the islands of the West Indies and on the coasts of Central America against the Spanish, Dutch and French.

Although supplanted in modern consciousness by the vicissitudes of wars closer to our own time, in the past the dangers of Caribbean service were foremost in the minds of the British people, not just because of the perils of warfare, which were also encountered on the battlefields of Europe, but also because of the serious threat to the health of the troops; the hot climate and, critically, widespread disease took its toll. Indeed, the danger of serving in the West Indies for British troops was such that it became known as the 'White Man's Grave'.

This story is not just one of the British soldiers serving in the West Indies, but of West Indians serving in the British Army. Various local regiments and militia had existed since the British first colonised the region, but, on occasion, regiments were created specifically for service in the Caribbean. A few West Indians of black, white and mixed-race could even be found serving in the British Army in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of them later settling in Britain; these non-white veterans helped to shape Britain's early black community.

The wars with the French at the end of the eighteenth century, and the large death toll amongst British troops in the Caribbean, particularly on Haiti, prompted the authorities to recruit more West Indians to the Army in the belief that such men were more resistant to the effects of both climate and disease in the region. This led to the creation of the West India Regiments in 1795, who subsequently served in the Caribbean and West Africa for over a century.

Many Caribbean men who joined the British Army later settled in Britain themselves, adding to the growing black community of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Later veterans of the British Caribbean would also settle in Britain after the First and Second World Wars, becoming the earliest members of the Windrush generation. The relationship between the Caribbean and the British Army continues to the present day, with West Indians still joining the British Army and the Army still operating in the Caribbean, often in partnership with the local Defence Forces.

This e-book is one of numerous outcomes of *The West Indian Soldier* project, carried out in partnership with the National Army Museum and with the generous support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We hope that this work presents another important aspect of Britain's and the Caribbean's mutual heritage and demonstrates that the long-lasting ties between the two date back centuries, each significantly contributing to the development of the other.

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The Western Design

When: 1654-1655

Combatants: England vs Spain

Reasons: Protectorate England wishing to challenge Spanish power, religious motivations

Other names: The Anglo-Spanish War

Key battles and places: Hispaniola, Jamaica

The earliest involvement of the professional British Army in the Caribbean came in the middle of the seventeenth century, when it was still solely the English Army. Oliver Cromwell, ruling England as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, opted to challenge the greatest power in the Western World, Spain. The Spanish-American colonies in the Caribbean and in Central and South America had provided Spain with great wealth and it continued to be the dominant power in the New World. England, by this time, had a few Caribbean Colonies of its own, including Barbados, St. Christopher (St. Kitts), Nevis, Antigua and Anguilla.



Oliver Cromwell

In June 1654, planning and preparation began in secret for a great military expedition to the Americas. The secrecy was such that it became known by the nebulous name of the 'Western Design'. The exact motives for the expedition continue to be debated by historians and there are likely to be many contributing factors to the decision. Cromwell and his ministers could have been influenced by the economic advantages that the American colonies had afforded Spain, or wished to protect English trading vessels, which the Spanish frequently attacked. Religious motivations can also not be discounted; Cromwell himself, many leading figures of the Protectorate and a large number in England were ardent Protestant Christians, opposed to Roman Catholicism as practised in Spain and spread by them in the New World. Thus, many believed that an expedition against the Spanish was sanctioned by God, and eyewitness accounts speak of opposing 'heretics' and the 'false church'.

The Commonwealth and Protectorate

The Commonwealth and Protectorate were the systems of government that ruled Britain after the execution of Charles I in 1649 until the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, a period known as the Interregnum. Cromwell became Lord Protector in 1653, after forcibly dissolving parliament, which had governed the country inefficiently. Cromwell is an important figure in English military history not only for his successes in the Civil Wars, but also for his reforms to the military and the creation of the New Model Army.

Recruitment for the Army had to be carried out in secret, with the decision taken to raise new regiments from those already stationed in England. However, not only did this fail to produce the desired number of men, but the soldiers that were recruited tended to be the worst sort, ones that had been 'volunteered' by their commanders to get rid of them as they were ill-disciplined or unskilled. To try and make up the numbers, 'recruitment parties' were employed in London to forcibly recruit more men. This too failed to raise a sufficient force, with one observer noting that the men recruited in this fashion were largely criminals. Finally, it was decided that the remaining men would be recruited from the English Colonies of the Caribbean.

The expedition, under the command of General Robert Venables and Admiral William Penn, left England in December 1654 with 2,500 men, of whom only 1,000 were experienced soldiers. Penn and Venables, and the five commissioners appointed to accompany the troops, were given orders to seek the capture of the major Spanish

territories of Hispaniola, Porto Rico, Cuba and Cartagena (on the South American coast in modern-day Columbia). The expedition arrived in the English colony of Barbados early in the new year and began to recruit the required number. They recruited free men from the island and nearby English colonies; these were the first West Indians we know that joined the Army. They also, however, opted to recruit from amongst the indentured servants of the colonies, promising them freedom from their indentures if they did so.

Indentured servants

Arguably, indenture is a state which most people would consider to be slavery today; some people, as a punishment or to avoid an alternative penalty, were forced to serve for what was, in theory, a set period. This was normally around seven years, although it could be longer and or shorter, depending on the terms of the deed of indenture. There were strict rules in place about what indentured servants could do, such as with whom they could marry and have children and even from whom they could buy goods. Oliver Cromwell made liberal use of pressing people into indentured servitude and then sending them to the Caribbean. In addition to convicted criminals, this included many people from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland who were prisoners of war, captured in Cromwell's campaigns during the seventeenth century Civil Wars in the British Isles. However, some people seeking a new life, willingly became indentured servants for a set term, in order to earn passage from Europe to the New World.

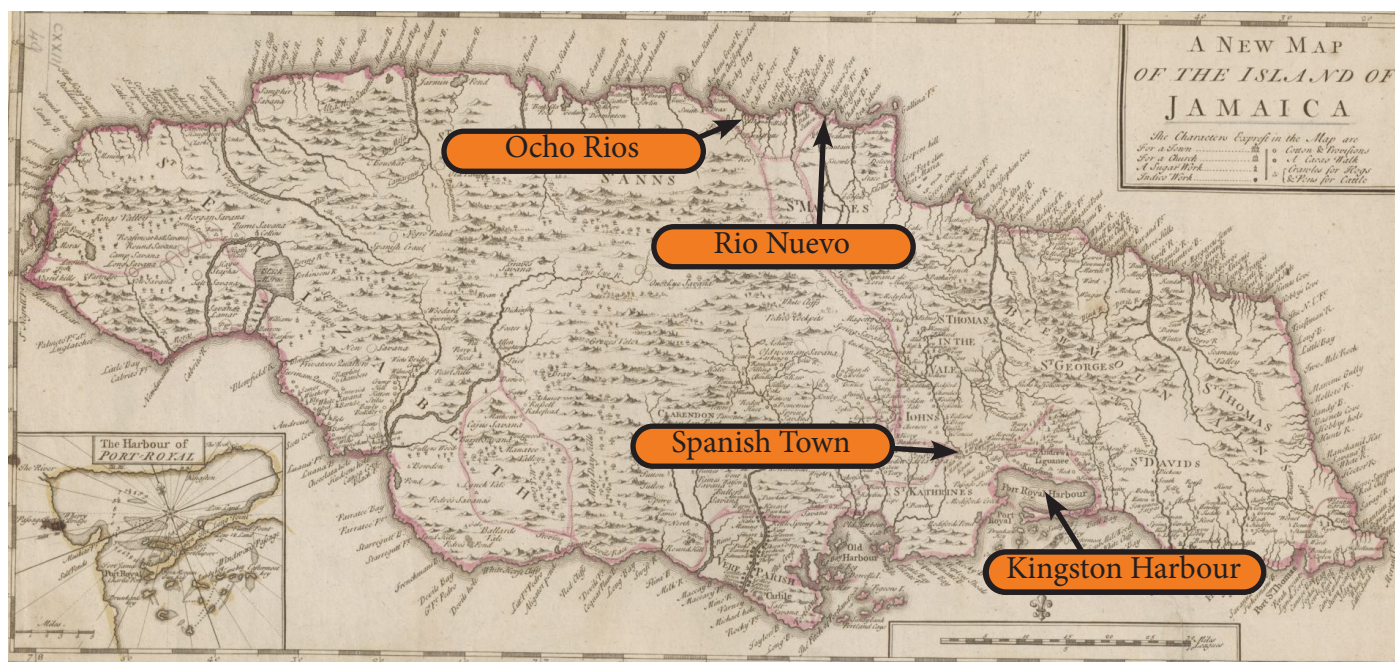
With over 3,000 men recruited in the Caribbean, Penn and Venables felt that they could now attack the Spanish. However, the men were poorly trained and ill-disciplined, and those recruited in the Caribbean were described as "*the very scum of scum*" by one eyewitness. It was decided that Hispaniola, the then most important island in the Spanish Caribbean, would be the first target. The objective was to capture its capital, San Domingo, which held additional significance for the English as Sir Francis Drake had successfully captured the city and ransomed it back to the Spanish over 70 years previously. Problems began almost immediately upon arrival, as heavy surf prevented the English landing near the city at the mouth of the River Jaina and they were forced to move westward to the mouth of the River Nizao, where they landed on 14th April 1655.

The Army was thus required to make a difficult three-day march through the jungle to reach San Domingo, having to endure great heat, humidity and a lack of water. Many fell ill on the march from dehydration or disease, including General Venables

himself who contracted dysentery. When they finally drew near to the city, they fell prey to a Spanish ambush and only escaped thanks to the efforts of a regiment composed of sailors. Thus, they fell back towards their landing site to recuperate as best as they were able and prepared for another attack. For the men left ashore, this meant minimal supplies and shelter. Another attack was launched on 25th April, now supported by bombardment from the fleet. However, the ships were too far out to sea for the bombardment to be effective, whilst the landward force was again ambushed and rescued by the sailors' regiment.



Having met with failure on Hispaniola, as well as the loss of well over 1,000 men through both fighting and disease, the commanders decided on a new target, an insignificant, poorly defended nearby island - Jamaica. They departed Hispaniola on 5th May 1655 and arrived at Jamaica, at what would later become Kingston Harbour, on the 10th. The Spanish defenders, seeing the superior English numbers, opted not to offer much resistance and retreated towards the island's capital of Santiago de la Vega, now known as Spanish Town. They decided to surrender to the English, and the latter's commanders offered them time to negotiate terms. The Spanish used this time wisely, transporting their most valuable possessions off the island, as well as setting their livestock free so that they could not be easily claimed by the English. They also liberated their slaves, asking them to attack the English in future, a request with which the freedmen generally complied. These former slaves fled to the hills, where they joined with others who had escaped the Spanish, as well as some of the native inhabitants of Jamaica; in time these groups formed the Maroon culture.



Despite having only captured one island, and not one that they had actually been directed to capture, Penn and Venables decided to return home, setting sail on 24th May in separate ships. On their arrival, they were both imprisoned in the Tower of London, charged with deserting their posts and cowardice. The majority of the men who had served with them were, however, left behind on Jamaica, where they became the first English settlers on the island. Life proved tough, as the commissioners, who were left to oversee the new colony, prevented the soldiers from looting the former Spanish settlements or shooting the livestock the Spanish had left behind. They were even prevented, on pain of death, from travelling more than half a mile from their quarters to search for food. This was to ensure that the Spanish plantations would be kept intact for the next wave of colonists that were envisioned, but it meant that famine swept through the poorly-supplied Army. This, coupled with the widespread disease that was sweeping through the ranks, led to many deaths, a problem exacerbated by the former Spanish slaves picking off some of their numbers. It is estimated that over two thirds of the Army on Jamaica died within the first ten months.

However, those that survived were eventually joined by reinforcements and more colonists from England and the existing English Caribbean colonies. Some of the men also settled upon other islands, with two deserters, with the surnames Watler and Bodden, choosing to settle on the uninhabited Cayman Islands, where their descendants still live today. The Spanish made two unsuccessful attempts to recapture Jamaica, using troops sent from Cuba under the command of the former Spanish Governor of Jamaica, Don Christobal Arnaldo de Isassi, which led to battles on Jamaican soil at Ocho Rios in 1657 and Rio Nuevo in 1658. The war with the Spanish would continue until 1670 with the signing of the Treaty of Madrid, which recognised English sovereignty over both Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

The Militias of the West Indies

The early colonies in the West Indies did not have the constant protection of the British Army or Navy and thus needed a local defence force to protect themselves against external threats; there was a danger of incursions from such foreign powers as the Spanish or French or even raids by pirates, as well as issues of local unrest. The inhabitants chose to establish local, part-time military units, based on the militias that existed back in Britain. The closest analogy to these units in modern Britain is the Army Reserve or the National Guard in the USA. Each parish in the West Indies had its own militia regiment. The militias of the British Caribbean were the main defensive force of the islands until the second half of the eighteenth century, when more regular British troops began to be stationed in the region and reflected the increasing professionalisation of warfare. Although primarily meant to serve as defensive units, occasionally the militias of the Caribbean did serve as offensive troops, lending aid to other British Caribbean islands or assisting the British regulars during invasions.

The rules for eligibility of militia service varied from island to island, as well as changing over time. Generally, however, free able-bodied white men aged between 16 and 65 were required to serve. As indicated by this rule, service in the militia was linked to the racial hierarchy of the Caribbean and several colonies placed restrictions on non-whites joining at various junctures in their history. However, as time went by, these restrictions were eased, as the white element became a small proportion of the overall West Indian population, which would have severely limited the pool of men eligible for service. Those men deemed free-coloured, made up of free blacks and those of mixed race, were thus required to serve. However, people of colour were generally prevented from becoming militia officers, although the various caste systems that operated throughout the region may have led to those with African ancestry being accepted into more senior ranks.

People of colour were also required to serve in segregated companies, that often separated those of mixed race from black servicemen; this reflected the stratification of Caribbean creole society that relied heavily on the caste systems determined on each island that were often enshrined in law during this period. Over time, and in line with the changing racial demographics of the region, such free black and mixed-race men became the majority in the militias. The racial divide also extended to the Jewish population, who again were similarly required to serve in their own companies. Despite the segregation within the militia, for many amongst the free coloured population their service demonstrated an ascendancy within the social hierarchy, particularly if they had previously been enslaved. It could also serve as a way of securing more rights for themselves; between 1796 and 1830, the loyal service that the free-coloured companies on Jamaica demonstrated during various conflicts and uprisings led to the gradual repeal of legislation known as the Disabling Acts, which had denied them certain rights and privileges. Such men wrote to the Jamaican Assembly in 1823 to indicate that, although they now formed the larger part of the Jamaican militia, the fact they had not encouraged or participated in an overthrow of the social order proved their *“loyalty and devotion to the British crown and government; for, what else could induce submission”*.

The extent of a man's property could also influence what they were expected to contribute to the militia. In Barbados, those who had estates of 30 acres or more, or whose houses were valued at more than £100, were obliged to send billeted men to serve in the militia. In some instances, it was also mandatory to send an armed, trusted slave. Slaves were not often required to serve in the militia, as the Plantocracy feared the consequences of teaching slaves how to fight, in case it led to a revolt, and indeed the practice was banned in several islands after slave rebellions. Yet it was not an uncommon practice for militiamen to bring a slave with them to fetch and carry both arms and ammunition for their masters.



A Jamaica Militia shoulder belt plate
Image © National Army Museum, London

There were three aspects of the militias: infantry, cavalry and artillery. The infantry were by far the most numerous of the three branches, especially owing to the high cost of maintaining a horse in the Caribbean in centuries gone by. The militia regiments were structured in much the same manner as those of a regular Army unit and of militias in Britain. They were commanded by officers, the highest of which was normally a Colonel, under the authority of a local Commander-in-Chief or the Captain-General of a colony, the latter role normally an office also held by the local Governor. A frequent criticism of militias, both in Britain and the Caribbean, was that obtaining a commission was often the result of wealth and nepotism. The richest and most influential planters frequently obtained the highest commissions, which led to several of them styling themselves 'Colonel' for the rest of their lives and, in some instances, they were even able to secure the rank of General, although Colonel was usually the highest rank available in a militia. These ranks provided a certain amount of prestige which was also the case in Britain, most popularly illustrated by the reaction of the younger Bennet sisters to the presence of the militia in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

However, it was such practices favouring the higher echelons of society that inhibited the efficiency of the militias in the British West Indies, particularly as they became more widespread over the course of the eighteenth century. The commanding roles were secured by men who were more concerned with the social status conferred, rather than the effective operation of the militia. Many of the most successful planters, who so often held the very highest ranks, chose to leave their holdings in the Caribbean in the care of managers and went to live in Britain, leaving the militias lacking direction from those who should have been providing it. Some militias only survived thanks to the efforts of veteran soldiers, who served in the militias in their retirement, and the occasional enthusiastic volunteer, who prevented a total collapse in standards and practices.



A Jamaica Light Horse uniform,
belonging to
Isaac Gomez Da Costa
Image © National Army Museum,
London

In addition to the issues of leadership, or perhaps because of them, there were many other problems with the militias. As irregular units, they were assembled only infrequently. In theory, there were a set number of days a month for training and drill, as well as an annual camp when all the different militia regiments of an island were assembled for group training. Wide variations in both standards and competency in the field were evident. The proficiency of the men in firing their muskets was often questionable, but, in the case of the cavalry, the reliability of their horses was frequently problematic, and it was not uncommon for the horses to bolt at the sound of a volley of gunfire, as they had not been trained to stand their ground. Often, when militias did parade for reviews, they were frequently viewed by the locals as a source of amusement owing to the often-poor performance of the troops. There were also issues with arms, as the men frequently had to provide their own, which again led to widely varying standards. It was also a complaint amongst the poorer residents of the islands that, even though they were still liable for militia service, they were unable to purchase the necessary equipment. The distances between some locales in many parishes in the West Indies made it difficult to assemble the militia for training, and annual camps, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, turned into primarily social gatherings.

The problem of poor leadership and training was exacerbated by the many exemptions allowed for not attending training or the like, and by the minimal punishments that were handed out to those who did not have the requisite permission. Despite the prestige that an officer's rank bestowed, service in the militia was widely unpopular amongst men of all fortunes. The call to muster interrupted the men's daily lives, and was very disruptive for those who were business owners or ran plantations, particularly if there was an extended period of Martial Law. Amongst those of the higher classes, who were not attracted to the social prestige that officer rank conferred, some acquired exemption from militia duty through holding certain official positions, which were deemed sufficiently important to excuse them. However, influence and nepotism again ran deep, and many of those seeking to avoid militia duty secured positions that, in fact, were purely nominal.



Martial Law in Jamaica by Abraham James,
a satirical look at the local militia

The issues with the West Indian militias in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries resulted in the officers and men of the regular Army having a low opinion of the irregulars, which led to tensions between the two. The scorn with which the militias were viewed also extended to British officials, leading Sir Lionel Smith, the Governor of Barbados between 1833-1836, to comment that, *"The... militia throughout the West Indies is disgraceful. I use a strong term because there is no just excuse for want of men or means, and I can only attribute the defect to apathy or to a mistaken confidence that they can always command the services of the regular troops."* However, such views were not always universal and some militias were viewed as being better than others, with the Barbadian militia, in particular, gaining praise. The Barbadian militia came to the aid of their counterparts on St. Kitts in 1666 and 1667. Units from the militias of Barbados and the Leeward Islands accompanied the English Army during the Nine Years War, when the Antiguans saw some particularly brutal fighting, and a number of volunteers accompanied the British during the invasions of Martinique and Guadeloupe in the Seven Years War. The St. Kitts militia also stood with the British regulars in the defence of Brimstone Hill in 1782, fighting courageously, although some did choose to desert. On at least one occasion, in 1744 during the War of the Austrian Succession, a local militia became a primary invading force, when Deputy Governor Arthur Hodge of Anguilla led his volunteers to neighbouring St. Martin and captured the French side of the island. This militia also single-handedly repelled a much larger French force that landed on Anguilla in the same year.

As slavery became more widespread throughout the Caribbean, the local militias were called upon, in addition to the regular troops that were stationed in the region, to put down slave rebellions. These suppressions were frequently brutal, with the militia often noted for their cruelty in the aftermath. Sir Lionel also observed that, *"the militia in these islands are so violent and cruel against the slaves, that they should be employed only in the last extremity."* The increasingly important role that the free-coloured and free blacks took in the militia did not ameliorate this treatment. Rear Admiral Harvey noted in the aftermath of Bussa's Rebellion in Barbados in 1816, *"The Militia, who could not be restrained by the same discipline as the Troops, put many Men, Women, & Children to Death, I fear without much discrimination"* Although there were instances in which some of the free black and free coloured members joined slave conspiracies, these were rare and some slave conspiracies

targeted such men alongside the white population. The Christmas period was considered to be a dangerous time, with the slave population emboldened by the celebrations. Thus, Martial Law was frequently declared at this time to allow the militia and whatever regular troops that were stationed on the island to control the situation.

Martial Law

In times of crisis, countries around the world have declared periods of Martial Law, which is defined as a period of temporary rule by military authorities until the crisis has ended. Although the exact effects have varied from country to country, it usually means the suspension of normal civil rights and that the entire area affected is instead ruled by Martial Law. An example of this would be that instead of a normal trial, with a jury, there would be a court martial, at which a panel of military officers would rule in place of the judge. Summary military justice without trial may also be utilised, depending on the exact rules governing Martial Law. It frequently involves imposing restrictive conditions on civilian life, frequently enforcing a curfew, and the mobilisation of reserve troops, such as a militia. In the West Indies in previous centuries, this was invoked during times of war when there was the threat of an invasion, or during widespread civil unrest, such as a slave rebellion, or even when there was a perceived threat of such an event. In some instances, Martial Law is declared by the military in a bid to take control of the government of a country.

Following the abolition of slavery, the higher echelons of West Indian society were anxious to keep the newly-emancipated men out of the militia, again fearing that their membership would encourage social unrest and uprisings. They achieved their aims by introducing property requirements for militia eligibility, which of course were greater than that which could have been possibly owned by recently emancipated slaves. Laws were also passed prohibiting anyone who was not a member of the militia from owning firearms, replicating previous laws which had banned slaves from owning such weapons.



The Trinidad Militia Volunteers (c.1850-1900)

Image © National Army Museum, London

By the end of the nineteenth century, when there

was mainly peace throughout the Caribbean and the militias had not been called upon to defend the British islands for many years, service in the militias became less constrained and, although not completely rescinded, the restrictions regarding race had been relaxed. The diminishing need for militias for defence meant that they

were gradually disbanded. Their remnants metamorphosed into local defence forces and volunteer regiments, more akin to the reserve services that are known today, which many former militiamen chose to join. A number of these later developed into the modern local Defence Forces, which today protect the now independent nations of the former British West Indies as their professional military bodies. Thus, these modern units can trace their heritage and practices back to these original militias of the Caribbean islands.



Infantry of the Barbados Volunteer Force (1902-1909)

Image © National Army Museum, London

Serving in the West Indies

The British soldiers who served in the Caribbean faced many difficulties during their time there and found themselves having to adapt to the region's peculiarities. The dangers were such that the West Indies acquired a reputation as a graveyard. The difficulties started as soon as the soldiers left Britain, as they were transported on a long and dangerous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, usually in very cramped conditions aboard a transport ship or a Royal Naval vessel. The ships could be battered by storms and were also subject to the nature of the winds; these could determine how many weeks a ship took to reach the Caribbean, extending in some cases to many months travel. For example, in one instance a ship which left Britain on 9th December arrived at Carlisle Bay, Barbados, the normal point of arrival for British vessels travelling to the West Indies, in mid-March, on the same day as another vessel which had left the same British port on 9th February. The voyage itself could prove deadly, as the close quarters and uncleanness of the ships served as breeding grounds for disease.

The soldiers also had to cope with the harsh climate, which proved to be, for the most part, both hot and humid. Horatio Nelson, the great British naval hero, was stationed for some time in Antigua, one of the main British military outposts in the region, and described it as a “hell hole”. The heat and humidity made marching long distances very unpleasant and difficult and, in a number of instances, such actions proved fatal for some men. The traditional uniform of the British Army, the famous red coats, did nothing to alleviate the soldiers' suffering, although attempts were made at various junctures to introduce clothing that was better-suited to the climate. In addition to the heat and humidity, the Army also had to face the dangers of the hurricane season, when great storms sweep through the Caribbean Sea, leaving devastation in their wake. There are many records of Army bases being damaged during these storms and of lives being lost. For example, in the storm that struck St. Lucia on 21st October 1817, not only was the island's Governor killed but Brevet-Major Burdett of the 1st West India Regiment, commanding the garrison, died along with his wife, children and servants, when their house collapsed on top of them. The men barely had time to escape the barracks before they were destroyed, and their clothing and equipment was blown into the nearby woods by the strong winds. Earthquakes too posed a threat to life.

The 38th Regiment of Foot

The 38th Regiment holds the distinction of having the longest overseas posting in the entire history of the British Army, serving abroad for 57 years. They first arrived in Antigua on 19th May 1707 as Colonel Luke Lillingston's Regiment, and were eventually numbered as the 38th. For much of their time in the West Indies, they served as garrison troops in the Leeward Islands, but were also known to serve as Marines aboard the ships of the Royal Navy. Matters were often difficult, with major delays in the arrival of pay and new equipment and clothing. On occasion, both officers and men took civilian employment on the side to support themselves. In order to repair their uniforms, the men used Holland Sacking, which was used for packing sugar. The Regiment was later granted the right to wear a brown patch on their uniforms in memory of this. The Regiment eventually left in 1764 and later became known as the South Staffordshire Regiment. Due to the amalgamation of Regiments over the last two centuries, they are now part of the Mercian Regiment, who still wear the patch symbolising the Holland Sacking.



Although many young soldiers who had not been to the region before treated the experience as an adventure and a novelty, amongst old soldiers, with previous experience of the Caribbean, the idea was clearly met with abhorrence. Jonathan Leach, then a young officer in the 70th Regiment, later recounted that when his contingent was ordered to the Caribbean, “*This intelligence caused some long faces among a few of our old hands who had previously served in that part of the world; but the greater part of us being young and thoughtless, the order for moving, being a novelty, was received with pleasure rather than dislike.*” In many cases, the reputation of the region as a hotbed of death and disease preceded it and, on many occasions, troops would not be told where they

were going until they were aboard ship and underway, so as to prevent issues before departure. In some instances, they were even told a false destination before they embarked. Fear of service in the West Indies led many troops to attempt avoidance tactics, with some even inflicting wounds on themselves to render them unfit for further service. Others attempted to desert before they departed for the Caribbean but this carried its own risk of death, as a capital sentence was often the result of being found guilty of this offence at a Court Martial. Some members of the Black Watch were marched from Scotland to London. Suspecting that they were to be sent to the West Indies, 100 of them deserted and were later captured in Northamptonshire. All were convicted of desertion, but all save three had their death sentences commuted, and 38 were actually sent to the West Indies. Desertion could also lead to service in the Caribbean; those condemned to death could be offered the option to avoid hanging, a choice also offered to criminals outside the military. These men were placed, alongside other convicts, in regiments specifically raised for service in the West Indies. These included the Royal West India Rangers, the Royal York Rangers and the York Chasseurs. These three regiments, raised in the early years of the nineteenth century, were all disbanded in 1819, when it became clear that there was no ongoing threat to the British Caribbean.



Corporal Samuel McPherson of the Black Watch, one of the three men executed
Image © National Army Museum, London

Officers had their own options to avoid service in the West Indies, some approved and some not; they simply absented themselves from their regiments and remained in Britain, which was not necessarily viewed as desertion and certainly was treated more leniently than if a common soldier had performed a similar action. Although there were many attempts to convince and indeed order these officers to join their regiments, it remained a problem with postings to the Caribbean well into the nineteenth century. Others exploited the system of Army commissions to avert West Indian service, either by purchasing a commission in a different regiment, or exchanging commissions with a willing officer from another regiment who was prepared to go to the Caribbean.



A cavalry sergeant in the Caribbean,
(c.1830)

Image © National Army Museum, London

In addition to the difficulties presented by the climate and disease, another issue which affected almost the entire Army in the Caribbean was the cost of living, with both officers and men struggling with pay that did not allow them to live in the manner to which they might be accustomed. One commander reported that the cost of feeding a soldier each day was twice their daily pay before the usual deductions. Matters could be exacerbated by the delays to pay that frequently occurred; it was not unknown for this to be caused by a paymaster embezzling funds. Officers were expected to meet a certain standard of living and, whilst those from wealthy families, especially if they had relations in the region, were able to weather the cost, others could not and found themselves living in much more reduced circumstances than they would have otherwise expected. Some officers managed to find private employment to supplement their income, a practice that could also be found amongst the ranks wherever possible.

The difficulties of both men and officers led the Army and British Government to try to solve the problem, but in as economical a way as possible. Thus, the British Government asked the local colonial governments to help support the Army in the region, which led to further political clashes between London and the Caribbean. Although the colonial governments wanted soldiers stationed in the area for both external and internal security, and often demanded more troops than they had been given, they were reluctant to meet these costs; these could take the form of paying for the Army's provisions,

helping with the construction and upkeep of local fortifications or an additional stipend for pay. They felt they were entitled to the Army's protection by default. However, generally, the local legislatures did contribute where it was possible for them to do so but the results varied from colony to colony. In Jamaica, officers received an extra 40% to their weekly pay, whilst private soldiers received an extra 100%. Yet such support was not always sufficient. Lieutenant Colonel Capadose, who served for sixteen years in the West Indies in the early nineteenth century, in his memoirs, complained that the allowance in British Guiana was "*wretchedly small*", deeming it the most expensive place to live in the Caribbean and advocating that allowances should be doubled throughout the West Indies.

The British Army could not exist within the West Indies without encountering the 'monstrous evil' of slavery, and indeed would be forced to develop its own peculiar relationship with this fact of Caribbean life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Individual officers and soldiers often recorded their own views and experiences with slavery in their memoirs. Whilst some officers, most notably those who were linked by family to the region and owned property there, engaged in slavery, others were repulsed by what they saw and resisted it in their own ways. Jonathan Leach, during his time in the West Indies as a young officer, recalled an occasion when he and another officer came across an overseer brutally flogging an old slave woman, and responded by riding a short distance away to shoot at his legs: "*peppered his legs pretty handsomely*". In another instance, George Pinckard and his fellow officers refused aid to the Manager of the Lancaster Plantation; the latter had flogged a slave to death and, with the dead man's friends seeking vengeance, requested protection. Some officers, whilst not necessarily engaging in slavery themselves, commented that, in general, there was little difference in the life of a plantation slave and that of a rural labourer in Britain, presumably not having witnessed some of the tortures and punishments to which slaves were subjected. Some soldiers formed relationships with the local populace, which led to the birth of children. A prominent example of this is Mary Seacole, later famed for her actions in the Crimean War, whose father was a Scottish soldier who married a local Jamaican doctress. In some circumstances, when the child was born to a wealthy officer, they would be sent to be educated or even brought up in Britain, much as the children of West Indian planters were.

Day to day life, when there was not a war to be fought, was often characterised by boredom, hence why so many men found comfort in alcohol or smoking. They would be roused by bugle call before dawn and the parade would be carried out early in the cool morning. This would be followed by the morning meal, with the second meal served at 12:30. Food consisted largely of salted meats, bread, rice and peas and was occasionally supplemented by other local vegetables that the men could procure. Beyond this, unless they had guard duty or another task, the soldiers were left to their own devices until the evening parade at 17:00. Officers had more options for their leisure time and many attended local social functions, enjoying dances or dinners with the upper echelons of Caribbean society. They also had a greater ability to go out and explore the colony in which they were stationed, visiting plantations and their owners. Some engaged in horse racing, if they could afford the high price of a horse in the Caribbean, or went shooting. Many recorded their experiences, as did some of their wives, providing us with first-hand accounts of their time in the Caribbean and how they viewed West Indian society in comparison to that of Britain.



A soldier of the 7th Regiment of Foot in the Caribbean (c.1805),
Image © National Army Museum, London



Soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars enjoying a meal in camp,
Image © National Army Museum, London

Diseases and Medicine

The greatest threat that the British Army faced in the Caribbean was not from the enemies they fought, but from disease, particularly the dreaded 'fever'. This ailment frequently struck people who were recently arrived in the West Indies from Europe and often proved fatal. Thousands of British troops perished from disease over the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Many of those who did not die were so weakened by illness that they were rendered unfit for service and had to be shipped home to Britain as invalids.

Between December 1799 and January 1803, the rate of death and invalidity caused by disease was such that it was calculated that the entire British garrison in the Windward and Leeward Islands would need to be replaced every six years. In times when there was a large number of troops in the region, such as the French Revolutionary Wars, the death toll could register tens of thousands within the space of a few years. By October 1796, Sir Banastre Tarleton MP claimed, in the House of Commons, that everyone in Britain knew someone who had died serving in the Caribbean. Whilst by no means proven, his claim is supported by huge fatalities amongst the regiments, with the 32nd Regiment of Foot losing 32 officers and almost 1,000 other ranks to disease within the space of a single year of service in what is now Haiti.

With the limited medical knowledge of the time still reliant on the writings of such ancient authors as Galen and Hippocrates, there was little understanding of how diseases spread and how they could be prevented or

Yellow Fever

This disease is normally found in tropical climates, although is now far less prevalent worldwide than it once was and has largely been eliminated in the Caribbean. True Yellow Fever is caused by bites from infected mosquitoes and is believed to have first been introduced to the Caribbean from Africa via captive African slaves. Symptoms can include a high temperature, nausea and headaches. In advanced cases, which can be fatal, symptoms can include haemorrhaging blood and jaundice of the skin, which gives the disease its name. Due to limited medical knowledge in previous centuries, many different illnesses were lumped together under the generic disease of 'fever', although all presented similar symptoms and, in many cases, proved fatal.



A 1800 cartoon showing opposing features of life in Jamaica, relaxation and the demons of disease waiting beneath © The Wellcome Library (CC BY 4.0)

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cured successfully. Some doctors tried a wide array of treatments, which we now know to prove harmful to the healing process: bleeding patients or treating them with such poisonous substances as mercury. Other doctors, more in line with today's medical thought, believed that these were of little benefit or indeed harmful. Yet not all treatments were damaging; the use of quinine, often known as 'Jesuit's bark' successfully treated malaria, although there was a mistaken belief in some circles that it could treat all types of fevers. Preventative medicine was also adopted, with the Army adopting inoculation against diseases like smallpox during the American Revolution, and the benefits of citrus fruits were known in preventing certain diseases, such as scurvy.



A 1784 sketch of Mr. Daniel Massiah suffering from 'Barbados Leg'
© The Wellcome Library (CC BY 4.0)

There were many diseases that could prove debilitating or even fatal. These ranged from 'Barbados leg', a form of elephantiasis, to the lethal dangers of a variety of fevers. To attempt to ward off infection, doctors made many suggestions. Due to the contemporary belief about the nature of diseases, which was before the widespread acceptance of the existence of illness-causing bacteria and viruses, much medical advice featured the need to avoid the swampy areas that are common in parts of the Caribbean; there was a prevailing conviction that swamps and exposed muds produced a miasma, which carried disease. To that end, they recommended that barracks and bases should be built away from these areas, in places with a good breeze to promote air flow. Such doctors as John Rollo, who served with the British Army on St. Lucia in the late 1770s, recommended that, if it was necessary to have a base or camp near a swampy area, fires should be lit between the camp and the swamp so that the miasma would be burnt off. If this proved unfeasible, then fires should be lit near the doorways of the barracks or tents to similarly burn off the miasma and such doorways should be built or erected facing away from the swamp. In the same vein, they also suggested that smoking, a common practice amongst soldiers of the time, could help to ward off these miasmas.

Although modern medicine largely disproves such ideas, many of these doctors nevertheless advocated good common-sense measures that we would commend today, such as ensuring that items should be kept clean, that men should wash regularly and that eating and drinking should both be in moderation. They also lamented the state of much of the barrack accommodation in the Caribbean, which was overcrowded and in poor repair and could often leave the men, both in the ranks and the officers, far more exposed to the elements than desirable. Many medics developed the opinion that military camps at higher altitudes were healthier and thus regiments, which suffered badly from outbreaks of disease, were often sent to mountain stations, if at all possible, in the hope that they could recover their health.

The Army's doctors themselves were as naturally vulnerable to disease as the soldiers and many of them also met their deaths, a situation that exacerbated matters, resulting in a lack of medical personnel to treat the men, a problem which was no doubt much more acute in the remoter postings in the region. Thomas St. Clair recalled meeting an assistant surgeon who had fallen ill with fever 10 days after his arrival in the Caribbean and died 3 days later. Women and children accompanying both officers and regular soldiers also suffered from the ravages of disease and perished. In 1819, during a fever epidemic in Jamaica amongst the 92nd Regiment of Foot, 4 out of the 5 officers' wives, 29 amongst the 60 wives of the rank and file and 33 of the 50 children died. One observer, Richard Wyvill, reported, *"I have been quite shocked at seeing three English ladies, wives to some of the officers here, who only three months ago had come to this country as fair as lilies, blooming as roses, now pallid, sallow, and sickly, with the appearance of being ten years older than they really are."*

Hospital buildings were often hard to obtain in the Caribbean, and also tended to suffer from the same lack of healthy conditions as other military buildings in the area. Many soldiers who served in the region dreaded being sent to the hospital for a 'minor' ailment in case they caught one of the dreaded fevers and died. George Pinckard, serving as a doctor and the Army's Inspector of Hospitals in the recently surrendered Dutch colonies

of Berbice and Essequibo during the French Revolutionary Wars, in a letter to Britain, recounted an incident in which a soldier named Chapman, who was quite clearly very ill, insisted that he had no more than a headache and did not want to go to hospital. Pinckard attempted to make the man as comfortable as possible in ordinary quarters, giving him a hammock in which to sleep in a peaceful place, but Chapman unfortunately soon passed away.

There was also a belief amongst many people that alcohol could ward off disease, which led a large number of soldiers to drink copious amounts of rum, not only as a social relaxant but in an attempt to prevent themselves contracting the dreaded fever. Some doctors also prescribed alcohol as a preventative measure and even as a curative, with Doctor George Pinckard drinking both old wine and port when he fell ill with fever whilst serving in Guiana. Although Pinckard survived, the drinking of rum in large quantities did in fact lower the resistance of the men to disease and, in many cases, by drinking regularly to vast excess, led to diseases of the liver. Several doctors realised this and therefore recommended moderation, not just in drink but also in foods eaten. In order to maintain the health of officers living in the West Indies, John Rollo produced a guide and commented that, *“living well and living regular are far from being incompatible. A tasty and nourishing diet, even a generous allowance of wine, may not only be used, but are absolutely necessary to answer the purposes expressed. The moment, however, you go beyond the cheerful glass, that instant you expose yourself, as has been already observed, to every cause capable of producing disease.”*

This was made worse by the fact that soldiers were largely only able to get their hands on so called ‘new rum’, i.e. rum which had not been properly aged by leaving it in a cask for a sufficient period of time. This new rum was far more hazardous to human health than proper rum, being essentially moonshine. There is now evidence to support the theory that many cases that were believed to be some form of fever were in fact lead poisoning. Much ‘new rum’ was distilled using equipment made of lead, which seeped into the liquid during the process, making it poisonous for those who drank it. For years, the Army tried in vain to reduce the dependence of the men on ‘new rum’, but were thwarted by a variety of factors; these included a lack of a safer replacement drink and dishonest commissaries who were in league with ‘new rum’ makers and kept purchasing it to fill Army stores, often in defiance of instructions. Both officers and men in the



The interior of an early 19th Century Caribbean Rum distillery

ranks continued to drink themselves into sickness or death and intoxication also led to several incidents of indiscipline amongst both classes. In one case, Lieutenant Dudgeon of the 4th West India Regiment, stationed at Fort Andrews in British Guiana, was reported to go to bed at night drunk and turn out to morning parade just as intoxicated; he died after six months. Doctors also called attention to soldiers’ diets, namely the heavy

reliance on salted meat. Thus, there was a drive to improve this unhealthy fare, with more fresh meat being introduced over time, as well as an attempt to ensure that plain, simple, healthy and nourishing meals were produced.

By the time of the wars against France in the 1790s, it was clear that this situation could not continue; not only were men dying in their hundreds, or being rendered permanently unfit for service, but such deaths were also affecting the number of recruits that the Army could raise. The British public’s view of the West Indies as a hotbed of disease was perhaps even worse than

West Indian Doctresses

Army doctors were not the only source of treatment for soldiers in the West Indies. Local women, who practised traditional herbal remedies, were hailed by doctors and soldiers alike as making excellent nurses and many soldiers recovered under their care. Many of these doctresses, if they were free women, ran their own boarding establishments where men could recover. Mary Seacole, for her contributions during the Crimean War, is the most famous West Indian doctress, and she learned her craft from her mother, who ran a boarding establishment in Jamaica.

the reality. Army Doctor George Pinckard described scenes in Southampton before a large expedition left for the West Indies in 1794, with people saying how they pitied the men and that they expected them never to return. The Caribbean acquired the nickname of the 'White Man's Grave'. Men were afraid to take the King's Shilling for fear that they might be sent to the West Indies. However, there was still a need to defend the colonies and so the Army and Government began to look at ways in which the West Indies might be better able to defend themselves through the recruitment of West Indians, particularly those of African descent or origin.



Alexander Tulloch circa 1860s

The furore surrounding the creation of the West India Regiments will be dealt with elsewhere, but from a medical perspective they were as successful as had been hoped, which was confirmed in a study conducted by Henry Marshall and Alexander Tulloch for the Army and Ministry of War in the 1830s. Examining reports from over a twenty year period, they discovered that the observations of earlier doctors were largely accurate and black troops were indeed much less likely to die from fevers and, on the whole, they were far less likely to succumb to disease than European troops. Some officers thought this was, in part, due to them drinking considerably less than white soldiers. However, it was noted that they were more likely to suffer fatally from respiratory ailments than their European counterparts, although their overall death rate was much lower.

This study also identified that certain diseases were more likely to be contracted on individual islands; diseases of the lungs were more prevalent in Barbados and diseases of the liver in others, notably St. Vincent. Marshall and Tulloch's report overturned some popular perceptions in medicine, including what necessarily constituted a healthy location for a military station. They noted that Fort Augusta in Jamaica, that was surrounded by marshy ground, was no less healthy than the base at Stoney Hill, which had traditionally been regarded as a much more salubrious site. The researchers did conclude that the belief that outposts at higher altitudes were healthier was true, so long as such outposts were built above 2000-2500 feet above sea level. This may have been because above these altitudes, mosquitoes are rarely found. They recommended that more elevated stations should be built, which eventually led to the construction of Newcastle Hill Station in the Blue Mountains of Jamaica.



A view of Newcastle Hill Station
in Jamaica's Blue Mountains

Although over time matters improved as medical understanding developed, the heavy death toll in the Caribbean meant that, whilst a military threat to the British West Indies remained, the British Government and Army wanted to find ways of reducing the death toll from disease. This meant placing an increasing responsibility for the defences of the region on the islands themselves, notably recruiting from the local population, who proved more resistant to the effects of the local diseases.

Fortifications in the West Indies



A map of Barbados demonstrating some of the defensive fortifications on its coast

In order to defend the West Indies, many fortifications were constructed across the islands, normally positioned around the coastline or overlooking harbours in order to defend against enemy raids or invasion. Particularly important sites, such as Barbados's Carlisle Bay, were given more prominence; six forts were established to protect it. The economic importance of some of the West Indian islands was so significant that some of the larger and richer islands developed quite extensive networks of defences, which led future American President George Washington on his visit to Barbados, in what was his only journey outside North America, to comment that the island was a single giant fortress. Often it was the case that the fortifications were constructed at the behest of the local governments.

The majority of the fortifications in the West Indies were initially built and maintained using slave labour, with hundreds of slaves used by the local Caribbean Governments to do so. However, maintenance on the fortifications was not always regular, and, in some conflicts, it was noted that fortifications had fallen into poor states of repair; during the American Revolution, many island governments refused to vote for additional funding to restore them. As the threat to the British Caribbean islands faded, many fortresses and camps fell out

of use and were no longer maintained. Over time, degradation in the Caribbean climate means that, of some, little evidence now remains. This process of deterioration occasionally has been aided by changes in Caribbean geography; for example, the site of the small fort that was at Saint George Cay off the Caicos Islands is now underwater, with its location marked by submerged, rusted cannons that once were part of its defences.

A number of fortifications that formed part of larger complexes and camps have survived the ravages of time, thanks to more consistent maintenance over the years. The Shirley Heights complex, named for Governor Sir Thomas Shirley, which is situated above English Harbour, Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, housed hundreds of soldiers and their families. Arguably, the most impressive fortress in the British Caribbean was at Brimstone Hill, St. Kitts, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This complex was developed gradually over the course of the eighteenth century, and remains one of the earliest surviving examples of the 'polygonal system' of military architecture, featuring various barracks, storerooms, cisterns, bastions and the citadel of Fort George. Made of stone, largely quarried from the 220-metre-high twin-peaked hill on which it stands, the stronghold was believed, at its peak, to be impregnable, and indeed no enemy ever captured it by storming the defences. Brimstone Hill was undoubtedly an imposing edifice but men in remoter postings had to deal with ruder structures. Thomas St. Clair was stationed for a time at Fort Myers in British Guiana, which was a poorly constructed mud-work, and during his residence there as an officer, he remarked that it reminded him of a house of cards built on a table.



The view from Shirley Heights, Antigua



Part of the fortifications at Brimstone Hill, St. Kitts

Even some of the smallest and poorest islands had their own fortifications for the use of their local militias when necessary. For example, on Grand Cayman, two small forts were constructed; one was to defend the main land site at Hogstye Bay and the other to safeguard the road to the then capital of Bodden Town. The remains of the first of these can still be seen in downtown Georgetown today, despite almost being destroyed by a property developer. Like larger fortifications, such as Brimstone Hill, it is made of local materials, but the poverty of the Cayman Islands, at the time of its construction in the late eighteenth century, limited its scale and strength. The fort covered a small area of 57ft by 38ft and, despite having emplacements for ten guns originally, in the early nineteenth century it was noted that it only had three guns.



The remains of Fort George, Grand Cayman

When constructing military buildings in the region, the British Army's engineers also had to consider some architectural features used in Caribbean civilian architecture to help keep buildings cool, dry and well ventilated. These included a raised ground floor for protection against storm flooding and, to help air circulate, window jalousies to keep direct sun and rain out, whilst still allowing light and air in, as well as a veranda or gallery around the building. The problem with many structures in the Caribbean was that they were built in what proved to be unhealthy sites, such as Jamaica's Fort Augusta, which was constructed near swampy terrain and whose garrison therefore frequently fell ill.

The British Army's Royal Engineers also developed a system of prefabricated buildings in the 1820s. These involved a cast iron skeleton, made in Britain, and then shipped to the Caribbean. This skeleton featured the girders, joists, stairs and doors, whilst the walls were 'filled in' with locally-sourced stone. Barracks made in this fashion were 156ft long, three storeys high, including a basement, with a gallery running around the two upper storeys. These buildings would sleep over 200 soldiers, between rooms designed for 18 to 20 men each. Hospitals were also constructed in this fashion and such buildings proved to be sturdy, resisting hurricane-force winds, with some even surviving to the modern day.

The fortifications of the Caribbean were equipped with some of the most impressive array of cannons to be found anywhere in the world; Barbados had 364 serviceable guns by 1780s. Some of these cannons are massive in size, with one example in Jamaica originally requiring its own steam powered mechanism to move it. Many of these guns remain in the islands and can be seen at the fortifications and camps which are now a major tourist attraction in the region. A few camps are still used today by the local defence forces, including Up Park Camp, in Jamaica, the site of which was first purchased by the British Army in 1784. Others have been repurposed, such as Jamaica's Fort Augusta, which is now the site of the island's only women's prison.

Women and the West Indian Soldier

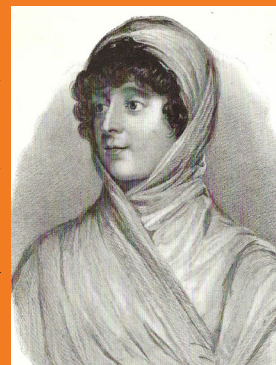
By Alice Howey

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the West Indies were a massive outpost of the British Empire with sixty-nine line infantry regiments serving there between 1793 and 1815. Historically, the lives of those serving within these regiments have been studied from their formation, through their postings to the demobilisation of the male soldiers within their ranks. This approach has seldom afforded an insight into the intricacies of the day-to-day lives of those women occupying the periphery of the narratives on the West Indian soldier. Women enter historical records in a multitude of ways during this period, but equally stark is their blatant absence from the military perspective.

In past centuries, it was usual for women to follow European armies on campaign, sharing inhospitable living conditions with the soldiers. Although often discouraged by the officers from accompanying the regiment, as they were regarded as an unwelcome distraction, women did fulfil some useful auxiliary roles: nursing, mending uniforms, cooking, doing laundry, cleaning, and as sutlers, acquiring and selling necessary supplies to soldiers, whilst some, to sustain themselves, entered prostitution. It was a harsh life, but was a preferable alternative to being abandoned to destitution. Officers' wives, however, enjoyed a better existence and were treated with deference to their higher status.

Lady Maria Nugent

Lady Nugent was the wife of General Sir George Nugent, the Governor of Jamaica (1801-1805). She accompanied her husband during his tenure and her diaries provide an important insight into Jamaican life, including not only military life, such as recruits to the West India Regiments and the health of soldiers, but the nature of Creole society and how it compared to British society.



The wife who did not follow her Army husband often disappeared into the historical ether, whilst little has been recorded about those women who were camp followers. It was not uncommon for unaccompanied soldiers, both officers and the rank and file, to seek feminine company amongst the local population and indeed it is the black women who struggle most to be heard within historical narratives. Military couples travelling from Britain always differed from their civilian counterparts in that they were subject to the culture and the policies of the British Army. The eighteenth century saw a vastly diminished role for women within the British Army. More sophisticated supply networks, combined with Enlightenment ideals of women meant that a white woman's role within the Army increasingly diminished within this period.

The Caribbean climate and its deadly diseases are a well-documented factor to have impacted the West Indian Regiments. Just over half of the European redcoats who served in the British West Indies died in service, mostly due to a new and deadly strain of yellow fever. As a result, many soldiers chose to stay at the same rank back in Britain rather than be promoted and serve in the West Indies, with George Pinkard stating that the very mention of the West Indies was synonymous with fear. As stated by historian Roger Buckley, most officers' wives completely refused to accompany their husbands to the Caribbean. However, he nuances that the wives of low ranking soldiers, with permission granted, would accompany their husbands to the West Indies, despite the harsh climate. This class differentiation is significant in that it demonstrates lack of historical sources pertaining to lower social classes; poor white women literally disappear from abolition-era and post emancipation gender histories, even though they represented a numerically sizeable demographic on some islands, such as Barbados.

The officer class were able to employ servants during their posting in the West Indies. In fact, most officers in service had considerable amounts of free time and were generally stationed without their wives, so black mistresses were not uncommon. Enslaved women did have some influence as mistresses to Army officers, such as through their occupation as doctresses, but this was likely a method of ensuring their position and security rather than a way of actively exerting their own agency. Lt. Thomas Staunton St. Clair gives us an insight into how British soldiers vindicated their immorality of having mistresses by citing black women's general usefulness during their time in the Caribbean. Whilst St Clair conveys his "*outrage on common decency and propriety*" towards having a mistress, he also claims that they are "*faithful and constant to the protectors*"

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by whom they are chosen”, thus constituting “a lawful marriage for the time it lasts”. He praises their ability to perform the duties of a wife except from “*presiding at the table*”, making apparent both the physical and metaphorical extent to which black women could integrate into the Eurocentric household.

British military commanders in the Caribbean told officials in London that black soldiers were absolutely necessary for the security of the British islands, complaining they had so few healthy white troops, that by 1795 they could not have prevented the French from capturing British colonies. Whilst the formation of the West India Regiments are well documented, there are far fewer discussions concerning the Corps of Military Labourers of the Eastern Caribbean. Drafted from the late 8th West India Regiment, these African men might have been in bondage when they entered the corps, but were considered free men when they were released from their service in the Army. Working in occupations such as joinery, masonry, carpentry and engineering, other non-military individuals were attached to each garrison. In 1808 at Fort Amsterdam, 26 black women and 51 children were attached to the engineering department of the corps. As analysed by René Chartrand, relationships between black men and women were not frowned upon, indeed, they may have been tacitly encouraged, as women were considered to have brought social stability and would also become caregivers to raise the next generation of artisans for the British Army. Details of these African-West Indian corps were obviously concealed by bureaucrats into budgets of other government corps, not recorded in War Office documents. The discovery of memoirs and manuscript correspondence dealing with these military organisations importantly gives a wider sense of a whole set of social circumstances that were purposely concealed by the British Army: if politics and law could afford to exclude and ignore familial groups and communities from African descent, it appears they succeeded in doing so.

Female household slaves provided nursing care to Army officers stationed in the Caribbean. Evidence of this comes from an account of the surgeon William Fergusson on his visit to the West Indies, who remarked, “*the colonial women of every class, whether blacks, mulattoes, or mustees [of mixed ancestry] make the best sick nurses in the world*”. Female doctoring skills were well respected in the Caribbean, as they seemed to work better in fighting enteric diseases than standard methods. In fact, historian Jane Robinson stresses that on no other subject related to the West Indian campaign is there so much unanimity than in the eyewitness accounts of black caregiving.



Mary Seacole

Mary Seacole’s skills as a caregiver certainly define her, in our modern-day terms, as a nurse; her autobiographical account of her travels published in 1857 provide historians with the fullest picture of the type of care received by soldiers of the West India Regiments. However, the skills that she documented have a direct link to the African tradition of Obeah – benign witch doctoring; Seacole herself states, “*The officers were glad of me as a doctress and nurse may be easily understood*”. The British Army dismissed Obeah doctoring skills as a form of voodoo but they became well known amongst those on the ground as being very effective. These doctresses based their treatments on decoctions of essential barks, roots and fruits. Our greatest insight into the attitudes towards this form of doctoring comes from the Great Exhibition of 1851 held in Hyde Park. ‘Charms and implements’ seized from Obeahmen in Jamaica were displayed with ‘African fetish charms’ taken from Sierra Leone, framing Obeah as being a mere discussion of its origins. Furthermore, the Jamaican objects were purposely chosen to appear inferior to the African artifacts in order to show how the cult of Obeah had deteriorated on Jamaican soil. Thus, we see evidence of female doctoring as a subject fraught with contradictions, manipulated within a complex colonial narrative of progress and modernity that oppresses occupations of the black woman.

Beyond an analysis of the set role of women as wives and caregivers in the Caribbean, it is of course important to highlight the black woman as a transient figure, hard to trace within historical sources. They owned lodging houses, ran restaurants frequented by soldiers and assisted doctors and surgeons within an ever-changing political and social landscape, directly impacted by the movements of the West India Regiments and the British Army at large. However, these findings are not to say that they didn’t have access, nor were a part of functioning family units beyond their enslavement. More so, that there is so much left to discover. In doing so, this chapter has sought to embrace specific enquiries into the lives of women as part of wider issues of identity and power.

The Nine Years War

When: 1688-1697

Combatants: England and allies (The Grand Alliance) vs France

Reasons: Expansionist policies of Louis XIV of France

Other names: The War of the Grand Alliance, The War of the League of Augsburg, King William's War

Key battles and places: St. Kitts, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Hispaniola

In 1688 England experienced the 'Glorious Revolution' which ended the reign of the Catholic James II in a largely bloodless event. James's daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange, were invited to ascend the throne as joint Protestant monarchs – William III and Mary II. England could no longer remain neutral in the conflicts that were occurring on the European continent, namely caused by the expansionist ambitions of the French King Louis XIV. William had for some years been opposing Louis' plans in his role as Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic. On 20th December 1688, an alliance was formed between England, the Dutch Republic and the Archduchy of Austria, later joined by Spain and the Duchy of Savoy, to oppose France. This led to the ensuing conflict, which was named the War of the Grand Alliance or, more popularly, the Nine Years War for its duration (1688-1697), but also known as King William's War in the Americas.



King William III and Queen Mary II

As was the case in other wars between European powers, the conflict also spread to the Caribbean. The French made the first move in capturing the Dutch island of St. Eustatius in April 1689, taking over the English half of the shared island of St. Kitts two months later; in this they were helped by Irish Catholic forces who were loyal to Louis' ally, the former King James II, who wished to recover his throne. The Governors of the English colonies in the region were naturally worried by these developments and felt that the military might that they had at their disposal was insufficient to combat the French and recover the captured territories, or better yet, capture any French territories. In Barbados, before the French had expelled the English from St. Kitts, Sir Timothy Thornhill, a local wealthy planter, slaveowner and Major-General in the Barbadian militia, raised a regiment of 700 men, who were paid from the island's public purse. He had intended to rendezvous with forces commanded by the Governor of the Leeward Islands, Christopher Codrington, before going to reinforce St. Kitts but, unbeknownst to him, the English on the island had capitulated before he left Barbados.

Although too late to repel the French from St. Kitts, Codrington, Thornhill and their compatriots resolved, nevertheless, to launch a few expeditions against the French, whilst awaiting reinforcements from Britain in late 1688. They were successful in rescuing the inhabitants of Anguilla, when the island was attacked in November 1689, and in forcing the French to capitulate on St. Bartholomew. Thornhill also led an expedition to capture the Franco-Dutch island of St. Martin in January 1690 but, owing to the appearance of French reinforcements, was forced to retreat, although they were successful in destroying the major fortifications on the island.

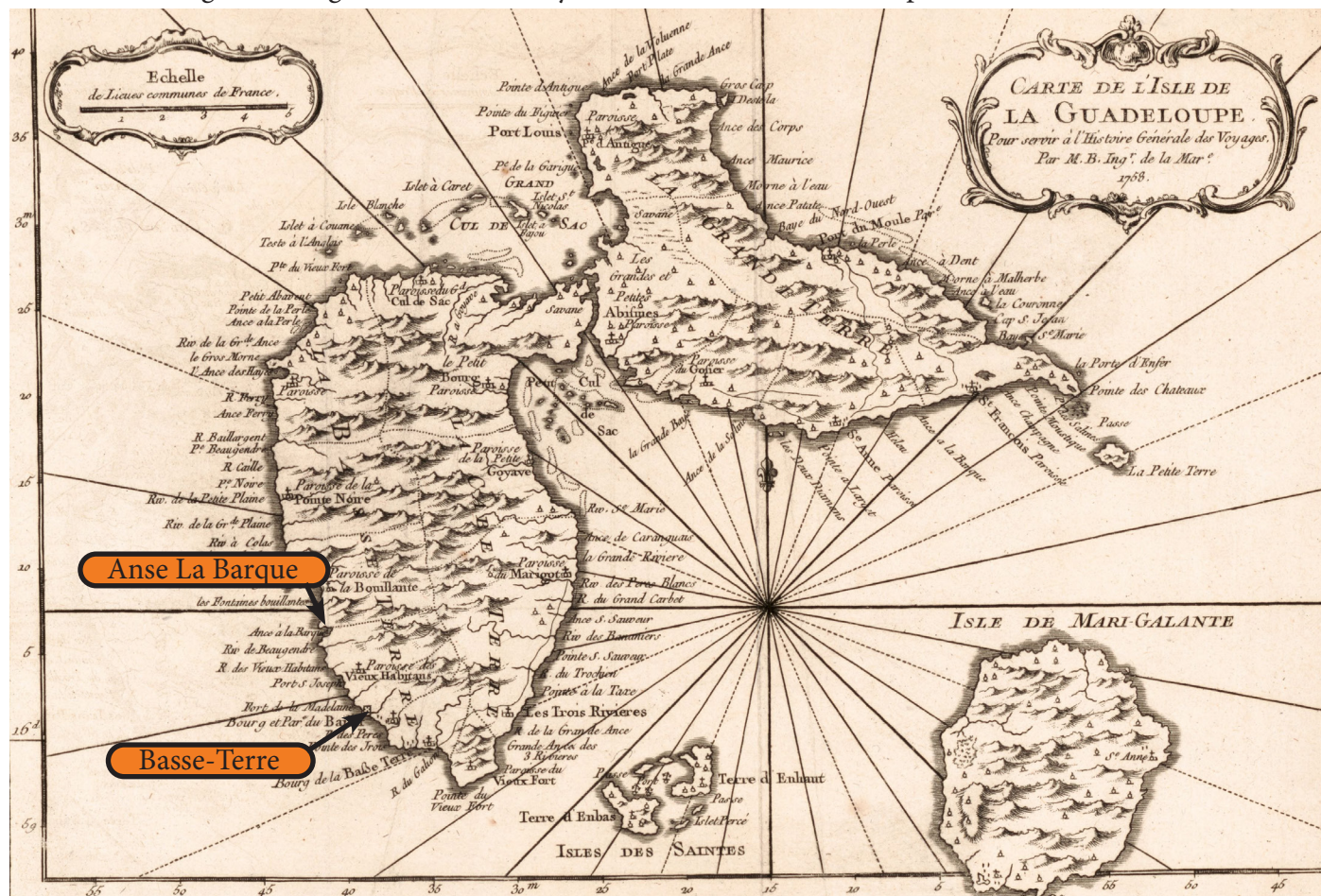
In England, the planned expedition was subject to a variety of delays and did not depart until 9th March 1690, arriving in Barbados in early May 1690. Commanding the fleet of 13 ships was Captain Lawrence Wright, whilst Lieutenant Colonel Henry Holt commanded the Duke of Bolton's second Regiment of Foot. Further delay occurred when many men became ill during the crossing; the fleet was forced to remain at Barbados for a month for them to recuperate before proceeding to Antigua to rendezvous with Codrington and Thornhill's

forces. Codrington, who was designated overall Commander of the land forces, was disappointed with the number of men that had arrived, only providing a total force of approximately 2,000, as he had designs on capturing the entirety of the French West Indies. There was yet another delay whilst more men were recruited, bringing the total to possibly 3,000. With these numbers, a surprise attack on St. Kitts was attempted on 19th June 1690 but the chosen landing site of Frigate Bay was discovered to have been fortified by the French with trenches and the landing was called off. Codrington believed that a head-on assault in such conditions would fail and therefore a new plan was constructed - the English would attack Frigate Bay the next day. The French would hopefully think that this was nothing but a feint; however, a force of 500 militiamen, led by Timothy Thornhill, would land half a mile to the east, ascend an 800ft hill and then come crashing down onto the French flank, opening a hole in their position. This strategy was a complete success and the English force was able to land its troops. For his efforts, the hill that Thornhill climbed has been known ever since as Sir Timothy's Hill or Thornhill's hill.



The English then advanced towards Basseterre, the principal town of the island, along two roads, one through the mountains and the other by the coast. The Antiguan militia, taking the coast road, saw heavy fighting with the French defenders with many of their number killed or wounded. Abandoning Basseterre, the French decided to make their stand at Charles Fort on Sandy Point. The English were able to observe them from the nearby vantage point of Brimstone Hill. A battery of guns was also established on Brimstone Hill to bombard the fort, marking Brimstone Hill's first use as a military site. It would later become the home of the island's principal defensive fortification. Between the 2nd and 12th July 1690, the English bombarded the fort; this was ended by a ceasefire, which turned into a French surrender two days later, securing the island for the English. This victory was followed by the successful recapture of the Dutch island of St. Eustatius by Sir Timothy and his men before the onset of the annual hurricane season ended campaigning. An attack on Guadeloupe was planned for later in the year, but was abandoned for a variety of reason, one of which was deteriorating relations between Codrington and Wright. Poor relations between commanders on land and sea would affect not only this expedition but the remainder of English operations in the Caribbean during the war. Thus, the next effective military operation did not take place until the following year with an attack on the island of Marie Galante on 28th March 1691, after much disagreement between Codrington and Wright. Although the English had successfully captured the island, they chose not to leave a garrison, but instead retained as much manpower as possible for the assault on Guadeloupe, a far more strategically important target.

The English fleet arrived at Guadeloupe on 19th April 1691, with the hope that they could land near the principal town of Basse-Terre on the island's southwestern coast. However, this proved to be impossible due to the strength of the French fortifications and thus they were required to proceed up the eastern coast. After considering Anse la Barque Bay as a landing point, they decided to sail slightly further to ensure that they could land without having directly to confront the French; this naturally meant a longer march, through difficult and dangerous territory to reach Basse-Terre. On 21st April Codrington and his men landed successfully and began marching southward through terrain filled with thick woods and deep gullies, which the French used to their advantage. The English endured heavy losses in their advance but pressed on, until, at sunset on 22nd,



Codrington, with his advance force, reached La Baillif, a mere 3 miles from Basse-Terre. The main body of the Army arrived the next day, whilst a naval force was sent to reconnoitre the town, where the French had decided to withdraw into the castle and accompanying fortifications. The English attempted to bombard the French position, at first unsuccessfully, from the sea and then from land. However, in the midst of these efforts, word arrived that French reinforcements had landed on Martinique. Not wishing to be trapped between the fort and these reinforcements, should they attempt to relieve Guadeloupe, the decision was made to leave. Thus, the expedition was ended, with the Army re-embarking aboard ship on 14th May and Captain Wright and his forces leaving shortly afterwards.

The failure to capture Guadeloupe led to another expedition being launched the following year under the command of Captain Ralph Wrenn of the Royal Navy. However, the land force only consisted of 400 men from the Duke of Bolton's Regiment, who never had a chance to fight as the fleet was unable to gain mastery of the seas when they arrived in January 1692. Many of them died of disease at Barbados, as did Captain Wrenn, and the remainder of the force returned, as per their orders, to England in the April. Following this disaster, a third expedition was launched in 1693, under the command of Sir Francis Wheler, with nearly 2,000 soldiers, in addition to the naval fleet. They arrived at Barbados in late February 1693. Militia forces had again been raised in the West Indies, totalling around 1,000 men, to support this force, but the Antiguan militia were unwilling to serve unless it was under their own officers, so Governor Codrington accompanied them in a voluntary capacity. The target of this expedition was Martinique, with the English landing at the beginning of April and Codrington's men landing on the 9th. On the 15th, the English decided to attack Fort Royal,

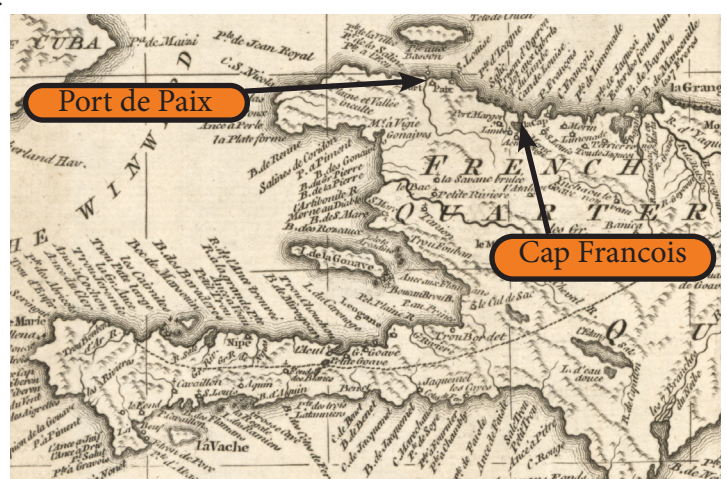
modern day Fort-de-France. The initial advance did not go well, with the advance parties forced by the French to retreat. The French, however, decided to withdraw to the safety of the Fort and town. The initial attacks failed and a French counterattack resulted in many English casualties. On 21st April, it was decided, in light of the 800 men who had been lost since the initial landing, and concerns about the loyalty of the large number of Irish Catholics in the Army, to withdraw. The expedition once again had orders to return to England, even though the commanders felt that an attack on Guadeloupe could have been successful.

One final expedition to the West Indies embarked as a result of an attack on Jamaica in 1694. 3,000 French troops had landed on Jamaica at Cow Bay and Morant Bay, under the command of Governor Ducasse. The Jamaicans had some advance warning from one Captain Elliot on 31st May, declaring Martial Law that evening and preparing their defences as best they could. When the French finally arrived on 19th June, the Jamaican militia put up a stiff fight and were able to drive the French back to their ships, but not before the French had done severe damage to the island, destroying over 50 sugar plantations, causing damage of over £60,000, which would be almost £12 million today. When news reached Britain of the French invasion, a force was sent to relieve Jamaica and recapture the island if it was found to be in French possession when it arrived. This expedition was composed of 1,200 men, divided between two regiments, under the overall command of Colonel Luke Lillingston, who had taken part in the earlier invasion of Martinique. The Navy was placed under the command of Commodore Robert Wilmot.



Luke Lillingston

All vessels of the squadron arrived at St. Kitts by 25th March 1695. As the militia had successfully defended Jamaica, the expedition proceeded with their secondary objective - to retaliate against the French by attacking St. Domingue on the western side of the island of Hispaniola, from which their attack had been launched. Travelling to the Spanish side of the island, who were allied with the English, they agreed a plan of attack, and began operations at Cap Francois, today's Cap-Haïtien, in May 1695. The French abandoned the local fort and retreated to Port de Paix with the English in pursuit. However, they misunderstood the distance and what they believed to be a four-day march was actually a sixteen-day one through terrible weather. The Navy arrived within the space of a few days and Commodore Wilmot began his attack whilst waiting for the Army. Operations were hampered by poor relations between Lillingston and Wilmot, with disagreements about where to position gun batteries to bombard the French fort. The poor working relationships between Army and Navy commanders had undermined the success of other Caribbean expeditions during the war, to the point that King William had made the unusual step of granting a joint audience to Lillingston and Wilmot to impress upon them the need for joint cooperation, a message that clearly went unheeded. Despite the arguments, the Fort at Port de Paix was successfully breached by the Lillingston's gun battery. The French attempted to escape before the Army could storm the fort, and managed to break out into the woods, where they were eventually captured by the Spanish. The English left Hispaniola on 17th July and sailed to Jamaica, where the remnants of Lillingston's regiment remained to bolster Jamaican defence and was eventually disbanded.



The Nine Years War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick (Rijswijk) in 1697. This war demonstrated that, owing to the geography of the Caribbean, it was vitally important for the Army and Navy to work together in the region. Furthermore, the war highlighted the toll that disease could take on armies serving in the region. Some of the expeditions had also arrived too late in the year, when the rainy season was starting, which exacerbated the problem of disease. However, lessons were not learnt and these issues continued throughout the wars of the eighteenth century.

The War of the Spanish Succession

When: 1701-1714

Combatants: Great Britain vs Spain and France

Reasons: Disagreements over who should inherit the Spanish crown and the territories it controlled.

Other names: Queen Anne's War (in the Americas)

Key battles and places: St. Kitts, The Bahamas, Antigua

The War of the Spanish succession, often known in North America as Queen Anne's War, was caused by disagreements over the inheritance of King Charles II of Spain, the last Hapsburg monarch of Spain, who died childless. He had named Philip, grandson of Louis XIV of France, as his heir, whilst England and others favoured Archduke Charles, the second son of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II. The conflicting claims, and the influence that the choice of Spanish Monarch would have on the balance of power in Europe, led to war.



Charles II of Spain



Archduke Charles



Christopher Codrington
the Younger

In the Caribbean, conflict once again broke out amongst the colonies, with the English colonies in the Leeward Islands launching an attack against the French half of St. Kitts. They were led by Christopher Codrington the Younger, son of the man who had fought in the Nine Years War, and who had now been appointed to his deceased father's former positions of Governor and Captain General of the Leeward Islands. As the English volunteers outnumbered the French by about eight to one, the French governor was induced to surrender. Codrington then planned an attack on Martinique, but an expedition arrived from England under the command of Commodore Hovenden Walker and together they invaded Guadeloupe on 12th March 1703. The island's capital Basse-Terre was captured and the French defenders withdrew inside the local fort. This led to a siege and by 30th March, Codrington and his men had succeeded in breaching the fort's walls, but the French abandoned their defences and withdrew to the mountainous interior. The English spent the next two months destroying French plantations and crops before sickness took its toll. The increasing

levels of illness, a lack of provisions and French reinforcement arriving from Martinique meant that the expedition was forced to withdraw, re-embarking on 6th May 1703 and sailing for Jamaica. Although new reinforcements arrived, the whole force journeyed to Newfoundland in June, in compliance with the orders that had been issued when it left Britain.

The English colonies came under attack in the aftermath of this expedition; there was a Franco-Spanish raid on Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas in October 1703, which saw the capture of the local Governor and his soldiers and the collapse of organised government in the Bahamas. This led to the infamous buccaneer state of the Pirates' Republic of Nassau, which lasted until 1718. On 5th February 1706, the French were prevented by bad weather from landing on Nevis, which gave the local militia time to man the island's defences and drive them off by the 11th. The French then proceeded to St. Kitts, landing at Frigate Bay and Belle Tete Point. They

went on to destroy property and loot the English side of the island, whilst the defenders were forced to remain in their strongholds at Charles Fort and Brimstone Hill. The French eventually left St. Kitts when rumours of approaching English reinforcements reached them, but they returned to Nevis in March 1706 under the command of Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville. The English were forced to abandon their defences and retreat to the hills which, according to one account was the consequence of a Militia Colonel abandoning his post. The French again departed before reinforcements arrived.

In 1707, the Acts of Union between England, Wales and Scotland to form the Kingdom of Great Britain were passed. The same year, 300 men of Colonel Luke Lillingston's Regiment arrived in Antigua from Ireland, although the Colonel did not accompany them. Daniel Parke, Governor of the Leeward Islands, had them dispersed in detachments around the colony and they remained in the Caribbean for the next 57 years, eventually being numbered as the 38th Regiment of Foot. However, Parke's relationship with the regiment proved strained and there were many arguments between him and Colonel Jones, who took up command of the regiment. Jones, for his part, appears to have been a poor commander, and many of his men petitioned the Governor directly for both money and clothing, as they had not been paid or supplied by their officers. Both men complained of the other's conduct to the authorities in Britain, and relations between the two grew even worse. Parke's relationship with the leading members of Antiguan society was also tense, with the latter accusing him of both having affairs with the wives and daughters of various men, as well as corruption. Matters eventually came to a head and an uprising took place, in which apparently many soldiers sided against the Governor. Parke was killed by the mob, who had managed to break into Government House, Antigua and eleven soldiers were also killed during the insurrection. Three officers, Captain Joseph Rokeby, Lieutenant Thomas Watts and Ensign Harry Smith, were all implicated in the event, but Smith's trial collapsed in 1714 due to a lack of evidence and the others were not even tried.



Governor Daniel Parke

From 1710 the French launched several attacks on Montserrat, but the initial attack in 1710 was easily repelled, with the defenders even capturing prisoners and some French regimental colours. A second attack was repulsed in April 1711, thanks to reinforcements from the 38th Regiment, who also helped repel another attack in the June whilst serving as part of the crew of *HMS Newcastle*. The final attack was on 8th July 1712, when the French were again repelled, thanks to the efforts of the local militia and a detachment of the 38th under the command of Captain Marshall.

The Treaty of Utrecht at the end of the war saw British territorial gains, which included the ceding of Gibraltar and Minorca by the Spanish in Europe, but the French also agreed to relinquish their territory of St. Kitts, meaning that the whole of the island was now British territory and would remain so until the island achieved independence in 1967. The Spanish also made another concession, granting Britain's South Sea Company the *asiento*, the right to transport 4,800 slaves from Africa to Spanish South America a year. It would be British Spanish disagreements over the *asiento* and other economic matters that contributed to the next war that Britain fought in the Caribbean.

The War of Jenkins' Ear

When: 1739-1748

Combatants: Great Britain vs Spain

Reasons: Cropping of Captain Jenkins' Ear, economic disagreements

Other names: The War of the Austrian Succession, Guerra del Asiento (The War of the Asiento)

Key battles and places: St. Kitts, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Hispaniola

The uniquely named War of Jenkins' Ear takes its name from an incident in 1731, when the merchant ship *Rebecca*, captained by Captain Robert Jenkins of Britain, was boarded by a Spanish guardacosta, captained by Juan Leon Fandino, who were trying to prevent illegal trade with Spanish America. Despite Jenkins' destination being unclear, Fandino is said to have cut off Jenkins' ear, saying that he would have done the same to King George if he were there. Jenkins preserved his ear and later showed it to the British Parliament in 1738. The truth of the story has been debated by historians ever since, with the causes of the war having more to do with deteriorating economic relations between Britain and Spain than Jenkins' severed ear. The British had been abusing their trade privileges, including the *asiento*, and the Spanish guardacostas had been overzealous in stopping foreign vessels.



A cartoon of Captain Jenkins presenting his ear to Parliament

The War of Jenkins' Ear broke out in 1739 when negotiations between Britain and Spain collapsed and Britain declared war on 19th October. A fleet was despatched to the Caribbean under the command of Vice-Admiral Edward Vernon, who had previously served in the region during the War of the Spanish Succession. Vernon believed that it would be possible to force the Spanish Empire in the Americas to crumble by dividing it. He planned to capture two of its most important cities on the coast of the American mainland: Porto Bello in modern day Panama and Cartagena in modern day Columbia.



Initially, the Army did not have much of a role in the conflict, with Vernon's fleet comprising only sailors and marines. After arriving in the West Indies, Vernon and his fleet spent a few weeks at Jamaica. He had been given rather vague orders, although this had included directions to gather information on potential targets in the Spanish Caribbean. In the end, it was resolved to attack Porto Bello. This small city was notable for being the port at which the Spanish trading galleons arrived. Vernon's fleet of six ships arrived on the 20th November and captured the lightly-defended city with ease, as for most of the year, before and after the visit of the trading galleons, it was sparsely populated. Due to this small number of inhabitants, there was little advantage in trying to hold onto the city and the British decided to withdraw, but not before they destroyed all of the city's fortifications.

Despite the fact that Porto Bello was not a particularly difficult military target, in the minds of the public it was a great bastion of Spanish power and news of Vernon's victory was rapturously received in Britain; it became widely celebrated, with Vernon becoming a household name. As would later be the case in the aftermath of the Battle of Waterloo, many different locations were named 'Portobello' or a variation thereof, hence Portobello Road in London's Notting Hill and the Portobello district of Edinburgh. Vernon's name was also given to many squares and streets. The victory at Porto Bello meant that other operations in the Caribbean were planned, the targets now being Cartagena and Havana. In these the Army would play a part and a force was assembled of both British troops and a contingent from nine of the thirteen British colonies in North America. This force took some time to assemble and eventually met in Jamaica. The American contingent arrived before the end of 1740 and soon felt the ill effects of the Jamaican climate, namely disease and an abundance of rum. Amongst their number there was one figure of note, a Captain Lawrence Washington, the elder half-brother of future American President George Washington.

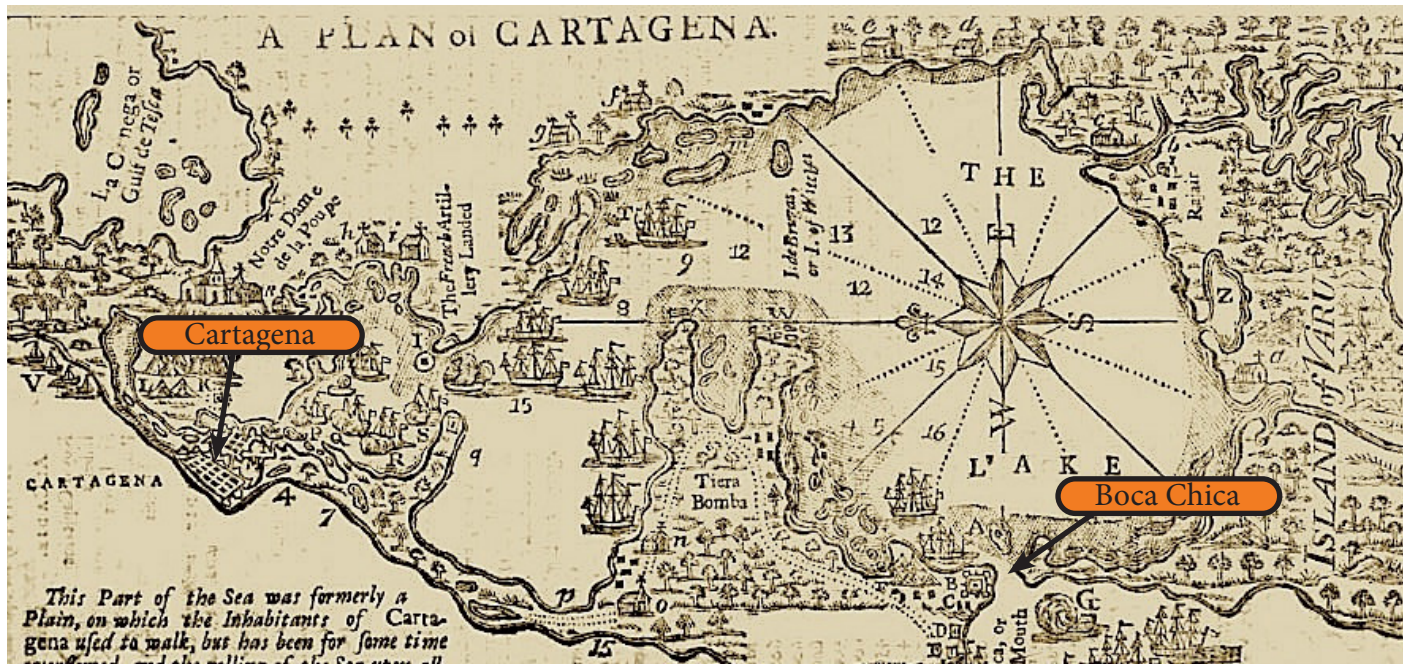
Meanwhile in Britain, the force was assembled on the Isle of Wight under the command of Major General Lord Charles Cathcart. This force comprised eight regiments and a total of 6,000 men. However, a large number of these men were fresh recruits, many of them quite young, and they had to be trained to a basic standard, a task that was carried out by Brigadier General Thomas Wentworth. For Wentworth's great efforts in this regard, Cathcart requested that the Army should assign him to the expedition when it left for the Caribbean, which was granted. There were, however, as had proven to be the case during the Nine Years War, many delays and false starts in the Army's departure from Britain but they eventually sailed successfully on 4th November 1740. It took them over a month to reach the West Indies, arriving at Dominica. Sickness had already begun to spread amongst the men on the transatlantic voyage and it proved fatal to some, including Major General Cathcart. As the next most senior surviving officer, Brigadier General Wentworth assumed command. Eventually the fleet arrived at Jamaica and rendezvoused with Vernon's fleet and the American contingent. From the beginning, it appeared that Vernon and Wentworth would not have a good working relationship, with Governor Trelawney noting on 31st January 1741 that, *"that there is such a disagreement between the Admiral and General that I think nothing will succeed as it should under their joint conduct"* and *"that the Admiral and Mr Wentworth will never act in concert together...their tempers and ways of thinking opposite"*. The task then was to decide where to attack; Panama was considered but discounted, as the amount of effort required would not be worth the gain and it would be difficult to garrison once captured. In the end, it was decided to attack Cartagena. The fleet sailed from Jamaica on the 25th February 1741 and arrived outside Cartagena's impressive harbour on 15th March.



Thomas Wentworth

The plan on paper was simple: to force their way through the Boca Chica, the mouth of the harbour, with its defensive fort and batteries, and then proceed towards the city itself, overcoming the fortifications in the interior of the harbour before laying siege to the city and its main defensive works. After several days of launching feints from the sea, on 20th March the British began their attack proper and the Spanish defenders at the Boca Chica were driven back into Fort San Luis. The Army was landed to overwhelm and capture it, but it was here that the problems truly began. Despite his high rank and his evident skill at training men, Wentworth had no practical experience of commanding in the field, an issue compounded by the inexperience of many of his subordinate officers and the rank and file.

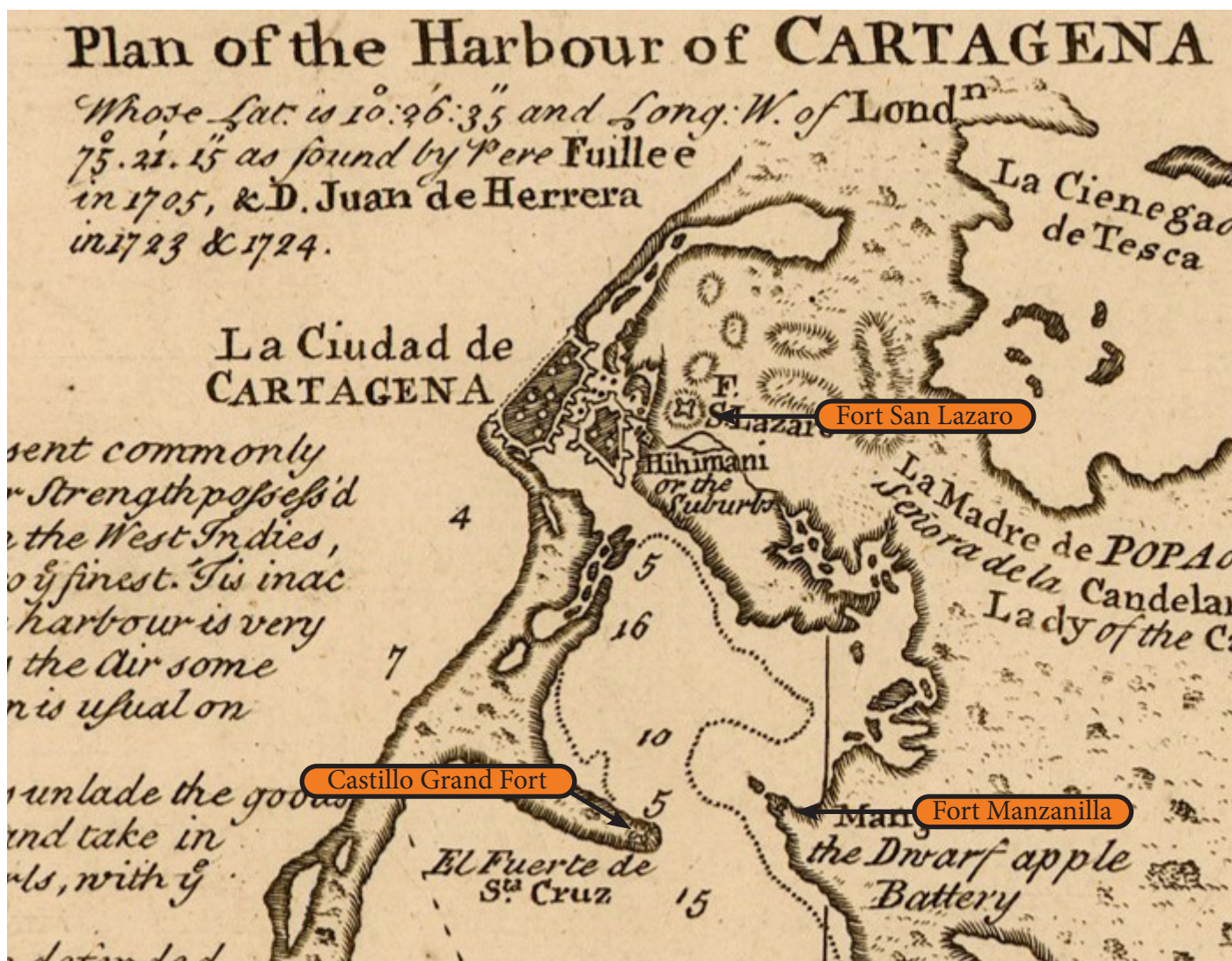
Vernon believed that the fort should have been stormed straightaway, but Wentworth decided to build a large, elaborate camp on the shoreline, as well as a gun battery with which to bombard the fort. Both of these constructions took time, something that the British could ill afford to lose. Not only did it give the Spanish greater opportunities to fortify Cartagena's defences but it also further exposed the men to the real enemy in the Caribbean - disease. Thus, as the building work continued, many of Wentworth's men began to fall sick. Annoyed with what he perceived to be Wentworth's unnecessary delay, Vernon landed a small band of the American colonial troops on the other side of the Boca Chica to attack the Spanish gun batteries positioned



there in order to prevent them harassing the fleet. This force, led by Lawrence Washington, was put ashore on 30th March and successfully overcame these batteries, moving at speed to forestall the second one from being turned on them after they had dealt with the first.

Wentworth finally completed his battery and it opened fire on the 2nd April and successfully neutralised what was left of Fort San Luis' guns. However, Wentworth still hesitated, until he was prompted by Vernon, and then acted successfully to capture the fort by storm on the 5th. Time was not the only loss; 130 men had been either killed or wounded since Wentworth had landed. The figures for disease were worse, with 250 dead and over 600 in hospital. Despite this setback, Vernon now believed that he could seize victory. Notwithstanding, it took a week for the Army to be re-embarked and carried to the head of the harbour, where the assault on the main fortifications could begin. Whilst this was occurring, the Spanish decided to abandon Fort Manzanilla and the Castillo Grand Fort, the two forts guarding the harbour's interior, as they believed that they could not withstand attack from the superior British numbers and firepower for long. The Navy was thus able to move into position and begin bombarding the city.





The Army's next target was Fort San Lazaro, also known as the Castillo San Felipe. Again, Vernon and his fellow naval officers believed that the castle could be overwhelmed by storm, with a force of 1,500 men. Wentworth, however, disagreed and insisted that the full Army be landed. Vernon and his commanders reluctantly did agree, but warned him that any delay was dangerous, especially with the approach of the rainy season, which would only worsen the spread of disease.

Despite this advice, Wentworth elected to build the same elaborate camp as before, whilst the increasingly agitated Vernon continued to urge him to attack. In the meanwhile, the Spanish worked to improve their defences. Eventually, Wentworth was convinced to storm the fort, with the 1,500 men as Vernon had originally envisioned. The attack was made early in the morning on 20th April, with the attackers departing the British camp before sunrise at 04:00. They made use of guides, who were either locals or Spanish deserters, to manoeuvre them into position. However, these guides, by either accident or design, led them astray so that one of the two British columns found themselves approaching the Castle up a steep incline, which required the men to climb on their hands and knees.

By the time they reached the top, it was broad daylight and they were thus exposed to the musket fire of the Spanish defenders. On the other side, the second column advanced in the face of Spanish fire and the British regulars called for use of their siege ladders, so that they could ascend the walls and get into the fort. These ladders had been carried by the Americans, advancing behind the British, yet in the face of the Spanish defenders, they threw down the ladders and fled. In any case, the ladders would have been of no use, as the Spanish had dug a trench outside the castle walls, which would have meant that the British would have found the scaling ladders too short. Therefore, the British were stuck in position, returning the enemy fire as best they could until Wentworth finally gave the order to retreat. The commander of the second column, Colonel Grant, was mortally wounded in the fighting and amongst his last words is said to have remarked, "the general ought to hang the guide and the king ought to hang the general".



Fort San Lazaro (Castillo de San Felipe de Barajas)
(photo by Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz CC BY-SA 4.0)

This failure marked the end of the attack on Cartagena and, with the men either ill or exhausted, the British retreated to Jamaica on 20th May. The number of men fit for service continued to decrease due to disease over the next three months, whilst the officers commanding the expedition continued to argue with one another. This included an incident in which Admiral Sir Chaloner Ogle assaulted Governor Edward Trelawney on 22nd July 1741, at the Governor's house. Sir Chaloner was put on trial for his attack on the Governor and was convicted by the jury, although apparently there was no punishment. Despite such altercations, the decision was still taken to make another attack, this time on Cuba. The British arrived at Guantanamo Bay on Cuba's south coast on 29th August. Vernon now urged Wentworth to take a force of 1,000 men, supported by 1,000 slave bearers, who had been assembled by the Jamaican government, and travel overland to attack Santiago, Cuba's second city. This involved a distance of some 90 miles and would have been a daring feat, but one that would possibly have been accomplished by a sufficiently experienced commander. Wentworth, however, refused, and so the Army remained stationary in southern Cuba for several months, with disease continuing to wreak havoc all the while. By the beginning of December, there were fewer than 300 privates fit for duty and the British finally decided to return to Jamaica. Of the men that had originally been assembled on the Isle of Wight, nine out of ten were dead. Reinforcements were sent in February 1742, but these men also fell sick on arrival. A second attack on Porto Bello was planned but, by the time the fleet reached the city, the levels of sickness and death were such that the whole operation was called off, which, in turn, marked the end of operations in the Caribbean.

The 49th Regiment

In 1744, a new regiment was raised on Jamaica at the request of Governor Trelawney, who became its first Colonel. This regiment was eventually numbered the 49th Regiment of Foot and remained on Jamaica for some years, providing a regular garrison for the island as well as helping to deal with matters of local unrest, including slave rebellions such as 'Tacky's War'. The regiment recruited locally, and there is evidence for soldiers of both European and African ancestry in the regiment. Through amalgamation of regiments over the centuries, their successors are now the Mercian Regiment.



Operations in the region once again highlighted the necessity in Caribbean warfare for conducting operations quickly, before disease spread amongst the men, and also the requirement for the Army and Navy to work harmoniously together. The War of Jenkins' Ear merged with the wider War of the Austrian Succession, which was largely fought in Europe and was eventually ended by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. The issues left unresolved in the aftermath of this conflict led to the next great combat between the European powers - the Seven Years War.

The Seven Years War

When: 1756-1763

Combatants: Great Britain and allies vs France, Spain and allies

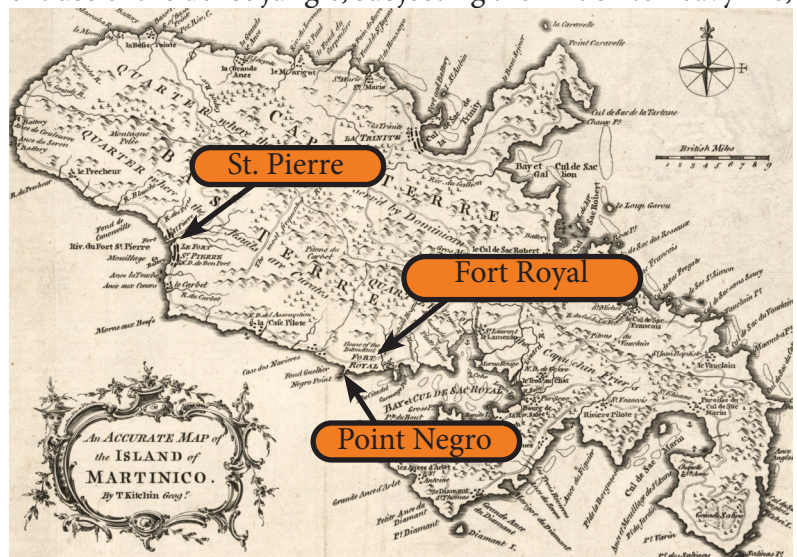
Reasons: Unresolved territorial disputes and national rivalries

Other names: The Pomeranian War, The French and Indian War, The Third Silesian War, The Third Carnatic War

Key battles and places: Martinique, Guadeloupe, Havana

The Seven Years War arose from various unresolved issues between the European powers after the War of the Austrian Succession. These included disputes over territory between Austria and Prussia, as well as rivalries between the French and the British in Canada and India. This war was fought on many different continents, between the great European powers and their colonies. It is the widespread nature of this conflict which leads some historians to label it the first true World War, over a century and a half before the Great War of 1914-1918 broke out. The early years of this conflict were focused in other parts of the world, so it was not until 1758 that the British Government and William Pitt the Elder, Secretary of State and Member of the Cabinet, first turned their minds towards the Caribbean. Louisburg in Nova Scotia had been successfully captured, although, overall, the war had not been going in Britain's favour and it was now thought that a victory in the Caribbean would be useful in domestic politics. Many West Indian planters, who had taken up residence in Britain, were also in favour of the war, as French islands had been more profitable than their own holdings; this was mainly the result of the French subsidising their own slave trade and trading illegally with the British colonies in North America. William Beckford, who owned extensive sugar plantations and was twice Lord Mayor of London and also represented the City of London as an MP, assured the British Government that Martinique could be conquered easily by a small force under a good commander. The capture of some rich French colonies, like Martinique, in addition to depriving the French of the economic benefit of such islands, would, it was believed, prove useful in any future peace negotiations, as the French would be prepared to make concessions in other areas in order to recover them. It would also have a military advantage by preventing the French from having a base en route to their territories in North America around the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers.

A force of around 7,000 men was thus dispatched in November 1758 under the command of Major Peregrine Thomas Hopson to invade the island of Martinique, arguably the most important and valuable of the French possessions in the Caribbean. Arriving first at Barbados, the fleet and the army approached Martinique on 15th January 1759. Troops were landed the next day at Point Negro and the Army began to advance the day after that. However, the French defenders made excellent use of the dense jungle, subjecting the British to heavy fire, whilst simultaneously concealing their position. The British realised that they would be unable to transport the necessary cannons to attack the French fortifications through this heavy terrain, as well as convey the necessary supplies to keep the troops fed and watered. They could not land closer to the fort or bombard it from the sea. Therefore, the British re-embarked that very same evening, having sustained 100 casualties since the morning. The fleet sailed up the coast, briefly pausing to bombard the town of St. Pierre, but it was decided to continue on to the expedition's secondary target, Guadeloupe.

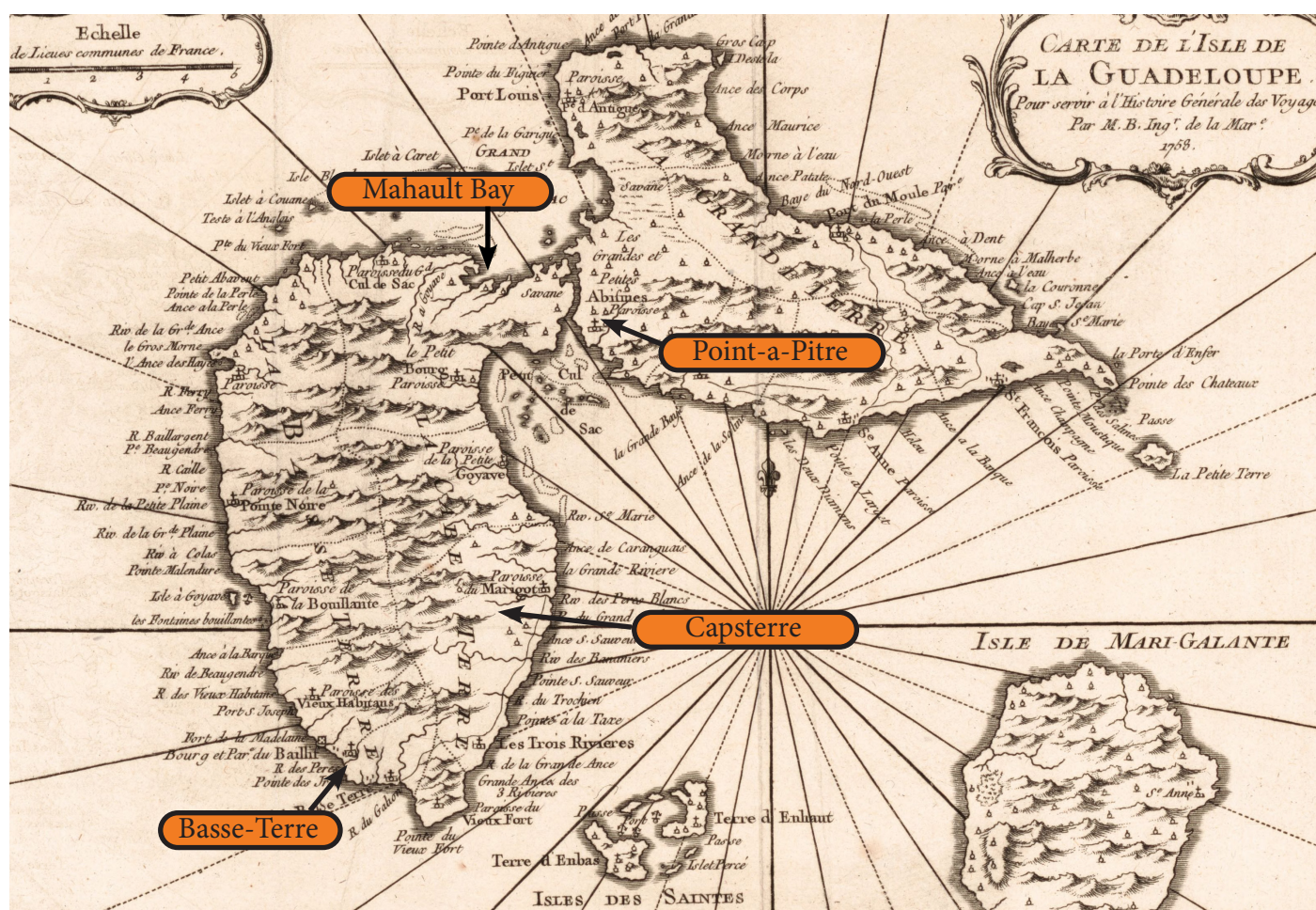


They arrived on the morning of 23rd January, bombarding Fort St. Charles near the town of Basse-Terre, forcing the inhabitants of both to flee, and landed the Army unopposed the next day. As the British bombardment had set the town on fire, the French retreated to Dos d'Ane, a mountain stronghold, which the British could not assail and the French Governor refused to surrender. A stalemate ensued for the next few weeks, with Hopson refusing to adopt a new strategy, despite the urging of many of his junior officers. The old enemy of sickness reared its head and many men fell ill with dysentery, so that 2,000 of them had to be transported to Antigua, where most of them recovered. However, this reduced the number of effective troops to around 3,300 and Hopson himself also fell ill, which ultimately proved fatal. Whilst he was indisposed, Commodore Moore of the Navy took a small force, composed of Marines, sailors and Highlanders and successfully captured Point-a-Pitre, providing the British with an excellently-situated base from which to launch attacks on both islands of the territory. After Hopson died on the 27th, command fell to Colonel John Barrington, Pitt's first choice to lead the expedition, who swiftly moved against the French.



John Barrington,
Image © National Army Museum,
London

Barrington removed the majority of his Army to the central point at Point-a-Pitre, leaving a small garrison of 500 men at Basse-Terre, as well as setting up tents and huts to mislead the French into thinking that he was establishing a long-term camp. Manpower was now a concern, as he had also to provide 300 soldiers to Commodore Moore to serve as sailors when the Commodore had to sail to intercept a French fleet that arrived in the region. This, coupled with losses from disease, left him with 1,200 soldiers, in addition to 350 volunteers and 300 slaves from Antigua. From Point-a-Pitre, Barrington launched attacks against various points around the coasts of the two islands, including the successful capture of Mahault Bay, where the French had been receiving supplies from the Dutch island of St. Eustatius. When the British entered the district of Capesterre, where Guadeloupe's most valuable sugar plantations were located, the principal residents, seeking to save their property from destruction, agreed to negotiate with Barrington. For his part, Barrington offered them generous terms, as he knew that the coming summer months would only intensify the sickness that was spreading



through his troops. Almost 800 men had been lost to disease, whilst 59 had been killed in action, with 149 wounded. The French fleet managed to outmanoeuvre Commodore Moore and reached Guadeloupe on 2nd May, the day after the terms of surrender had been agreed. Although the commander of these reinforcements tried to convince the French Governor to break the agreement, he refused and they departed.

Following Guadeloupe's fall, the nearby islands of Marie-Galante, Petite Terre, La Désirade and Les Saintes also surrendered to the British. It was this great success, coupled with victories in other theatres of the war, that led to 1759 being deemed an *Annus Mirabilis*, a wonderful year. However, the Army had lost too many men to comply with an order sent from Britain to capture St. Lucia, and some troops were sent to Canada to aid the campaign against the French there. The capture of Guadeloupe and nearby islands was not the final British military triumph in the Caribbean during the war. In addition to several successful naval operations, 700 men were landed on Dominica 7th June 1761 and forced a French surrender the next day. The following January, another British force arrived at Martinique, approximately twice the size of the one sent three years earlier. The Army, commanded by General Monckton, landed on the 16th at Case Navire and slowly advanced towards the capital at Fort Royal. This involved a gruelling march through three miles of difficult terrain, overcoming French defences and counterattacks. This included securing the French stronghold at Morne Grenier, which was successfully captured in the early hours of 29th January by the forces under the command of Brigadier Haviland, a veteran of the siege of Cartagena. A few days later, the advancing troops forced Fort Royal's surrender on 3rd February. The remainder of the island was secured within a further nine days. Other islands, Grenada and St. Lucia, were secured with minimal or indeed no fighting.

Following this success, the British prepared to attack another target, but this time a Spanish one - the city of Havana, Cuba. This operation was planned in great secrecy, based on knowledge from Admiral Charles Knowles, who had previous experience of operations attacking Cuba and had visited the city on several occasions in his previous role as Governor of Jamaica; he knew that the city's defences were in poor repair. The fleet and troops were gathered at Cape St. Nicholas, between Cuba and St. Domingo, and in order to take the Spanish by surprise, travelled around the eastern end of Cuba through the Old Bahama channel, as opposed to the normal western route.

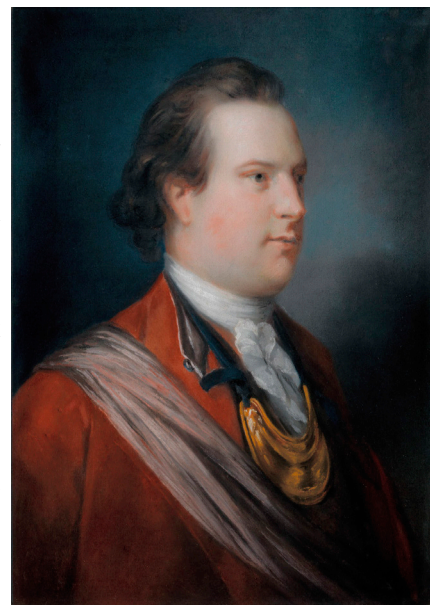
The fleet arrived on 6th June 1762, taking the Spanish by surprise, but were initially prevented from disembarking by high winds. The Army, comprising over 12,000 men under Lieutenant General George Keppel, the 3rd Earl of Abermarle, and including some of the men who had taken Martinique, was landed without a single loss the following day. They came ashore to the east of the city at Coximar Bay, whilst some Marines were landed to the west in a feint. The British built batteries with which to lay siege to El Moro, the city's main defensive castle, and opened fire on 1st July. Most of the cannons were operated by sailors, who impressed their soldier colleagues



The capture of El Moro
© The West India Committee

with the speed with which they fired the guns. The batteries managed to neutralise the castle guns and the Army's siege lines began to get closer to its walls. However, matters were delayed when the first battery caught fire owing to the heat of the cannon and a lack of water, and a new one had to be built to replace it. The Spanish attempted to counter-attack but were driven back and on 30th July, following the British engineers detonating a large mine underneath the walls, the castle was captured by storm.

A few days later, the British began their bombardment and disabled Fort Punta, the other main fortification, which led Spanish Governor, Juan de Prado, to send out a flag of truce. Terms were agreed on 13th August 1762. This success, which granted Britain control of the main passage from the Caribbean to Europe on the trade winds, was met with widespread celebration back in Britain. Yet the Army at Havana was now very sick, to the extent that Abermarle could not send the 8,000 troops that had been earmarked by the overall British War Strategy to join the assault on French Louisiana in North America; nor could Abermarle send the troops, who had come from the British North American colonies, home if he was to hold Havana. The siege itself had cost 1,000 men through wounds or death. By 18th October, the British had buried over 5,000 dead from disease.



George Keppel,
3rd Earl of Abermarle

Despite yet another catastrophic death toll from disease, the operations carried out by the British Army in the Caribbean in the Seven Years War were highly successful and, as planned, put the Government in a strong negotiating position when the time came to talk peace. With these French Caribbean bargaining chips, they were able to secure the return of captured British territories, such as Minorca. The French were also forced to recognise British dominion over parts of India and Canada, whilst the Spanish relinquished Florida and their territory to the east of the Mississippi. In the end, Britain returned all of the Caribbean conquests it had made during the war, with the exception of Dominica, which it retained for the time being. Yet the next conflict, overshadowed in popular history by developments in North America, saw the British forced on the defensive in the Caribbean.



The American Revolution

When: 1776-1782

Combatants: Great Britain vs The American revolutionaries, France, Spain and the Dutch Republic

Reasons: Tensions in the North American Colonies and Britain's rivals wishing to exploit the crisis.

Other names: The American Revolutionary War, the War of Independence

Key battles and places: The Bahamas, Dominica, St. Lucia, The Nicaragua expedition

A popularly forgotten theatre of one of the most famous wars in history is that of the Caribbean during the American Revolution. The revolution had a direct impact on the region, as the British West Indies were largely reliant on the thirteen North American colonies for foodstuffs, their own agricultural economy being geared to the production of cash crops, most notably sugar. It was the impending threat of war and the economic effect that it would have on the Caribbean that made the members of the West India Committee resolve to become a permanent body, as opposed to just banding together on occasion when their economic interests were threatened. Food shortages did indeed occur, with famine and malnutrition taking a heavy toll on the slave population in the region; it was estimated that 15,000 slaves may have died on Barbados over the course of the war.

The food situation was not, however, the only threat to the Caribbean as the conflict spread. An American force raided Nassau in the Bahamas on 3rd March 1776, capturing stores of ammunition and gunpowder to support the revolution. Whilst such raids were an annoyance, the major threat did not come until Britain's European rivals joined the war on the side of the revolutionaries, seeking to undermine Britain's power. France allied itself with the Americans in 1778 and began a military campaign in the region, successfully invading Dominica in September that year with 2,000 men under the Marquis de Bouillé. The British made a counterattack, raising a large force under Major General James Grant. 5,800 men from ten different regiments, and 200 artillery men, including some 5,000 stationed in North America, were gathered. The withdrawal of large numbers of very experienced troops from North America at this time demonstrates the importance that Britain placed on its Caribbean colonies; they were viewed as far more economically valuable, to the extent that the government abandoned Philadelphia to protect them.



James Grant



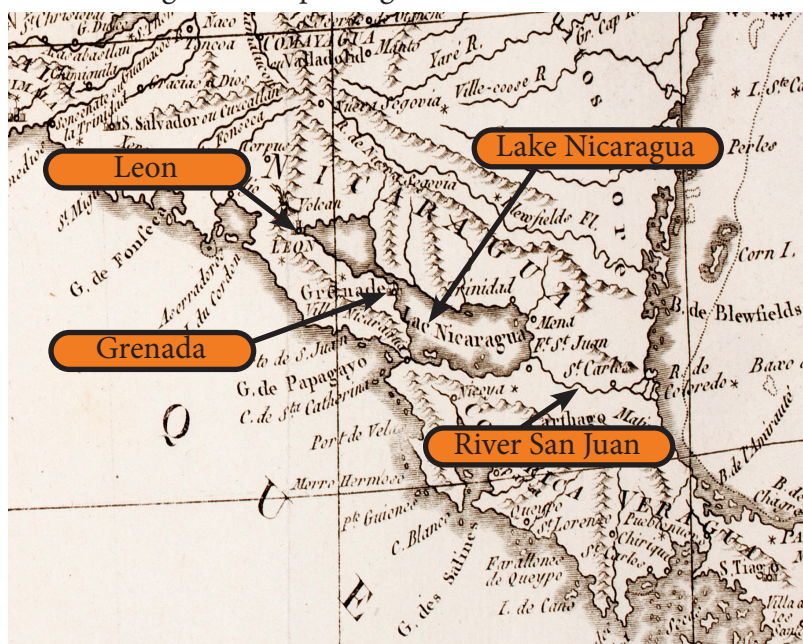
William Medows

Instead of trying to recapture Dominica, the British force was sent to St. Lucia, due to its strategic location, landing on 12th December at Cul de Sac Bay and securing the island over the next few days. However, following the island's surrender, a French fleet with 9,000 soldiers arrived from Martinique. The fleet was unable to force its way into the well-defended Castries Bay, and so troops were landed to the north, in the hope that the Vigie peninsula to the north of the Bay could be captured, and thus allow the French fleet to enter. A British force of 1,300 men, experienced veterans, under the command of Brigadier General William Medows successfully repelled a much larger French force on 18th December after three hours of combat, making good use of the thin neck of the peninsula to limit the effectiveness of the superior French numbers. After over a week of inaction, the French withdrew from St. Lucia, leaving it in British hands.

A force sent from Jamaica was able to recapture the settlement, before besieging the Spanish town of Omoa. Despite the small size of this force, it was able to capture Omoa, as well as a large amount of goods and ships, but had to abandon its prize in December as disease took its toll on the garrison.

Major-General Vaughan was sent as Grant's replacement and, although he had been given nonspecific orders, it was nevertheless suggested that he should attempt to recapture Grenada and St. Vincent and, if possible, attack Puerto Rico. However, the dispersion of the Army had sapped the men of both health and morale. Although he was able to assemble a great number at St. Lucia, which also scared off a potential French invasion on 23rd March 1780, Vaughan realised that an offensive action was impossible in such circumstances and used the reinforcements that he had brought to the region to strengthen the garrisons of Antigua and St. Kitts. Soldiers also saw service as Marines during naval engagements between the Royal Navy and the enemy fleets.

1780 saw an unsuccessful expedition up the River San Juan in Central America, with the aim of reaching Lake Nicaragua and capturing the towns of Grenada and Leon on its shore. This action would have helped to



divide the Spanish Empire in the New World in two. The expedition stalled on its passage and disease took its toll, killing approximately two thirds of the men involved and leaving less than half of the survivors fit for service. The expedition, having first departed Jamaica in the February, was finally abandoned in November and is chiefly remembered today, if at all, for the participation of the Captain of *HMS Hinchinbrook*, Horatio Nelson, later Britain's most famous naval hero. The soldiers' lot in the Caribbean was exacerbated by the calamitous effects of a hurricane that swept through the Windward Islands in October 1780, which killed many and caused devastation in its wake, leaving many civilians and soldiers without shelter.

Early 1781 brought reinforcements and news that Britain had declared war on the Dutch. This was because Britain believed that the Dutch had been secretly trading and negotiating with the revolutionaries. Vaughan and his naval counterpart, Admiral Rodney, lost little time in capturing the Dutch island of St. Eustatius, which surrendered when the British arrived on 3rd February. Long known as a centre of commerce and illicit trade, St. Eustatius was found to hold French, Dutch and American goods in large quantities, as well as prohibited merchandise from the British West Indies and even Great Britain itself. Many British merchants, despite the illegality of their actions, later complained that the military seized their property. The value of the goods seized on St. Eustatius totalled over £690,000,000 in today's money. It was also arguably the first territory to recognise the American colonies as a separate political entity, when it offered a salute to a revolutionary ship. Admiral Rodney later commented that despite St. Eustatius's small size, it had, "*done England more harm than all the arms of her most potent enemies, and alone supported the infamous American rebellion.*" The nearby Dutch islands of St. Martin and Saba were also captured at this time, as were the colonies of Demerara and Essequibo in South America.

The French launched further invasion attempts, trying to recapture St. Lucia in May, but departing when they saw the strength of the defences. Shortly afterwards, they launched a successful invasion of Tobago, forcing the Governor's surrender. Admiral Rodney arrived on 4th June, two days too late. On 19th October, Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in North America, allowing the French fleet to return to the Caribbean as it was no longer required to support the revolutionaries. This allowed the French to recapture St. Eustatius and St. Martin in late November, and take the 800 men of their garrisons hostage. Barbados was saved from invasion by the trade winds that prevented the French reaching the island easily.

Although Barbados was safe, St. Kitts was not and a veteran force of 8,000 men under the command of the Marquis de Bouillé landed on 11th January 1782. Capturing Basseterre, they proceeded to lay siege to the fortifications at Brimstone Hill, one of the most impressive military structures in the Caribbean. The fortress was garrisoned by 600 men from the 1st (Royal Scots) Regiment and 15th (East Yorkshire) Regiment under General Fraser and 350 men of the Kittfonian militia commanded by Governor Shirley. There were issues with the defence from the beginning, as war materials, both stores and weaponry, had been left at the base of the hill; the Kittfonian government, still on poor terms with the British authorities, had refused to provide slave labourers to carry the materials up to the fortress. Thus, they were seized by the French and used against the defences. The French proceeded to open trenches and had completely cut the citadel off by 28th January. The evening of the



The siege of Brimstone Hill

same day, British reinforcements landed on the island, having manoeuvred past the French fleet. The reinforcements were, however, unable to contact the now completely isolated defenders, despite the efforts of several men. Unable to make contact, and unable to face the superior French numbers, the reinforcements were re-embarked.

By 8th February, the fortress had been severely damaged by cannon and mortar fire, with many casualties amongst the defenders. A number of the militia had already deserted and another attempt by the reinforcements offshore to contact the garrison failed and the men making the attempt captured. With four breaches in the fortress walls, the militia convinced Governor Shirley to

surrender. Terms were discussed on 12th February and the serving garrison of 500 men marched out under the full honours of war. Following this defeat, the neighbouring island of Nevis came under French control and, in the same month, the French were also able to recapture Demerara and Essequibo. The British island of Montserrat surrendered on 20th February after a brief period of resistance.



There was now a severe threat to Jamaica but an invasion was prevented by Admiral Rodney, who on 12th April 1782 defeated a combined Franco-Spanish fleet in the Battle of the Saintes. This largely broke the power of both the French and Spanish in the region but, before the end of the war, a joint Spanish and American force travelled from Havana, Cuba, to the Bahamas. Having only some 600 men under his command, as opposed to well over 2,000 enemy troops, Vice Admiral John Maxwell, the Captain General of the colony, opted to surrender.

The Treaty of Paris, in 1783, secured American independence and Britain came to agreements with both France and Spain. Most of Britain's colonies were returned, but France was able to retain Tobago and regain St. Lucia. However, 1783 also saw one final military operation, one that took place after the signing of the treaty and the accompanying agreements. Instead of being carried out by the regular Army, it was the result of an initiative by a commander of the militia.

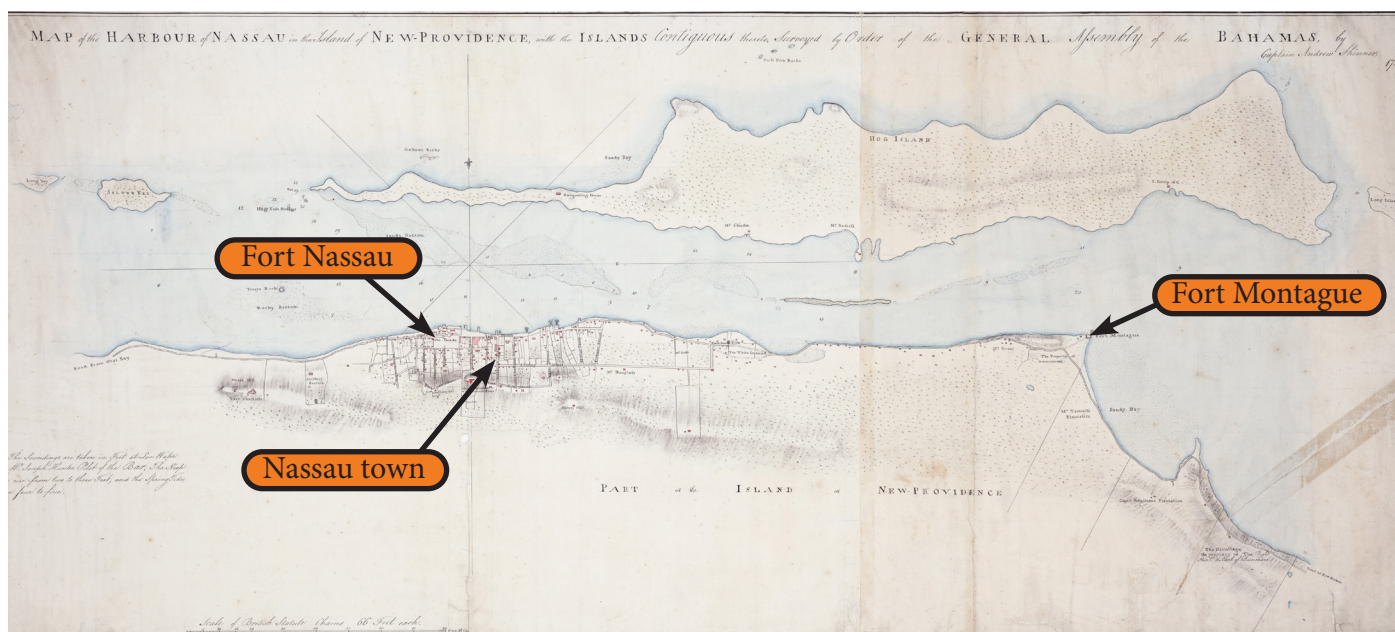
Admiral Rodney at the Battle of the Saintes



Fort Montague
Photo by Oscar Flowers (CC BY-SA 3.0)

American Loyalist Colonel Andrew Deveau of South Carolina funded an expedition to recapture the Bahamas in March 1783. A force of some 160 to 200 men landed on the island of New Providence before dawn on 14th April and quickly captured Fort Montague. The Spanish Governor, who had already heard that the Bahamas would be returned to Britain and communicated this information to Deveau under a flag of truce, but the Colonel refused to believe him and continued hostilities. Deveau prepared to attack Fort Nassau but, being severely outnumbered by the Spanish, opted to use subterfuge. He convinced the Spanish that he had far more men than he actually did. He had figures made out of straw and even had his boats ferry men to shore repeatedly,

making the boats look empty on returning to the ship by having his men duck down out of sight and then sit up again for the journey to shore. This ultimately convinced the Spanish to surrender on 18th April. In the years following the American Revolution, many American Loyalists, now in exile, would settle in the Bahamas, Deveau amongst them.



Despite the widespread failures of the British war effort, having to fight multiple enemies on multiple fronts, the British were ultimately able to prevent a total collapse in the Caribbean theatre. The efforts they made in order to defend the region demonstrated the high value they placed on the West Indies and later historians have commented that the resources deflected to defend the Caribbean may be the reason why ultimately Britain lost the war in North America.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

When: 1792-1815

Combatants: Great Britain and allies vs France and allies

Reasons: French Imperial Ambitions

Other names: The War of the First/Second/Third/Fourth/Fifth Coalition, The Hundred Days

Key battles and places: Guadeloupe (1815), St. Lucia, Grenada, St. Vincent

Following the execution of French King Louis XVI at the hands of revolutionaries, the European powers were once again drawn into conflict. The French Revolutionary Wars comprised several smaller wars of allied coalitions drawn together against French Power and would set the stage for world events for years to come.

As before, the conflict spread to the Caribbean where, on this occasion, the British enjoyed an advantage in that many of the inhabitants of the French islands remained loyal to the fallen Monarchy and were willing to co-operate with the British to bring about its resurrection. The spread of French Revolutionary ideals, with their motto of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*, posed a major threat to the social order of the Caribbean at the time, and indeed these ideals encouraged the spread of several revolts and uprisings amongst both the free and enslaved black populations, nowhere more dramatically than in Haiti, where the British Army would also become involved.

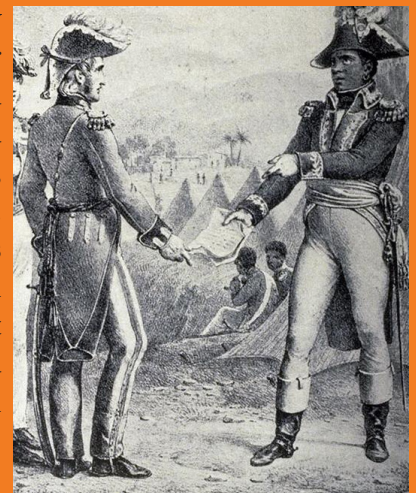
The early stages of the war against France in the Caribbean were marked by the recapture of Tobago and a failed assault on Martinique when Britain entered the conflict in 1793. As had been the case in previous wars, large expeditions were sent from Britain to fight, the first of them being directed by Lieutenant General Sir John Grey, a very experienced soldier who had served in both the Seven Years War and the American Revolution; his experiences in the latter

influenced the style of warfare that he waged in the Caribbean. Grey and his deputy, Vice Admiral John Jervis, arrived at Barbados on 6th January 1794, but had to wait for the rest of the troops to arrive from Europe, as well as soldiers already in the Caribbean to gather there. During this time they trained the officers under their command in the skirmishing techniques that Grey had honed during the American War, which contributed significantly to his success in the Caribbean.

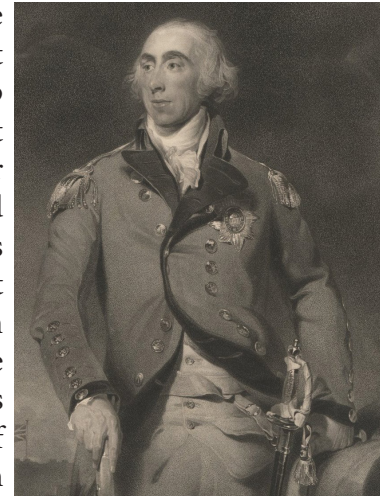
By the end of January, Grey had over 7,000 men and was prepared to launch his first attack, against Martinique, arriving there on 5th February and landing his Army at three separate locations. Over the course of the next

Haitian Revolution

The Haitian Revolution began in 1791, with the black and mixed-race population rising up against the ruling white planter class. As Saint Domingue, as it was then known, was an important French colony, the British decided to get involved in 1793, in response to a request from some of the colony's inhabitants. However, the British involvement was a failure, with some 13,000 of the 20,600 troops involved losing their lives, largely through disease. Britain withdrew in 1798 after signing a treaty between commander Sir Thomas Maitland and the famed revolutionary leader, Toussaint Louverture. The Revolutionaries would go on to win their struggle against France in 1804 and to found their own independent nation.



month, these three forces swept across the island, until the time came at the beginning of March for the siege of the main settlement and defences at Fort Royal. Fort Louis was seized when Captain Faulknor of the *Zebra* ran his ship aground under its very walls and successfully stormed it with his crew, whilst the town of Fort Royal itself was captured by the Light Infantry and Grenadier battalions. The French commander realised that his position was hopeless and surrendered, marching out of the remaining fortifications on 23rd March, thus securing Martinique for the British with minimal casualties. Grey's next target was St. Lucia, which the British reached on 1st April, landing at four locations on the coast. This operation was much quicker than that on Martinique, with the British marching along the coastline, capturing the French sea-facing batteries and meeting at Morne Fortune on 2nd April. Following the successful capture of the outer defences of Morne Fortune by Grey's famous bayonet tactics, French General Ricard surrendered that evening.



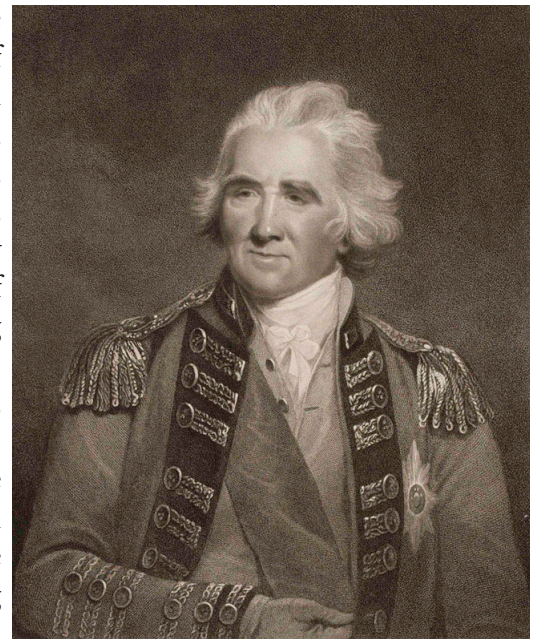
Sir Charles Grey

Grey's final target was Guadeloupe, at which he arrived on 11th April, landing 1,000 men at Gozier Bay on Grand Terre. His forces successfully captured Fort Fleur d'Épée and another fortification on Morne Mascotte in a night time assault on the morning of the 12th, carrying out the operations with bayonet alone. On the 14th Grey crossed to Guadeloupe's other island, landing at Petit Bourg, and marched down the coast to Basse-Terre. Three days later, another force under General Dundas landed to the northwest of the town and marched to join Grey. French General Collot realised the hopelessness of the situation and surrendered. With their three targets in the Caribbean taken, Grey and Jervis now had to endeavour to retain the prizes. This proved to be more difficult than the initial conquests, particularly as sickness began to take its toll after two months of solid campaigning. The arrival of French reinforcements at Guadeloupe saw the British hold on the island weakened, and therefore Grey returned to the island on 7th June with reinforcements for the British garrison. Although they were successful in securing the Basse-Terre side of the island, they were unable to recapture Grand-Terre, following a failed night attack on Point-à-Pitre and Fort Fleur d'Épée on 1st July. Grey's request for further reinforcements and supplies went unanswered and he was soon recalled to Britain. In September, the French launched another attack on the British-held side of Guadeloupe and succeeded in recapturing the island in its entirety.

1795 saw a series of uprisings, that started on Grenada, against British rule. A mixed-race plantation owner, Julien Fédon, at the beginning of March that year, led a rebellion supported by French Republicans. Mainly comprising the non-white population, but including some whites, the rebels took the local militia and garrison largely by surprise, in the process capturing the local Governor. Meanwhile the Caribs of St. Vincent were encouraged by the French to take up arms against the British, whilst tensions on Jamaica boiled over into another Maroon War. Lieutenant General John Vaughan, Grey's replacement as Commander in the West Indies, prioritised Grenada and sent what reinforcements he could spare. However, they were unable to overpower the rebels and the latter gained control over most of the island, whilst the French Republicans continued to send supplies to support them. Reinforcements did arrive from Britain, but they were inexperienced and so few in number, yet Vaughan had to divide them between the various British holdings in revolt. Those sent to Grenada met with some success, although Fédon executed Governor Home and fifty others in retaliation for an attack on the rebel stronghold at Mount St. Catherine. By the end of July, thanks to the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Nicholls, the British were able to secure the main ports and the coastline, making it more difficult for the Republicans to land supplies. However, increasing sickness again weakened the British position and reinforcements were few, meaning their position was looking increasingly tenuous by early 1796.

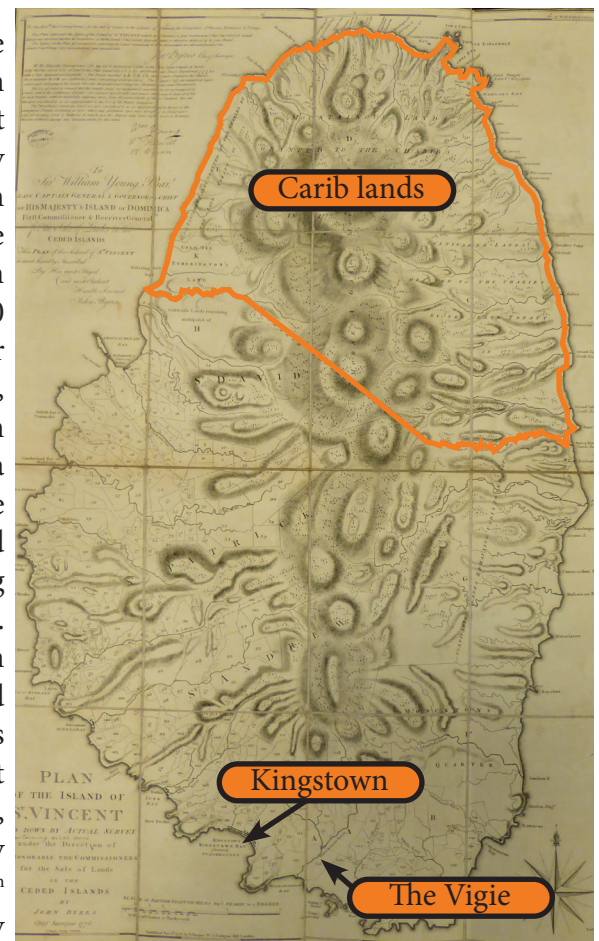
On St. Lucia, although Brigadier General Stewart had gone on the offensive on 14th April after receiving his initial reinforcements, he was forced off the island with his 1,200 men five days later. The French also sent an expedition against Dominica in June 1795, but the British garrison and local militia were able to repel them, despite over a third of their number suffering from illness. A new expedition from Britain would soon change the course of the Caribbean war again. After many delays, Sir Ralph Abercromby arrived at Barbados on 17th March 1796, with orders to capture Guadeloupe and St. Lucia as his primary objectives. Following this, he was

to quell the uprisings on Grenada and St. Vincent and then to secure the Dutch colonies of Surinam, Berbice and Demerara. Some of the men, who had arrived before him, had already proved useful in turning the tide against the enemies on Grenada and St. Vincent, whilst Abercromby, still awaiting the rest of his expedition to arrive, was able to use what troops he had to secure the Dutch colonies; some of them had already offered to surrender and none put up any resistance when confronted by the British Army. The main body of the expedition finally reached the Caribbean in mid-April, giving Abercromby 8,000 men and the opportunity to capture St. Lucia. From 25th April 1796, Abercromby's troops landed, as Grey had done, in three locations - at Anse du Cap, Anse du Choc and Anse la Raye. The British were able to force the French back to Morne Fortune and laid siege to the stronghold over the next month. The British succeeded in pressing the French to surrender on 25th May, as the latter were running low on food, medicine and water. Any remaining French resistance had fled to the interior, and Abercromby left 4,000 troops, under the command of John Moore, to keep the island secure, although disease quickly took a toll on their numbers.



Sir Ralph Abercromby

Abercromby then sailed for St. Vincent, leaving some reinforcements at Grenada en route. Landing on St. Vincent on 8th June 1796, the following day he began a siege of the Vigie, a set of elevated fortifications to the east of Kingstown. Whilst many of the French Carib allies retreated in the face of this, the French generally held their ground. The British attempted to storm the French position at 14:00 hours and drove the enemy back from their outer defences, resulting in a French surrender at 17:00 hours. Although conflict with the Caribs would continue for some months, the French had now been defeated on St. Lucia, allowing Abercromby to journey to Grenada, arriving there on 16th June. On the night of the 18th, Lowenstein's Chasseurs, a mercenary unit in British employ, succeeded in securing the stronghold at Mount Quoca, the tallest peak on the island and British control was slowly restored over the territory during the following months. Fédon fled and was never seen again. Abercromby returned to Britain for a brief period, but soon journeyed back to the Caribbean with orders to capture Trinidad and Puerto Rico; the Spanish had, by this time, switched sides due to developments in Europe and were now fighting against the British. When the British troops arrived on 17th February, Trinidad surrendered with minimal resistance, with the only British casualty believed to be Lieutenant Villeneuve of the 8th Regiment of Foot; he is thought to have been shot accidentally in an incident of friendly fire.



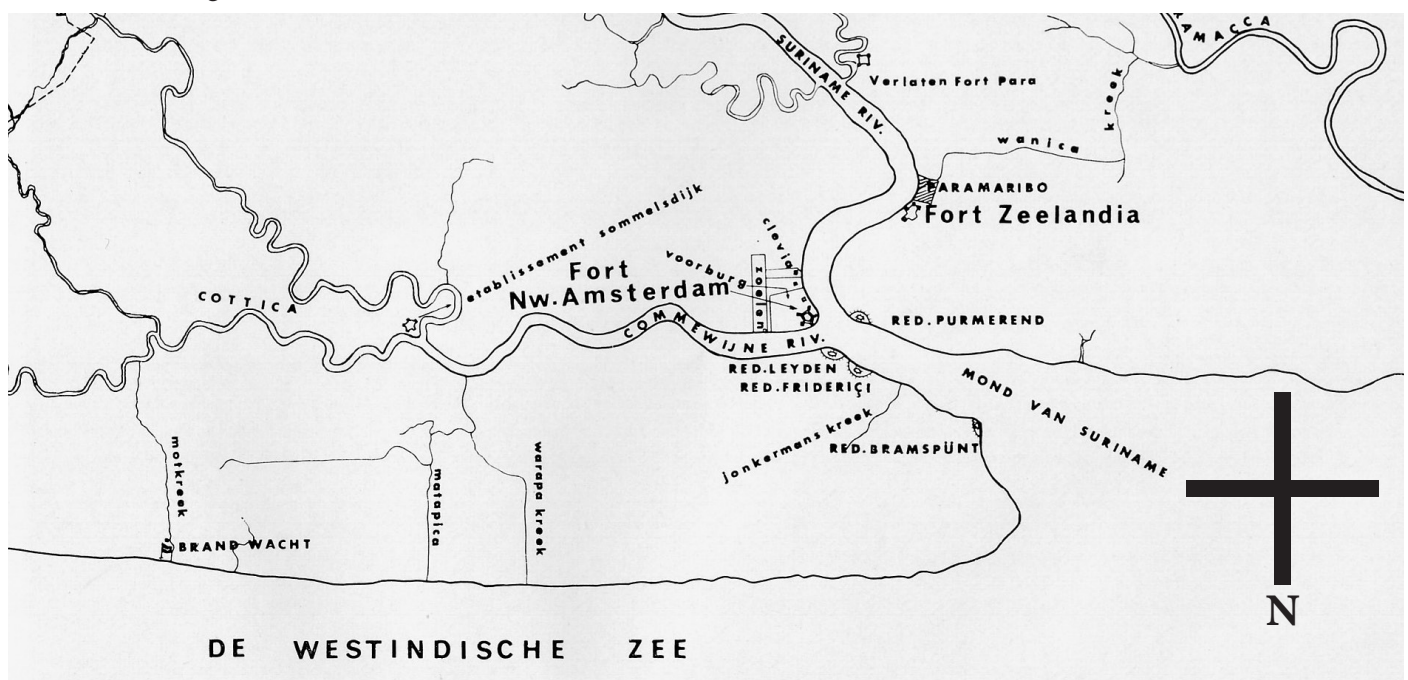
St. Vincent 1778

After returning to Martinique to make preparations, Abercromby sailed for Puerto Rico, arriving on the 17th and landed on the 18th, with Abercromby, himself, the first ashore. Approaching the principal town of San Juan, and driving back the Spanish troops they encountered, he resolved to bombard the town, setting up a battery to the south for that purpose, but it proved ineffective and the Spanish guns did far more damage to the British position than vice versa. As a possible change in the weather risked leaving him isolated, Abercromby decided to withdraw. Although this was the last major British expedition of the war, General Sir Thomas Trigge was able to secure the surrender of Surinam in late 1799 and, between 22nd and 29th March 1801, also led

an expedition from Antigua which secured Swedish St. Bartholomew, Franco-Dutch St. Martin, Dutch St. Eustatius and Saba and Danish St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas. Many of these islands were, in fact, returned to their former colonial owners under the terms of the Peace of Amiens in 1802, although Britain retained control of Trinidad.

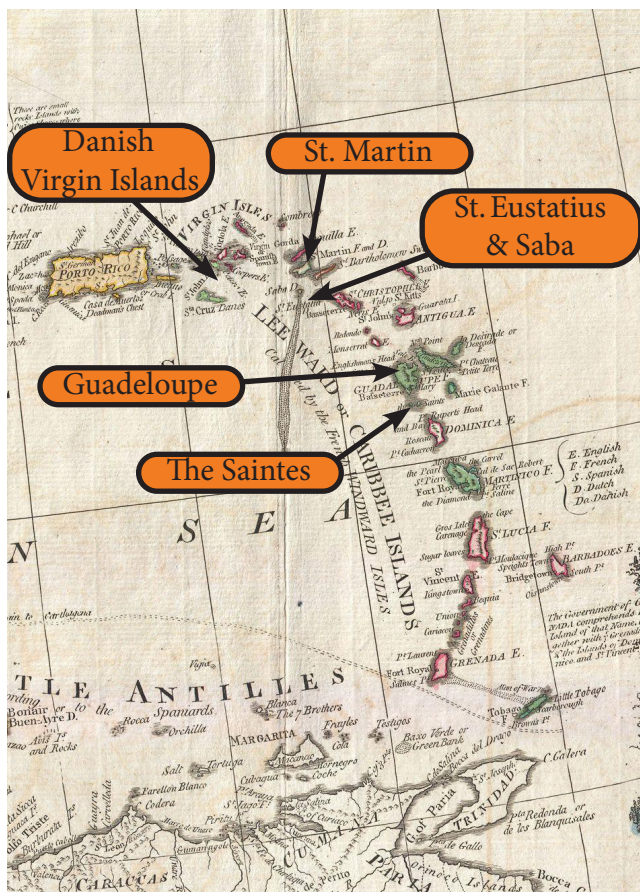
The Peace of Amiens is often said to be the point at which the French Revolutionary Wars became the Napoleonic Wars, with Napoleon Bonaparte having become leader of France in 1799. The redeclaration of hostilities came as a surprise to no one and when, in June 1803, news reached the Caribbean of a new war, Britain still had 10,000 men stationed in the region. The Commander of the British forces, Lieutenant General William Grinfield, was ordered to attack St. Lucia, Martinique or Tobago. With the 3,000 men he had available for an attack force, landing on 21st June, he quickly secured Morne Fortune, and the whole island of St. Lucia the following day. When Grinfield and his men arrived at Tobago on 25th June, the small French garrison opted to surrender without a fight. Grinfield was also ordered to secure the Dutch settlements of Demerara, Berbice and Surinam. Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice surrendered in August 1803, with many of their inhabitants having actually requested a British presence.

Dutch Surinam, however, opted not to surrender on this occasion and a force of some 2,150 men was sent, arriving there in late April 1804. In order to capture the colony, the British had to go up the Surinam River, past not only the battery at the river mouth but also six other forts, before they reached the capital of Paramaribo, ten miles upstream. An advance force was landed thirty miles to the east of the river mouth, with the intention that they would journey overland to secure the Commewyne River and obtain boats to sail downstream to approach Fort New Amsterdam from the rear. Meanwhile, the main body of men overcame the river mouth battery and then sent a force overland, guided by locals, on a five-hour march through jungle terrain to capture Fort Frederick from the rear; this success was quickly followed by the capture of Fort Leyden. From here they were able to bombard Fort Amsterdam, whilst the advance party succeeded in drawing close to the rear of the fort on 4th May 1804. At this point the Dutch sent out a flag of truce, which led to terms being agreed and Surinam coming under British control.



A map of Dutch Surinam in the early nineteenth century

The following February saw the French launch an attack on Dominica, but the British defenders were able to put up enough resistance to induce the French to withdraw, despite the latter having a two to one numerical advantage. For the next few years there were no major operations; when Denmark entered the war in 1807, the Danish islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix in the Danish Virgin Islands all surrendered without a fight in the face of a 2,500 strong British force drawn from the local garrisons. Thus, the Army's next major role was not until 1809 with another invasion of Martinique; despite a blockade of the island, the Navy had failed to coerce it to surrender. A force of 10,000 men, divided into two divisions, under General George Beckwith landed on 31st January. The first contingent travelled overland from Bay Robert to Fort Desaix, encountering heavy opposition on the way.

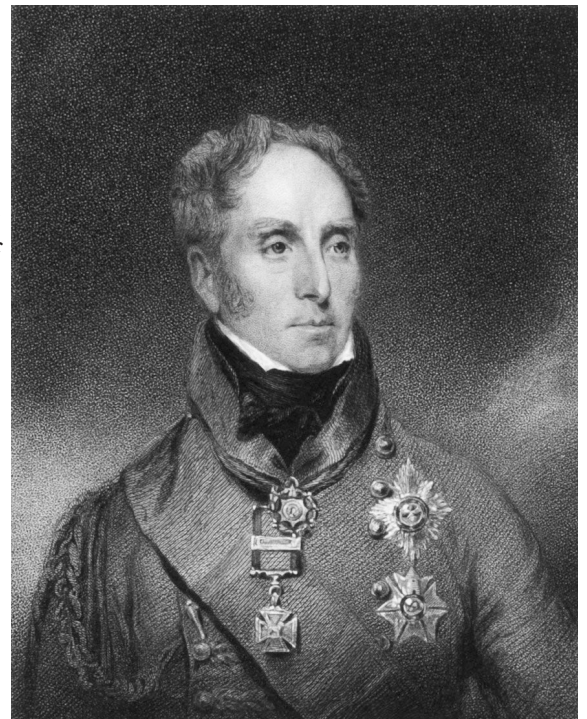


However, the Second Division, who had landed near Sainte Luce, encountered no resistance as they advanced, even accepting the surrender of members of the local militia en route. With both divisions at Fort Desaix, they began preparations for a siege, with the British batteries opening fire on the 19th February, forcing a French surrender on the 24th. April 1809 saw a successful British invasion of the islands of Les Saintes, with the 3rd and 8th West India Regiments being noted for their bravery and strenuous exertions in the capture of Terre en Haut.

Beckwith launched another invasion of Guadeloupe in late January 1810. The strategy adopted was to form a pincer movement to attack Basse-Terre town, so the First Division landed on the east coast of Basse-Terre island and began a march along the coast towards the town, whilst the Second Division landed to the northwest and began advancing from the other side. The French chose to abandon the town and fell back into the mountains. The British pursued them, overwhelming the French defences on the Plateau de Palmiste and crossing the River Gallion, before coming to the River Noire, where the French held the opposite bank. The Royal York Rangers crossed the river to the north, flanking the French and overwhelming their positions in

the heights overlooking the river, enduring heavy casualties in the process. With this, French General Ernouf opted to surrender, signing terms on 6th February. St. Martin, St. Eustatius and Saba also opted to capitulate shortly afterwards, without a fight. With this, the Napoleonic Wars in the Caribbean came to an end, save for the events of 1815 and the famous 'Hundred Days' following Napoleon's escape from Elba.

Hearing of Bonaparte's escape and resumption of power, those who remained loyal to him in the French Caribbean once again took up his banner. In agreement with the French Royalist Governor of Martinique, 2,000 British soldiers were stationed on the island to help successfully to prevent a Bonapartist uprising. However, Guadeloupe declared itself for Bonaparte on 18th June 1815, unbeknownst to them, the same day as the Battle of Waterloo. Sir James Leith, Commander of the British troops in the Leeward Isles, gathered available soldiers and launched an invasion, landing on 8th August at Anse Saint Sauveur and Grande Anse. Over the next two days the French were forced back towards Morne Houel, where the majority of their troops were situated. Morne Houel was attacked, forcing a French surrender on the 11th, thus ending the Napoleonic Wars. However, Guadeloupe was returned again to France by a treaty.



Sir James Leith

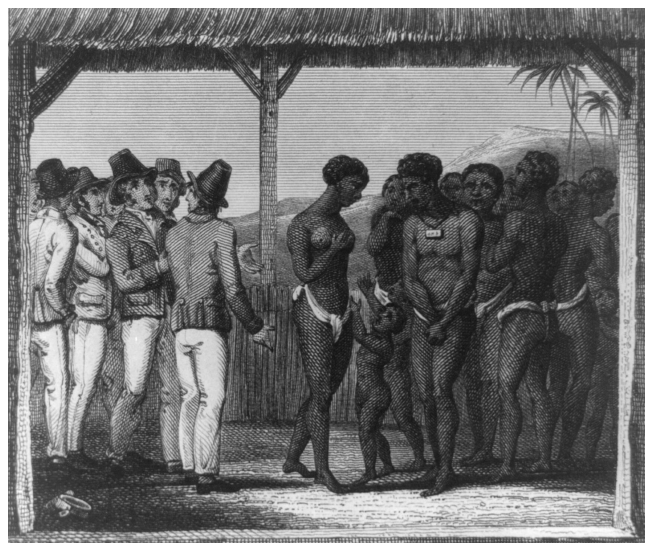
The West India Regiments

By the mid-1790s, the wars with the French in the Caribbean were not going well for Britain and new sources of men were required to help defend the colonies. Issues with recruiting European troops and the high mortality rate amongst them meant that military minds had to consider new options with which to garrison and defend the West Indies. The local white population was not large enough to provide the number of men required, so attention turned to the large black population, mainly comprising slaves. Thus, Lieutenant General Sir John Vaughan proposed that a regiment should be raised composed of black soldiers. Unlike previous black regiments raised in the region, this was not to be a temporary measure but a new, permanent, regular infantry regiment of the British Army. The idea of a permanent corps of black soldiers outside their control horrified the leading figures of the Plantocracy, and their representative body in London, The West India Committee, attempted to use its influence in Government to prevent their formation. However, slave rebellions in both 1794 and 1795, as well as the conflict with the Maroons of Jamaica, coupled with the advice of senior officers who had been stationed in the Caribbean and knew the difficulties of serving there, led Sir Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, to approve the formation of two new regiments composed of black soldiers.

It was impossible for these regiments to be formed by volunteers alone, so the decision was taken to purchase slaves from the Caribbean islands to fill the ranks. However, the planters were reluctant to sell their slaves to the Army as they believed that the creation of such regiments would fundamentally undermine and threaten their way of life. Therefore, when they were prepared to sell their slaves, they sold the ones that they considered to be unruly, the ones that would not make disciplined soldiers. Thus, in order to obtain suitable men, the Army mainly chose to buy slaves who had newly arrived in the region from Africa. Agents were employed to acquire them and were given guidelines for what sort of men were desirable, but these could vary in the instructions given from agent to agent. In general, the men were to be in good health and capable of bearing arms, aged between 16 and 22 years old and to be a minimum 5ft, 5ins tall. Agents were awarded contracts, which usually were for the purchase of 200 slaves. A budget was also established, with, normally, the price of slaves not to exceed £62, between £5,742.81 and £7,514.53 in modern money, although the budgeted amount could be much higher. The issue was that the planters, with vast financial resources at their disposal, were willing to pay far more than the Army for a slave - up to £100 each.

Ranger Regiments

The previous slave regiments were known as Ranger Regiments, who were raised in times of desperation and usually commanded by local officers. Ranger Regiments tended only to serve on the island where they were created and slave-owners were paid for the services of their slaves, receiving additional payment if the slave was killed. These Regiments, despite the prejudices of the Plantocracy, were frequently very effective. One of the most famous was raised by Robert Malcolm, who was later referred to as 'the father of the black regiments', even though he had died before the creation of the West India Regiments. Many of the last Ranger Corps to be raised served as the basis from which the new West India Regiments were created. For example, Malcolm's Rangers became part of the 1st West India Regiment, whilst the South American Rangers, raised in such colonies on the Central American Coast as Essequibo, became part of the 11th West India Regiment.



A West Indian slave market

The 'recruits' newly arrived from Africa faced many of the same difficulties that others from this continent faced. They came from different nations or tribes, many of them far from the African coast from which they had sailed, and spoke a variety of languages as a result, with very few knowing any English. This made understanding orders and the training they received very difficult. Despite these initial problems, there were

significant advantages in choosing these newly arrived men. They were, for the most part, hardy, having survived the trials of the 'Middle Passage' across the Atlantic and, unlike the men recruited in the Caribbean, they had no ties to the local population, which arguably made them more likely to enforce order in the region. Some officers of the day went further, claiming that the newly arrived Africans lacked many of the vices that they deemed to be present in the creole slave population and were more orderly and disciplined.



A Private of the 5th West India Regiment

These new regiments quickly proved their worth and, from the initial two regiments founded in 1795, the number rapidly increased in the space of a few short months, eventually reaching a total of twelve. It is estimated that between 1795 and 1808, 13,400 slaves were purchased as recruits for the West India Regiments, which arguably made the Army one of the largest slave owners in recent centuries, although other slave armies throughout history have exceeded this size. It must not be thought that the early West India Regiments were composed of slaves only; there were many free volunteers, not only from the free black and mixed-race populations of the West Indies, but even some whites, including some from England. Although these black soldiers could rise in the non-commissioned ranks, they could not attain a commission and become an officer.

The authorities in London decided that all stations in the British Caribbean would be required to have some black troops, much to the horror of the local legislatures. As a form of reassurance to the higher classes of colonial society, a policy was implemented that an island's garrison should have two white soldiers for each black soldier and the latter would also be frequently moved between islands to prevent them from forming relationships with the local slave population. However, this move did not totally allay the fears of the planters. Nor was it totally successful

in its implementation, with black soldiers outnumbering white soldiers in several posts in the Windward and Leeward Islands.

The 2nd West India Regiment were the first to see combat, against the Caribs and French forces on St. Vincent. Although they were classed as infantry of the line, in the early years, their role went far beyond that. Engaging the enemy in guerrilla warfare in the wooded and hilly interiors of the Caribbean islands, their role was, in truth, much closer to that of Light Infantry. In 1807, sections of the West India Regiments were also trained in the use of artillery, most likely owing to a lack of regular artillerymen. They also served, on occasion, as labour units, a role that they would fulfil periodically for the remainder of their existence. The first battle honour awarded to any West India Regiment was Dominica 1805, when the 1st WIR defended the island. The Regiments continued to serve with distinction until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, participating in campaigns on various French islands, including the final invasion of Guadeloupe in 1815.



The 3rd West India Regiment attacking a bridge on Terre en Haut 1809 Image © National Army Museum, London

Another notable problem during the early years of the Regiments was the mutiny of some soldiers of the 8th West India Regiment at Fort Shirley, Dominica on 9th April 1802. Rumours abounded within the Regiment that it was to be reduced in size and that the excess men were to be sold into slavery. Whilst untrue, several events occurred that convinced some troops that there was truth to this gossip. Firstly, there had been an issue with their pay over the preceding months, not perhaps totally unusual in the Army of the time, but it had lasted long enough to induce worry. Whilst at Fort Shirley, the men were assigned to various labour tasks, again not totally unusual, but they were asked to remove the brush and drain the swamps near the fort, work that was normally given to slaves. To carry out this task, they were each issued with a billhook, a tool used by slaves on plantations. This led to a feeling, confirmed by Private James who testified at the inquiry after the mutiny, that the task of cutting down brush was in fact a test to see if the men could cut sugar cane. The mutiny lasted for three days and was put down by the marines, artillerymen, the local militia and detachments of regular troops, which included men of the 8th West India Regiment who had remained loyal. 3 officers, and several other whites were killed in the disturbance. This led to the disbandment of the 8th and the rearrangement and renumbering of the other West India Regiments. There was another small mutiny by 30 men of 2nd West India Regiment in 1808 at Fort Augusta, Jamaica, which was put down at once by loyal men of the same regiment.

Such mutinies, even though they comprised a small number of men and were successfully suppressed, were cited by the rulers of the Plantocracy as an indication that their fears were right and black soldiers were dangerous, despite the obvious benefits that the Regiments had brought to the region. Colonel Thomas Hislop, writing a series of recommendations on the future of the West India Regiments commented that, *“Whatever prejudices may have existed or may still be entertained, among the Planter or other Residents in the West India Colonies, against the establishment of Black regiments, the utility of them, has in every instance been fully proved.”* Clashes between the Plantocracy and the Army over the use of the West India Regiments would continue for years to come, although some islands warmed to the West India Regiments earlier than others. For instance, in 1800, both the Legislature and the Council of Trinidad unanimously passed motions expressing their gratitude for the service of the Regiments, whilst on Jamaica criticism continued.



The Colours of the 4th West India Regiment
Image © National Army Museum, London

The mutiny of the 8th highlights an issue with the status of the men of the early West India Regiments. Although they had been purchased as slaves, there arose a legal question about whether they remained slaves, and thus remained subject to the local slave laws, or whether they had become free men, albeit bound by the same rules and regulations that governed the lives of other soldiers. There were many reasons why they should feel differently. They were told during their training that they enjoyed a privileged position and they were superior to slaves who worked in the fields. They were given the same uniforms as their white counterparts, received pay and allowances, and were treated in the same hospitals. Their testimony was accepted in military courts, just as a white soldier's would be, something that would have been impossible in a colonial civil court, as slaves were classed as chattels rather than people. Black sergeants were entrusted with the commands of important military posts, without any immediate supervision from white officers.

Although the Army had purchased these men, it also worked hard to ensure that they were protected from the worst aspects of slave society. The local legislatures, particularly as the threat of French invasion lessened, began to try and bring the black soldiers under the local laws governing slaves, which led to certain clashes between

military and civil authorities. Those soldiers who were retired from service, due to illness or injury, were often persecuted, as slave-owners deemed them to be a bad influence on their slaves. Special arrangements were made occasionally; for instance, a merchant was charged with the care of some veterans of the 11th West India Regiment. In 1797, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the West Indies, declared that all soldiers of the West India Regiments, who were deemed unfit for further service, would retire as freemen on a pension of a shilling a day. Whilst this decree was a major argument in support of the idea that these soldiers were free men, Sir Ralph's proclamation was neither condemned nor supported by the authorities in London. As a result, the legislatures of the British Caribbean ignored it whenever possible and continued to treat soldiers and veterans as being subject to local slave laws.

This failure inspired both the Army, and some officials, such as the Duke of Portland, to take further action to protect these ex-servicemen. Legal opinions were sought. The Government's legal officers gave their official opinion on the matter in March 1799, arguing that military service did not free the men from slavery in and of itself, but that an explicit act of manumission was required. Other lawyers disagreed, such as the Attorney General of Antigua, who argued that if a man had been employed as a soldier and paid to that end, then he was free as it was an "*implied or virtual manumission*". Nevertheless, the Government's legal officers maintained their opinion on the matter when they were consulted on a further two occasions. The arguments continued until 1807, when the Mutiny Act of that year, which governed the existence of the Army, deemed that all blacks in the service of the King were free. The act received Royal Assent two days before the Act abolishing the transatlantic slave trade, thus putting the Army at the forefront of abolition. This meant that the 10,000 men of the West India Regiments were undeniably free, 27 years before the slave population of the West Indies as a whole was freed. In the parliamentary debates on the abolition of the slave trade, Lord Hardwicke asked the Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, if the men of the West India Regiment were slaves or freemen. The Prime Minister replied he had always considered them to be free.

Negroes purchased and serving in the Forces, shall be deemed free.	CII. And be it further enacted, That from and after the passing of this Act, all Negroes purchased by or on account of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and serving in any of His Majesty's Forces, shall be and be deemed and taken to be free, to all Intents and for all Purposes whatever, in like Manner in every respect as if such Negroes had been born free in any Part of His Majesty's Dominions; and that such Negroes shall also to all Intents and Purposes whatever, be considered as Soldiers having voluntarily enlisted in His Majesty's Service.
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Section CII of the Mutiny Act 1807, declaring all black soldiers serving in the Armed Forces to be free men

With the end of the transatlantic slave trade, the West India Regiments now had to find another source of recruits. As the British Navy started to intercept foreign slave ships leaving the West African coast, the decision was made to recruit from amongst these liberated Africans. This presented its own set of ethical problems, in that enlistment in the West India Regiments remained, in theory, for life. Governor Thomas Perronet Thompson of Sierra Leone, an abolitionist, banned the recruitment of such liberated Africans into military service, as it was still theoretically a lifetime commitment, which was not the case for white soldiers, and possibly those of mixed race. Thus it was, in a sense, a forced slave apprenticeship for those who joined. However, Perronet Thompson was later removed from office and his replacement was ordered to restart the recruitment of liberated Africans, as well as to implement a fair method of encouraging Africans to volunteer. A recruiting depot was established in Sierra Leone in 1812 but only operated for a few years. After this, more and more of the recruits came from the Caribbean.

The effective service of these men in the difficult climate of the Caribbean made the authorities in London believe that they would also be effective in another region where the climate frequently proved lethal to white troops - West Africa, including Sierra Leone. The West India Regiments would divide their times between the Caribbean and West Africa for the remainder of their existence, serving not only as garrison troops but also on military expeditions.

The Maroon and Caribs Wars

When: The First Maroon War 1728-1739, The First Carib War 1772-1773, The Second Maroon War 1795, The Second Carib War 1795-1796

Participants: Britain and colonial governments vs Jamaican Maroons and Vincentian Caribs

Key battles and places: Jamaica; Trelawney Town, Accompong Town. St. Vincent; Carib lands in the north of the island, the Maraiqua Valley, Kingston

The British Army also had to face internal enemies on the islands that they controlled. Not only did this sporadically involve assisting the local militia in the suppression of a slave rebellion, but it also brought them into conflict with some of the native peoples of the Caribbean, which, contrary to the popular belief of many even today, had not been wiped out by disease and slavery following the first arrival of Europeans in the region. They also came into conflict with new cultures that had developed from the fusion of indigenous and African elements in the Caribbean since the arrival of Europeans.

The Maroons

The Maroons are an example of a creole culture, different cultures coming together in a new foreign environment, thereby forming a new multifaceted culture. In the case of the Maroons, these were formed from former slaves who had escaped their masters, those who were freed and some of the native peoples of the Caribbean, such as the Arawaks and Caribs. Maroon cultures exist on different islands throughout the Caribbean, with the most famous communities existing on Jamaica. The Jamaican Maroons are notable for not only the way that they have fought the British on several occasions throughout the centuries, but also through the treaties they made with them, which established the Maroon communities as their own separate societies on Jamaica. The Maroons are noted for the martial structure of their societies. Even today, the leaders of their communities are known as Colonels. These treaties saw the Maroons fight alongside the British Army at times and they also assisted in dealing with internal unrest such as slave rebellions.



The Maroon culture on Jamaica developed in the aftermath of the Western Design, and slave rebellions in 1694, 1702 and 1704 saw many escape their bonds and join them, increasing tensions between the Maroons and the colonists. The spread of colonists across the island, claiming more territory, also contributed to these tensions, and hostilities erupted in 1728, in what would become known as the First Maroon War, although in the opinion of many historians, it was merely a continuation of hostilities since the English first arrived on Jamaica 73 years earlier. The Maroons were led on the Windward side of Jamaica by Captain Quao and Queen Nanny, and by Cudjoe on the Leeward side. Faced with superior firepower and numbers, the Maroons adopted guerrilla warfare, which proved to be very effective; they hid in the deep woods and mountains of the island, which provided them with nearly inaccessible defences.

On the colonists' side, the majority of the war was borne by the militia, who also employed slaves to fight the Maroons, promising freedom to those who served. In addition, companies of free black and mixed-race men were recruited, as were some of the native inhabitants of Central America's Miskito Coast, but these had very little effect. Some small-scale reinforcements of regulars were also ineffective. Meanwhile, the Maroons' continuing successes encouraged more slaves to escape and join them. In 1733, the colonists decided to adopt a new system of fortified barracks throughout the island to counter the Maroons more effectively, as well as to target the lands where the Maroons grew their crops, in order to starve them into submission, but this too had little effect. By

1739, the war having waged for over a decade, it was decided to negotiate and an envoy was sent, agreeing terms with both the Leeward and Windward Maroons. These terms assured the Maroons of their freedom, as well as recognising their ownership of sections of the island and granting them significant autonomy. In return, the Maroons were obliged to fight on the British side should Jamaica be invaded or to deal with such matters of internal unrest as slave rebellions.



The major Maroon settlements of Jamaica in the eighteenth century

Matters between the Maroons and the other inhabitants of Jamaica would remain relatively peaceful over the next fifty years, with each side generally fulfilling their side of the agreement, until the 1790s when certain incidents caused relations to deteriorate. The Maroons of Trelawney Town wished to be granted new land where they could grow provisions and hunt as, not only had their own population grown significantly, but some planters had begun encroaching on their existing territory. An incident in which two Maroon men had been publicly whipped for allegedly stealing pigs exacerbated matters. Governor Robert Lindsay, the Earl of Balcarres, made the situation worse when he imprisoned six Maroon representatives, who had travelled to see him in order to resolve matters peacefully. Hostilities increased, leading to the outbreak of war in July 1795. The Governor established a blockade around Trelawney Maroon territory, but the Maroons withdrew into the mountains and launched another guerrilla campaign.

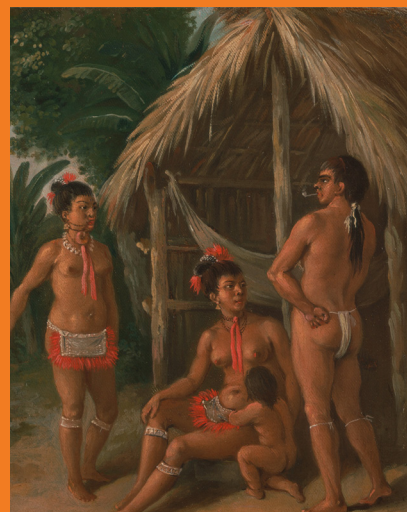
An ultimatum failed to convince them to surrender so the Governor ordered a general attack, which was unsurprisingly unsuccessful. He then switched to a policy of burning the land where the Maroons grew their crops and called up the militia, but neither of these actions had much effect. The Maroons succeeded in killing Colonel William Fitch, the British commander, in an ambush in early September, and by the end of the month British casualties since the start of the war were 70 men dead, whilst the British could not confirm they had killed a single Maroon. The new commander, Colonel George Walpole, adopted a different strategy, fighting the Maroons with similar guerrilla tactics and cutting down the bush that provided the Maroons with cover. These tactics turned the tide against the Maroons, and they negotiated a peace with Walpole in December 1795.

The aftermath, however, was not peaceful. The Jamaica Assembly and the Governor decided to exile the majority of the Trelawney Maroons from the island, although Walpole had given a commitment that this would not happen. The Assembly and the Governor argued that, as the majority of the Maroons had not given themselves up by 1st January 1796, as stipulated in the agreement reached with Walpole in the December, that they were not bound by this promise. Walpole refused to accept the Sword of Honour that the Assembly voted him and, when he was later elected to the British Parliament, he campaigned on the Maroons' behalf. Some of the exiled Maroons later returned to Jamaica, following the abolition of slavery.

The British Army and colonists of St. Vincent also came into conflict with a native Caribbean society during the eighteenth century. There were several years of tensions arising from the colonists' attempt to purchase lands in and build roads through Carib territories, whilst the Caribs harassed settlements. The First Carib War broke out in 1772, the colonists advocating that the Caribs be removed from the island by force. 2,500 soldiers were gathered on St. Vincent, with additional marines and artillerymen for support, in the hope that their very presence would be enough to convince the Caribs to agree to a treaty as the Maroons had done in the 1730s. However, this was not to be and the Caribs, led by Joseph Chatoyer and others, were prepared to fight. Like the Maroons, the Caribs made excellent use of the terrain and were able to hold the British forces at bay. The war proved controversial in Britain, and an inquiry determined that it was unjustified. With new orders, Major Dalrymple negotiated a treaty with the Caribs in February 1773.

The Caribs

The Caribs are one of the native peoples of the Caribbean, from whom the region derives its name. They still live in pockets across the Caribbean, including reservations on Dominica and St. Vincent. In the past, a number of escaped slaves took refuge with some of the Carib communities on the islands. On St. Vincent this gave rise to a creolised 'Black Carib' society, also known as the Garifuna. Like the Maroons, following wars, they eventually established treaties with the British, which led to some volunteering to join the British West Indies Regiment in the First World War.



Joseph Chatoyer,
leader of the Caribs of St.
Vincent in both Carib Wars

Yet the treaty was unsatisfactory on both sides, and the colonists still sought more Carib lands, whilst the Caribs reoccupied much of the 2,000 acres they had agreed to cede. Again, discontent increased over time, resulting in the outbreak of the Second Carib War in March 1795. Occurring in the middle of the French Revolutionary Wars, the French Republicans encouraged the Caribs to take up arms and offered them support. Chatoyer accepted this offer and by the end of the first month of the war, they had laid waste to much of the island, although Chatoyer was killed during this time. By early June, the Franco-Carib force had advanced so far that they were in striking distance of the capital at Kingston. Reinforcements arrived and the French and Caribs were repelled, with the British overcoming the enemy position at the Vigie on the southwestern side of the Maraiqua Valley and eventually driving into Carib territory.

However, the British withdrawal from St. Lucia meant that the French were free to send reinforcements to St. Vincent, which resulted in French gains in the late August and September. The British situation recovered thanks to reinforcements from Martinique at the end of September, including the Second West India Regiment, who saw combat for the first time. The Franco-Carib force had once again secured a position at the Vigie, but were driven off on 2nd October after a day-long battle in heavy rain, forcing them back towards Carib territory. Engagements would continue into the new year, with the 2nd West India Regiment fighting their first battle on 8th January 1796, although the cost was high; they lost 152 of the 200 men they fielded. They would go on to engage the enemy on several more occasions before the war ended.

The Caribs eventually capitulated in October 1796. Following the war, many of the Garifuna were banished and the descendants of these exiles still live in Belize and across the eastern coast of Central America.

The West India Regiments garrison

With the West Indies largely at peace following the end of the Napoleonic wars, service in the West India Regiments was largely as garrison troops. Whilst this was usually monotonous, on occasion this involved being called out to assist the militia deal with matters of local unrest, which before 1834, included slave rebellions. They were also called upon to help in the aftermath of various disasters, such as hurricanes, fires or earthquakes.

The principal incident in which the West India Regiments engaged in the suppression of a slave rebellion was Bussa's rebellion, which broke out on Easter Sunday, 14th April 1816 in Barbados. Beginning in St. Philip's parish and named for Bussa, one of its leaders, the rebellion spread through the neighbouring parishes, with the rebels setting fire to plantations and the homes of slave overseers, damaging some 60 estates. When the news reached Bridgetown, the local militia, the 1st West India Regiment and the 15th Regiment of Foot were mobilised. The West India regiment came into contact with the rebels and drove them off, after the rebels had fired upon them. Following this, the rebels were scattered and the militia hunted the rest down, being brutal in their reprisals. For their efforts the West India Regiment earned the thanks of the Barbadian assembly.



The flag of the rebels in Bussa's rebellion

Dealing with unrest was not limited to slave rebellions; it also included the fraught period surrounding the abolition of slavery on 1st August 1834. Tensions ran high throughout the Caribbean, and the Army was prepared to deal with any unrest that might arise. The local authorities on the Cayman Islands, expecting some issues, requested new muskets for their militia. What they received on 4th April 1834 was a visit from Howe Peter Browne, Marquess of Sligo and Governor of Jamaica, the first visit by a Governor to Cayman, and twenty troops from the 2nd West India Regiment. The presence of the soldiers, however, increased tensions, as the Caymanians were not used to having British troops stationed on the island, let alone black troops and there were several clashes between the soldiery and the civilians. In one instance, one Richard Phelan argued with and abused Private Rafferty, calling him a "Damn Affrican Negro Barbarian" and physically assaulted him. Rafferty defended himself and beat Phelan, but was later badly assaulted by a man called Richard Parsons who in addition to insulting the local magistrates, the soldiers and King William, also threatened to "Kill all the damn Negro soldiers" which almost led to a fight between soldiers and civilians, but was prevented by the local magistrates and the commanding Lieutenant. Other incidents also occurred during their stay and the locals accused them of crimes of rape and theft, petitioning, unsuccessfully, for their removal.

The Morant Bay Rebellion

Paul Bogle, a Baptist preacher who protested against the continuing racial inequalities in Jamaican society, led a crowd to the court house at Morant Bay, Jamaica on 11th October 1865. The crowd attacked the local militia, who retaliated. Many buildings were set on fire and there were deaths amongst both the authorities and the protesters. It was widely believed that Bogle was trying to begin a general uprising that was aimed at removing Jamaica's white population and those who otherwise disagreed with them, with their rallying cry said to be 'colour for colour and blood for blood'. The violence spread in the following days and Governor Eyre was criticised for his brutal reaction by some and hailed by others. He was replaced as Governor but was never brought to trial for his actions despite the desires of some. Paul Bogle was executed in the aftermath and is now recognised as a National Hero of Jamaica, alongside George William Gordon, a member of the Jamaican Assembly that Eyre had tried and executed under Martial Law, as he believed Gordon had encouraged the rebellion.

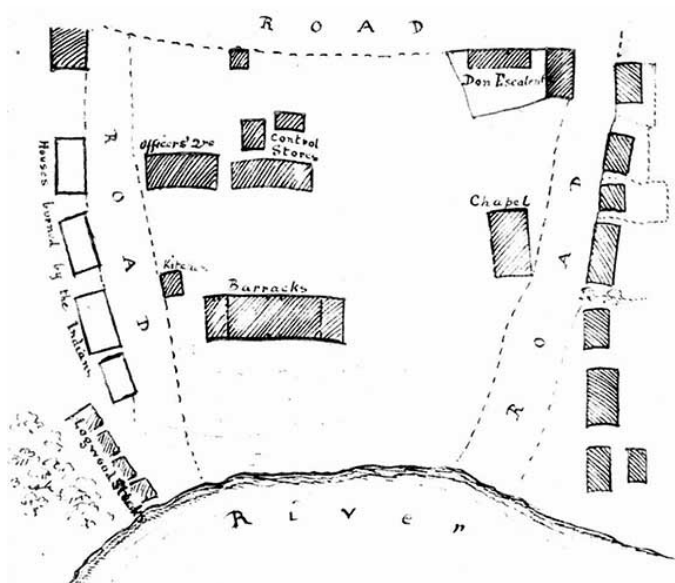
Another incident involving public unrest with which the West India Regiment found themselves involved was the infamous Morant Bay Rebellion. Martial law was declared and regiments stationed all over Jamaica sent troops to the affected area to restore order. This response proved particularly brutal, with soldiers carrying

out summary executions and setting fire to homes and other property. Amongst these incidents was the march of a detachment of the 1st West India Regiment and some men of the 6th Regiment of Foot from Port Antonio to Manchioneal, a distance of some twenty miles; this was noted for its particularly brutality, with Ensign Cullen, commanding the West India Regiment detachment, accused of having three men shot at Duckinfield Suspension Bridge and his accompanying Surgeon Morris accused of shooting a fourth. Major Ellis later noted in his history of the 1st West India Regiment that, *"Nine-tenths of those men were Jamaicans, born and bred, and in the work of suppressing the rebellion they were required to hang, capture, and destroy the habitations of not only their countrymen and friends, but, in many instances, of their near relatives. Yet in no single case did any man hesitate to obey orders, nor was the loyalty of any one soldier ever a matter for doubt."* Both Cullen and Morris were court-martialled for their actions on the march to Manchioneal but neither were convicted. The 2nd West India Regiment was brought from Barbados to Jamaica as reinforcements and stayed for some time until the authorities felt order had been restored.

Whilst matters in the islands were largely confined to garrison duties and incidents of local unrest, for those of the West India Regiments stationed in British Guiana and British Honduras, modern day Guyana and Belize, there were occasional clashes with external powers. In one instance in 1842, a detachment of the 1st West India Regiment had a difficult journey up the Essequibo and Rypmani rivers in British Guiana to reach the village of Pirara, where some Brazilians had been encroaching on British territory. It took them over a month to reach Pirara, arriving on 13th February and they successfully expelled the Brazilians.

In 1866, the 4th West India Regiment was sent to British Honduras, where they were required to help deal with an incident of woodcutters near the colony's northern border being harassed by Icaiche Maya. This was the result of years of ongoing border disputes, and the Icaiche Maya had even occupied the town of San Pedro and made demands for rent of the land and for ransom. Commissioner Edward Rhys and 142 men of the 4th Regiment were sent to negotiate with Icaiche leader Marcus Canul. Whilst marching to San Pedro on 20th December, less than a mile from the village, they came under attack from the Icaiche. Having marched overnight through terrible weather and mud, the 4th put up a spirited defence, but were ordered by commanding officer Major McKay to withdraw, leaving behind four dead and Commissioner Rhys missing, never to be seen again. Another expeditionary force, including men of the 3rd and 4th West India Regiments and the Royal Artillery searched for two months for the Icaiche but they had withdrawn over the border to Mexico.

A postscript to the San Pedro incident took place at Orange Walk, British Honduras, where a party of Icaiche Indians under Canul's command crossed the River Hondo and entered British territory. Orange Walk, although now a large town, was then a small village, with a small detachment of thirty-eight men of the 1st West India Regiment serving as garrison. In the early morning of 1st September 1872, 180 fighting men, supported by 100 camp followers, drew near to the small military outpost and took the West India Regiment by surprise. The two officers of the detachment, Lieutenant Joseph Graham Smith and Staff-Assistant-Surgeon John Dallas Edge were caught having their morning baths and had to run a distance of 40 feet to reach the relative safety of the barracks; Smith was at least able to don a pair of trousers for the dash, but Edge had to make the run naked. The men had begun defending the barracks, but in order to re-supply them, Smith and Sergeant Edward Belizario, had to retrieve the key for the ammunition box from Smith's quarters in another building; they succeeded without injury, despite heavy enemy fire. Belizario then managed to run to the guard room and retrieve the ammunition box, but it was too heavy to drag back to the barracks and he showed great bravery in passing packets of ammunition under the eaves of the barracks roof to his comrade, all the while exposed to enemy fire.



A map of the barracks at Orange Walk, 1872

Smith was badly wounded whilst defending the West Door of the barracks and Edge was forced to assume command, ably assisted by Sergeant Belizario. The battle continued for several hours, with the defenders being joined by the local police Magistrate and two of his constables, as well as by two American gentlemen from a nearby ranch. At one point the defenders started a fire, which set several buildings in the compound alight, but fortunately the barracks remained untouched. The Icaiche attack began to lessen around 13:30 and they had totally withdrawn by 14:00. Over the course of six hours fighting, Marcus Canul was mortally wounded and 50 Icaiche had been killed. On the side of the West India Regiments, Privates Lynch and Bidwell had died, with Smith and fourteen others severely wounded. One civilian, a 14-year-old boy, had also been killed and several others injured. The detachment patrolled the area for the next three days, keeping a watch for another potential attack, until a relief party finally arrived at midnight on the 4th. The action at Orange Walk has drawn certain comparisons with the famous defence of Rourke's Drift, although no Victoria Crosses were granted. Sergeant Belizario was, however, given the sum of £10 a year and the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions. Lance-Corporals Spencer and Stirling were also given promotions to full corporal, as well as the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Smith and Edge were also promoted.

Natural disasters with which the West India Regiments had to deal included fires; they helped in extinguishing the blaze, rescuing property and in keeping civil order and calm. In the extensive fires that broke out in Kingston, Jamaica on Saturday 25th August 1843, the 2nd West India Regiment were noted for the *"sense of cheerfulness, activity and well-directed exertions, evinced by them during a protracted and laborious period of severe fatigue."* However, such tasks were by no means free from risk; in the fire that broke out in Belize in 18th July 1854 many of the men were severely burned, with Lance Corporal William Maturin dying of his injuries. A fire killed twenty-four men of the Regiment in the hospital of Up Park Camp when an earthquake struck Kingston on 14th January 1907, which also caused severe damage to the rest of the camp. The earthquake, which killed over a thousand people in total, also killed two officers of the Regiment and wounded seventeen more, with another eighty wounded amongst the rank and file. Some of these also later died of their wounds, but it was noted that despite the devastation, the regiment managed to maintain military routine. In Kingston itself, the Regiment worked to remove the bodies of the dead, calm the people and whatever else they could.



The ruined church at Up Park Camp, 1907

Although the Regiments were largely viewed positively in the Caribbean, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were occasionally tensions and incidents of unrest. This included the events of 9th June 1894, when some 50 men of A company of the unified West India Regiment's 2nd battalion, under the lead of Corporal Philips smashed the windows of two police stations in Kingston, Jamaica, with two constables and a police inspector injured during the riot. The whole incident was over in the space of two hours, when other men of the battalion were sent to bring the rioters back. The Governor of Jamaica declared the whole episode the result of a few men's foolish actions. Another notable incident occurred in Belize in August 1920. This was linked to the sighting of a man in strange clothing, who civilians believed was a soldier. Civilians began to abuse the soldiers with insulting language. Matters turned violent and a civilian was injured. The next evening some of the Regiment went into town armed with sticks, to intimidate the civilians, travelling around in groups and using whistle calls to communicate. This did not stop several civilians jeering at them and over the next few days Captain Sharp, criticising the men under his command for their actions, restricted their ability to go into town. Notices were also placed around town warning civilians that they would be arrested for making *"insulting and provoking remarks"*.

Despite these incidents, and the role that they played in the suppression of slave rebellions and incidents like the Morant Bay Rebellion, the West India Regiments were a source of Caribbean pride until they were disbanded.

The West Indian soldier in Africa

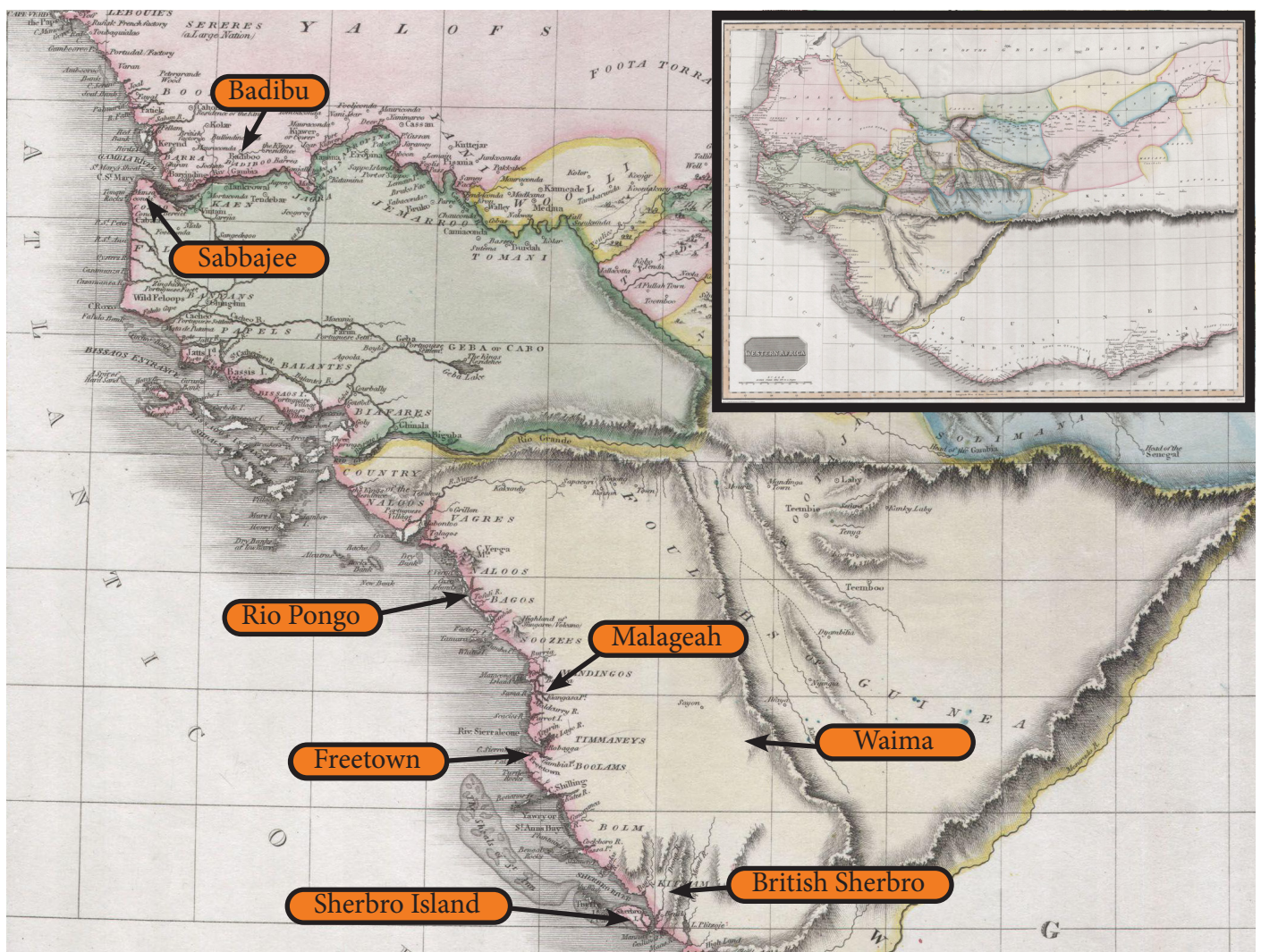
When: 1812-1927

Participants: Britain vs The Marabouts, Bamba Mihi Lahi, the Sofas, Bai Bureh

Key campaigns: The Rio Pongo expedition, The Marabout War, The expeditions to Malageah, The Hut Tax War

Key battles and places: Sierra Leone, The Gambia, The Gold Coast, Sabbajee, Malageah, Badibu, Rio Pongo, British Sherbro, Waima, Bagwema

The West India Regiments were employed in West Africa, as the region had the same reputation as the Caribbean in that it was hotbed of disease that was fatal to Europeans; black soldiers were believed to be more resistant to the local diseases, which proved to be mostly true according to the medical reports. The West India Regiments already had a link to the area early in the nineteenth century, due to the recruiting depot that had operated in Sierra Leone 1812-1814. Many West India Regiment veterans also settled in Sierra Leone when they retired, founding towns named after people and places from British military history, including Wellington, Waterloo, Hastings and Gibraltar Town. Their presence also led to the development of a new creole language, Krio, which is still widely spoken in Sierra Leone. Their service in Africa was, in many ways, similar to their service in the Caribbean, generally consisting of garrison duties, but in Africa they saw more combat, taking part in various small expeditions and, on occasion, in larger engagements. There were countless operations over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the following are some of the more significant events.



Following the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, a large proportion of the British forces in Africa participated in actions to disrupt the trade. Sometimes this involved an expedition against the Africa-based traders themselves, whether they were European or African. In one instance in 1820, this involved the 2nd West India Regiment participating in an expedition up the River Pongo near Sierra Leone, against the Afro-American slave trader, Benjamin Curtis, and his local allies. Curtis's allies had brutally captured the crew of *HMS Thistle*, who had been engaged in anti-slave trade operations. Therefore, three companies were sent up the Pongo and attacked and destroyed the towns of these allies, as well as Curtis's base of operations and much of his property at Curtistown. Expeditions during the nineteenth century frequently featured an aspect of freeing slaves; an example is the conflict against the inhabitants of Mongray in 1875, who had plundered towns in British Sherbro and taken their inhabitants to sell into slavery in the July. A contingent comprised of armed police and men of the 1st West India Regiment was sent to negotiate with the Mongray chiefs, which resulted in the return of the captives. However, this was quickly followed by fresh disturbances, which required the West India Regiment to fight, leading to the establishment of a peace treaty.

Britain also found itself drawn into such local disputes in West Africa as the Marabout conflict. The Marabouts, a type of Muslim cleric found in the region, were in conflict with the Soninke, an ethnic group in Senegal, Mali and Gambia, who formed the ruling class of the Kingdom of Kombo and largely followed traditional African religions; this resulted in a civil war within the Kingdom. Britain, as an ally of the Soninke, found itself drawn into this conflict and hosted peace negotiations in 1853. However, not all the Marabouts agreed with the treaty, and the inhabitants of the town of Sabbajee, home to the largest mosque in the region, continued hostilities. This led to the successful siege of the town on 1st June 1853 by the West India Regiments. The Regiments returned to the town two years later when Fodi Osumanu, an influential figure in the town, sent an armed force to the British-controlled settlement of Jossung to capture the wife of a man he had imprisoned. Despite a few unsuccessful attempts to arrest Osumanu and attack Sabbajee, the town was eventually captured in August 1853 and Osumanu's forces defeated.

However, not all actions in which the West India Regiments participated in Africa were successes, the debacle at Malageah in May 1855 being such an instance. Bamba Mima Lahi, the King of Malageah, had agreed a treaty with the British the previous year, and promised to make restitution for his attacks on British mercantile factories on the River Mellicourie. However, he had still not paid the agreed amount by the following year and the Acting Governor of Sierra Leone, a West Indian of mixed race, Robert Dougan, ordered that 150 men of the West India Regiments be sent to Malageah to burn the town and capture the King. This was against the advice of Captain R. D'Oyley Fletcher of the 1st West India Regiment, who argued that far more men were needed and that the enemy force they would face could be significantly stronger. Nevertheless, Dougan insisted and a force was duly embarked. Following an unsuccessful negotiation with the king, the town was attacked and set on fire. However, the town was not totally destroyed and, despite his better judgement, D'Oyley and his men were ordered to return the next day to complete the job. No sooner had they landed on the river bank from *HMS Teazer* than they came under heavy enemy fire and over a third of the total number of men were killed. The order was given to retreat and more soldiers were killed covering the withdrawal, whilst a number of the last survivors had to swim half a mile to reach *HMS Teazer*. With the deaths of some 70-90 men, Dougan was held responsible for this catastrophe, having acted beyond his authority, and was stripped of his rank.

William Fergusson

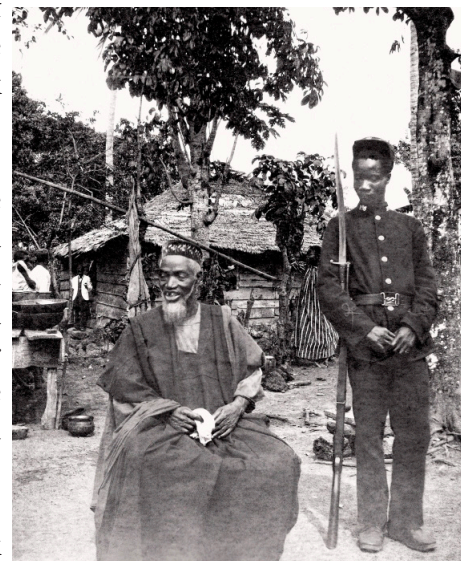
As shown by Robert Dougan, the West India Regiments were not the only West Indians in Africa. William Fergusson was born in Jamaica in 1795 to a white Scottish father and a black West Indian mother. He studied at the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh and, after qualifying in December 1813, joined the Army as an Assistant Surgeon. At the request of the Governor for a trained surgeon, one who could help the Africans who had been liberated from slave ships by the British, he was sent to Sierra Leone in 1815. He was promoted over the years and served as Acting Governor, being eventually appointed Governor in 1845, but dying the following year. He is the first non-white West Indian Army officer in the British Army of which we know, over a century before Walter Tull and his contemporaries. There were also other black Army officers serving in Africa in the nineteenth century, including surgeon James Africanus Beale Horton.

slavery. The Regiment faced a hard march through marshland and rain to Tungea, where they were able to resupply and eventually returned at last to Freetown, arriving on 21st January.



The Attack on Bagwema

1898 saw the outbreak of the Hut Tax War, a conflict that arose out of the creation of the Protectorate of Sierra Leone in August 1896 and the imposition of a new tax on dwellings of five shillings a year. The lack of consultation of the local rulers and rising anti-British feeling led to conflict when the tax began to be collected at the beginning of the year. 1,100 officers and men of the West India Regiments were involved in the strife. The African forces were led by Bai Bureh, ruler of Kasseh, and a chieftain of the Temne people, who had in the past aided the West India Regiments in other operations. He now carried out a campaign of guerrilla warfare. The West India Regiment formed a flying column, which over the course of twelve weeks from 15th April 1898, travelled throughout the territory, surrounding the town of Karene, dealing with the rebel forces and restabilising British control. This campaign was conducted in heavy rains, with up to five combat actions a day; marching took place from sunrise to 17:00 hrs with a half hour break in the morning and an hour and a half break in the afternoon. When the Mende people of Sherbro joined the rebellion, the West India Regiment formed part of the Sherbro Expeditionary force that was sent to the town. Bai Bureh eventually surrendered himself and was sent into exile, but peace was not fully restored until early 1899.



Photograph of Bai Bureh, taken by Lieutenant Arthur Greer, West India Regiment

The role of the West India Regiment in Africa was described in an article in *The Navy and Army Illustrated* on 10th December 1898: “Whenever fighting has been necessary on the West Coast of Africa, the West India Regiment has almost invariably been in the forefront of it, and at times has suffered severely without having even the consolation that it had qualified for a medal.” Yet at the same time it was “much more clearly recognised that the West India Regiment is really an ordinary Line infantry Regiment”, as opposed to a colonial corps.

Locally raised regiments, such as the West African Regiment and the West Africa Frontier Force, were formed at the end of the nineteenth century and they assumed much of the military responsibilities in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, reducing the West India Regiment’s role accordingly. Arguably, the most notable set of conflicts in which the West India Regiments participated in Africa were the Ashanti Wars, a series of five conflicts of varying scale, fought over the course of the nineteenth century and which require their own focus.

The Anglo-Ashanti Wars

By Laurence Benson

When: 1823-1824, 1863-1864, 1873-1874, 1895-1896, 1900

Combatants: Great Britain and allies vs Ashanti Confederacy

Reasons: Ashanti desire for coastal trade routes, British expansionist policy

Other names: The Ashanti Wars, The Ashanti Expeditions, The Kumasi Expeditions, The War of the Golden Stool

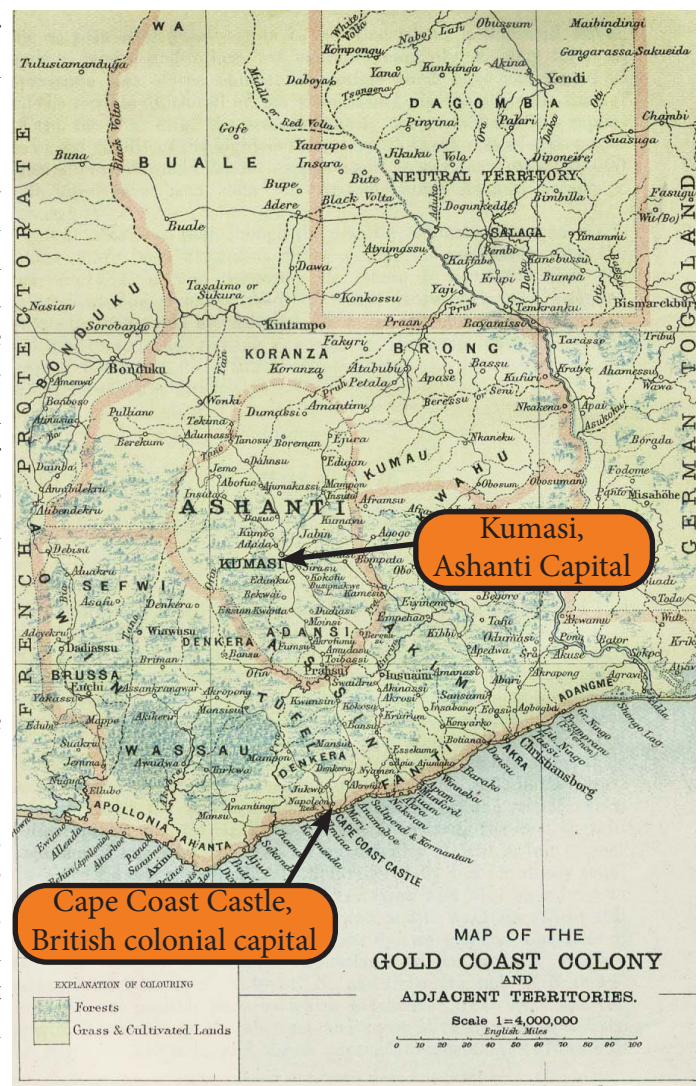
Key battles and places: The Gold Coast, Cape Coast, Elmina, Kumasi

During the nineteenth century, there were a series of wars between the British and Ashanti on the Gold Coast, in what is now modern-day Ghana. The Ashanti were one of the major African powers in the region, drawing much of their strength from the provision of enslaved West Africans for the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

However, the Ashanti territory was largely land-locked with no access to the coast, meaning the Fanti, who controlled the coastal territory and effectively acted as middlemen between the Ashanti and the British, were the dominant local power before 1806. As a result, the Ashanti led an expedition into Fanti territory and, after a successful campaign, they became the dominant local power in the region from 1806 onwards.

However, as Britain's presence in the region increased and as they attempted to assert their political dominance in the nineteenth century, Britain was drawn into colonial conflicts against the Ashanti on the side of the Fanti and other local powers. With eighteen companies from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th West India Regiments stationed in the region, thus forming the majority of Britain's imperial forces in the area, and involved in a host of other colonial expeditions in the nineteenth century, it was inevitable that West Indian soldiers became involved in these conflicts in the 1820s, 1860s and 1870s.

The First Anglo-Ashanti conflict was from 1823 to 1824. After the Ashanti campaign against the Fanti in 1806, some local groups who resented Ashanti dominance began to look to the British as a perceived alternative. Consequently, the Ashantehene, leader of the Ashanti, directed his soldiers to invade the British Protectorate, an area formed of local powers aligned with Britain. The British Governor of the region, Sir Charles MacCarthy, led a group of British soldiers against the Ashanti, which included detachments of the West India Regiments, but was ambushed and killed at the Battle of Assamcrow in January 1824.



After this encounter, there was no truly effective British military opposition to the Ashanti. Indeed, for large periods of time, the British forces, composed of the West India Regiments and local militia forces, were entrenched along the River Prah which effectively formed the border between Ashanti territory and the local powers aligned with the British. However, at the Battle of Beulah ninety-nine men from the 2nd West India Regiment helped to fight off an army of supposedly 10,000 Ashanti. Later, Colonel James Caulfield, who was a lieutenant in the 2nd West India Regiment at the time of the Third Anglo-Ashanti War in the 1870s, said of this action that “[the West Indian soldiers] *conducted themselves with praiseworthy steadiness in this engagement*”.

By the 1860s, British dominance in the Gold Coast area had greatly increased. In 1852, they had even imposed a tax of one shilling per person in the Protectorate. Once more, cut off from the coast and having lost a lot of territory, the Ashanti so resented such displays of British colonial power that in 1863 they again invaded the Protectorate. As with the First Anglo-Ashanti War, the British did not present an effective opposition to the Ashanti forces, again becoming embroiled in a stalemate along the River Prah. As a result, during the Second Anglo-Ashanti War West India Regiment troops were confined to outpost duty and were prevented from active service against the Ashanti.

Caulfield writes that this was in a large part due to the ‘unhealthy season’, the part of the year when the tropical diseases were most dangerous, being unusually difficult, thus meaning “[West Indian] *troops suffered most severely, especially from want of shelters from the heavy rains*”. Whilst the role and experience of WIR soldiers in the Second Anglo-Ashanti War was drastically different to those of West Indian troops four decades earlier – they were effectively side-lined because of their severe reaction to tropical diseases – they were nevertheless praised for their conduct. Indeed, the then governor wrote, “*I take this opportunity of recording the esteem in which I hold the services of the 2nd WIR ... while attached to this Government, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty*”.

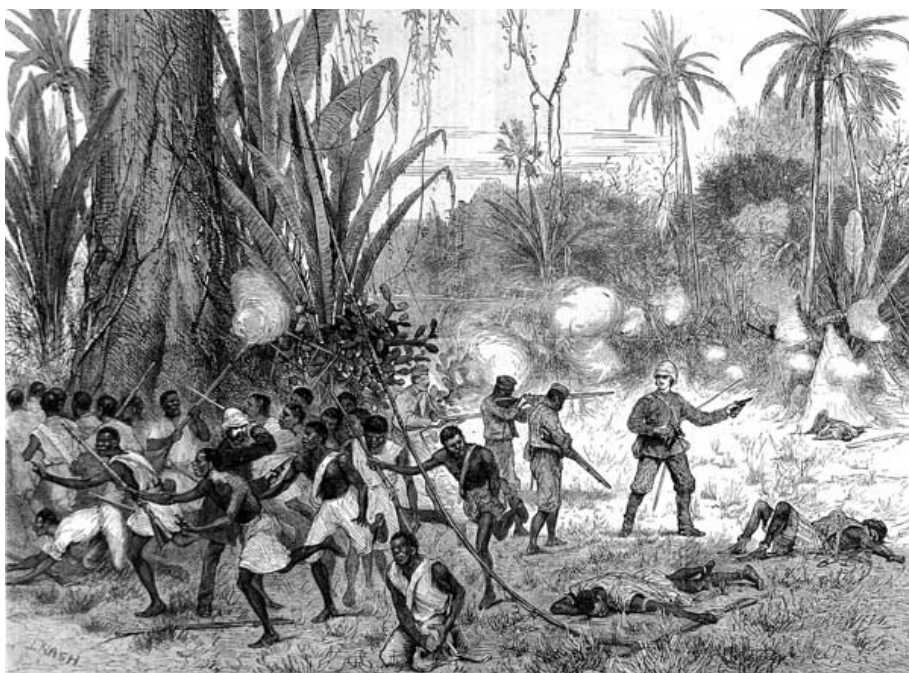
During the first two Anglo-Ashanti wars, West Indian troops had very different experiences – in the 1820s they had played a more active role in the conflict, whereas in the 1860s they had been limited by forces outside their control. However, these first two conflicts had been indecisive and the tensions between the two powers persisted and continued to escalate, meaning another conflict in the 1870s was inevitable. In the Third Anglo-Ashanti War (1873 to 1874), the British tried to take Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti territory, and, in doing so, attempted to neutralise the Ashanti as a serious threat to British colonial dominance in the area.

Whilst the previous two campaigns had been unsuccessful from a British perspective, the West India Regiments had played a central role in both. Nevertheless, Sir Garnet Wolseley, who was the commander of British forces during the Third Anglo-Ashanti War, believed that the only way to take Kumasi was to use European troops. However, the season’s incumbent health issues were a major concern for Wolseley. Tropical diseases, which had been a problem for the West India Regiments previously in the 1860s, were more prevalent in the early months of the year and were particularly dangerous for European troops. Writing to his wife in December 1873, Wolseley complained about this, saying that he seemed, “*always condemned to command in expeditions which must be accomplished before a certain season of the year begins*”.



Sir Garnet Wolseley

For Wolseley, the main concern was to minimise his use of European troops and complete the campaign in as short a period of time as possible. This required the creation of supply lines along the route to Kumasi before the beginning of the expedition in order to most efficiently accommodate the advance of Wolseley’s European troops. With various methods of supplies transportation proving unfeasible, Wolseley decided to use 8,500 local Fanti people as carriers. However, high levels of Fanti desertions saw the supply of carriers exhausted by the fourth day, meaning Wolseley had to turn instead to the West India Regiments, who were converted from a fighting force into a supply transportation unit.



Soldiers of the West India Regiment standing their ground in the Third Ashanti War

Caulfield wrote that the, “*action [of the men as carriers] on their part had a most important influence on the future of the campaign*”. This was a sentiment reiterated by Wolseley, who, in his farewell general orders, wrote that he “*wishes to convey to the soldiers of the 1st and 2nd West India regiments his appreciation of their soldier-like qualities, and of the manner they have performed their duties during the recent campaign*”. The efforts of the West Indian troops as supply carriers led media outlets in Britain to praise Wolseley’s management of the campaign; the Third Anglo-Ashanti War was held up as a model for how to employ white troops in tropical territories where there was a significant threat of disease.

Whilst the major role of West Indian troops in this conflict was as supply carriers, there were a few occasions when they were able to demonstrate their capabilities as soldiers in a more conventional sense. For example, towards the end of 1873, Privates Robert Fagan and James Lewis of the 2nd West India Regiment volunteered to go on a reconnaissance mission into enemy territory, tracking the movements of the Ashanti forces after they had retreated across the River Prah. G.A. Henty, special correspondent for the *Standard*, later wrote of this episode that, risking death and torture, “*this feat appears to me one of the most courageous, if not the most courageous, which was performed during the whole campaign*”. Indeed, Fagan and Lewis’s actions saw them win medals for distinguished conduct in the field in 1875 after the end of the campaign, along with several other West Indian soldiers.

In this conflict in the 1870s, the experience of West Indian soldiers was more complicated than it previously had been. In the 1820s, they had been recognised very much as a fighting force and in the 1860s, whilst they had not been utilised as an active force due to the impacts of the ‘unhealthy season’, they were still very much expected to be used as such. However, despite the example of Privates Fagan and Lewis, West Indian troops in the Third-Anglo Ashanti war were effectively relegated from a position of active duty to a supporting role.



The 2nd West India Regiment being presented with medals for the Third Ashanti War

The comments of the British officers above suggest that the efforts of West Indian troops as carriers were appreciated by the Army, and even implies that West Indian troops were happy to comply. However, Caulfield recognised the mistreatment of the West India Regiments when speaking about the final assault on the Ashanti at Kumasi. He wrote that, “*the regiment which had borne the brunt of the campaign for over eight months were not allowed to participate in the honour of entering it [Kumasi]; the regiment deserved better luck than it got on this occasion*”. This does not necessarily betray a sense of injustice at the manner in which the West India Regiments had been treated regarding their relegation to a mere supporting role, but it does demonstrate how the reputation of the West India Regiments diminished throughout the nineteenth century and indicates how the West Indian troops were considered inferior to their white European counterparts, reflecting the rigid racial divides borne out of colonialism.

After their creation in the late eighteenth century, the West India Regiments had been held in high esteem by the Army. For instance, after a small group of the 2nd West India Regiment mutinied in Jamaica in 1808, General Villetes stressed the *“loyal and proper feelings and spirits shown by the body of the [2nd] regiment”*, as more than 900 soldiers suppressed a recently arrived contingent of 33 enslaved conscripts. To calm fears that this incident and others like it would encourage enslaved labourers to revolt in the Caribbean, General Villetes’ successor, General Carmichael, used them as his personal house-guard, therefore publicly stating the British Army’s confidence in the West India Regiments.

By the 1850s, this public confidence had not entirely disappeared, but there were moves towards greater racial and social divides amongst white soldiers and West Indian troops. In 1858 the West India Regiments were presented with new Zouave uniforms, inspired by French military forces raised in North Africa, who had fought in the Crimean War. The oriental design of the new uniforms set the West Indian troops apart, creating a divide between them and their white European officers and counterparts in other regiments, who continued to wear the traditional uniforms.

In 1872, the Acting-Governor-in-Chief of the Gold Coast settlements, John Pope-Hennessy, wrote that *“experience shows that they [West Indian soldiers] were not physically fit for any purpose in the interior”*. This was a sentiment clearly shared by Wolseley who, in 1873, wrote in personal correspondence that the *“moral effect of their [West Indian soldier’s] presence upon the Ashanti is not to be compared with that which a similar number of Europeans would exert”*. This points to what was becoming a commonly held belief amongst British Army officers in the latter half of the nineteenth century – the West India Regiments were full of ‘excessively pampered’ soldiers who were not capable of a similar level of performance as white European troops.



A soldier of the
3rd West India Regiment
Image © National Army Museum,
London

In the 1890s, the British attempted to annex Ashanti territory into their Gold Coast colony, but Ashanti resistance resulted in a further expedition to Kumasi to force the issue. However, in 1888 the 1st and 2nd West India Regiments had been merged, completing the decline of the regiments from twelve units at their height to simply one. This meant that in the Fourth Anglo-Ashanti war (1895 to 1896), the role of West Indian troops was extremely limited, with the majority of the expeditionary force comprising European troops and locally raised forces like the Hausa Constabulary. The Fifth Ashanti War (1900), also known as the War of the Golden Stool for the symbol of Ashanti Royal authority, only saw a limited role for the 3rd Battalion’s artillery section. The role of the West India Regiments was so limited in these final two conflicts that in 1904, Colonel James Willocks, who had been a lieutenant in the West African Frontier Force during the campaign, said of the West Indian soldiers, *“I am convinced you will never get their proper value out of them so long as they are treated in the same way as Europeans”*.



Officers and Men of the West India
Regiment outside the officers’ quarters
at the Kumasi garrison 1898

In the First Anglo-Ashanti war during the 1820s, the West India Regiments had been at the height of their powers and played a prominent role in that conflict. However, through the second and third conflicts in the 1860s and 1870s, their role had been incrementally reduced and changed, coinciding with their diminishing reputation in the British Army throughout the nineteenth century. This was such that by the 1890s, the West India Regiments had been reduced in number to only one unit, which saw their role in the Fourth Anglo-Ashanti War severely limited. The experience of West Indian soldiers in this period varied from conflict to conflict, but certainly they had played a prominent role in Britain’s military campaigns in West Africa during the nineteenth century.

West Indian soldiers in Britain

Although not a common occurrence, several West Indians joined the British Army in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, long before the creation of the West India Regiments. Like many British-born younger sons of higher-class families, several white West Indians purchased commissions in the Army, before the practice was abolished in 1871. Like their British counterparts, some families developed traditions of military service which continued beyond the purchase of commissions. For example, the brothers Douglas and James Alleyne of Barbados enjoyed highly successful military careers in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Several West Indians of African heritage also enlisted, and came to occupy something of a niche role. An enduring belief in the innate musicality of black people meant that many regiments desired to have black musicians as part of their regimental bands, and many black West Indians were recruited accordingly, forming the majority of such black musicians. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries music played a vitally important role in Army life, with certain tunes representing orders; for example, a command to advance or to withdraw. Due to their importance on the battlefield, the musicians were a key target for any enemy force, as killing or injuring them would disrupt the operation of the opponent. This is demonstrated by the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade, in which more trumpeters were killed, captured or injured than any other rank. The distinctive uniforms that regimental musicians wore, normally the regimental colours reversed, only helped the enemy to target them. The Guards regiments stationed in London took this differentiation even further, by dressing their black musicians in uniforms inspired by those worn in the Ottoman Empire.



West Indian bandsmen at the Changing of the Guard
Image © National Army Museum, London

The desire for black musicians from regiments across Britain contributed to the spread of the black community throughout the country. Whilst they appear to have been well-treated in their regiments, black servicemen in Britain in this time did come across some racist treatment; a well reported story tells of one West Indian soldier, whilst walking along the Strand in London, was abused by a man, whom he promptly knocked down. However, it was by no means universal. Many married British women and settled happily, with their regimental comrades frequently acting as godparents to their children. William Afflick, born in St. Kitts 1781, married his English wife Elizabeth before 1810 and, after his service in the Napoleonic Wars, including in the Iberian Peninsula, France and the Battle of Waterloo, settled in Gore Lane, London and seems to have remained there until his death in 1855. The social status they enjoyed in Britain, where slavery had never been legally recognised or practised, would have been unthinkable in the Caribbean.

Despite this, some indeed did opt to return, such as George Rose. Rose had been born as a slave in Spanish Town Jamaica in 1787. He escaped to England and enlisted in the 73rd Regiment of Foot in August 1809, fighting in the European campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars, including the Battle of Waterloo where he was severely wounded by a shot to the arm. He eventually rose to the rank of sergeant in 1831, the first known black regular soldier to do so. After his discharge in 1837, he lived in Glasgow for some years before returning to Jamaica in 1849 as a Methodist missionary. He remained in Jamaica until his death in 1873.

Contrary to popular opinion, some men of African heritage, including West Indians, were able to achieve officers' commissions in the nineteenth century. Amongst their number was an Ensign of the 49th Foot, James Swaby, who was born in Jamaica to John Swaby and a woman of mixed race, making him $\frac{1}{4}$ black, a Quadroon by the contemporary Caribbean racial classifications. This did not only include the regular Army but also the British militia. Nathaniel Wells, the son of a white planter and a slave, was born in St. Kitts and inherited his father's wealth. Moving to Monmouthshire, he became Deputy Lord Lieutenant for the county and secured a commission in the Monmouthshire militia, although his resignation in August 1822 may have been influenced by his experiences during riots a few months earlier.

The First World War

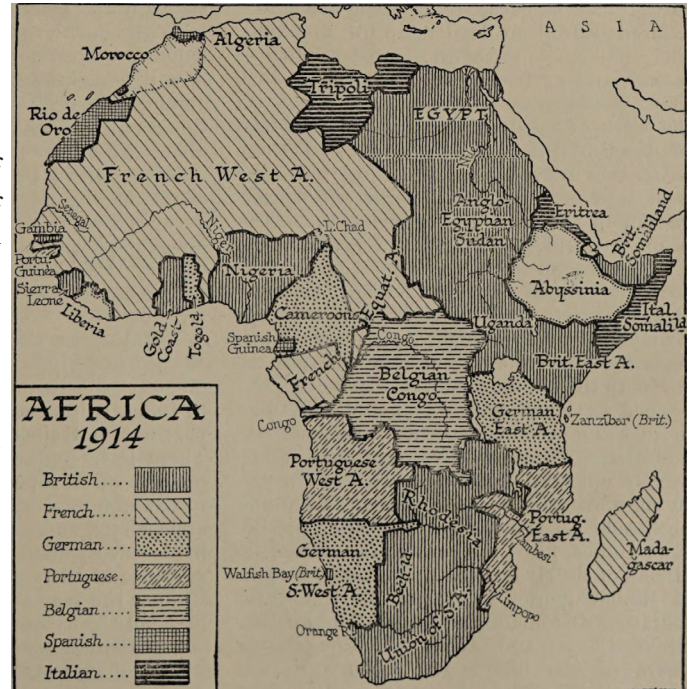
When: 1914-1918

Combatants: Britain and allies vs Germany, the Ottoman Empire and allies

Key campaigns: Middle East, East and West Africa, the Western Front

Key places: Egypt, Palaestine, Togoland, the Cameroons, German East Africa, France

The West India Regiment continued to serve in the First World War, in the campaigns in West Africa, where they had served for so long in the previous century. This time they saw combat in the early months of the war against forces stationed in the German colony of Togoland (modern day Togo and the Volta Region of Ghana) and the Cameroons, which resulted in victory for the allied British and French forces in the region. The Togoland campaign ended in 26th August 1914, when the Germans surrendered. The Cameroons campaign began in September 1914 and the West India Regiment formed part of a force composed of British, French and Belgian troops, with detachments from the machine gun and signalling section taking part. The campaign lasted for two years and the Regiments were awarded a battle honour to display on their colours: 'Cameroons 1914-16'.



A map of the different colonies in Africa 1914

The whole of the Regiment was assembled at Sierra Leone in April 1916 and in the August were sent to German East Africa, where they fought against the German forces commanded by General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck; at the end of the campaign they were involved in almost continuous combat from the 23rd September 1917 to the 18th October, with the Regiment operating Stokes guns, a type of trench mortar. The 16th to 18th October 1917 saw the Battle of Nyangao, also known as the Battle of Mahiwa, one of the most lethal battles of the African campaign, with the British incurring 2,500 casualties, killed and wounded, half the number of their force. Many awards were granted from this campaign, including 8 Distinguished Conduct Medals and six Military Medals, including that awarded to Lance Corporal Ruben Robertson (6353), and two Meritorious Service Medals. Another battle honour was awarded; 'East Africa 1914-1918'.



The 2nd battalion of the West India Regiment, after the African campaigns had ceased, was sent to Palestine in the last months of the war where they served behind the lines and did not engage in active combat; nevertheless, this earned them another battle honour for their service. This was their last major campaign, and the return of the 2nd battalion to Jamaica in 1919 in many ways heralded the end of the Regiment, although it was not dissolved until 1927. This was due to changing defence priorities and the policy in the 1920s of reducing defence spending. After a small ceremony, the regimental colours were handed over to the King and are kept at Windsor Castle.

The last colour of the West India Regiment
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021



Edward Jones with a Lion statue in Trafalgar Square

The story of the Caribbean in the First World War was by no means limited to the West India Regiment. Many West Indians were eager to enlist and serve in the British forces, with many paying for their own passage across the sea to Britain to join various regiments; for example, Edward Jones of Barbados joined the Cheshire Regiment as a Private.

However, despite the initial resistance of the War Office, the efforts of the Colonial Office and the Governments of the British West Indies, aided in no small measure by the personal support of King George V, resulted in the creation of the British West Indies Regiment. This fighting regiment was initially created in 1915 and served until 1918, leading to the creation over time of twelve battalions, with 15,204 men volunteering for service in the regiment by the end of the war. The volunteers faced several issues before they even set foot in a combat zone, including the infamous incident aboard the troop carrier *SS Verdala*, which was diverted to Nova Scotia to avoid enemy attack. With a broken heating system and a lack of suitable warm

clothing for the men, many suffered frostbite and had to have extremities amputated, and five men even died. This incident, which caused widespread discontent in the Caribbean, led to a temporary reduction in the number of volunteers. The men who first arrived in Britain were sent to Seaford Camp, where many fell ill and some even died from infections such as influenza; they were not prepared for the difference in climate between the Caribbean and the UK and were not issued with sufficient warm clothing or heaters to compensate for the low temperatures.

Three of these battalions, the 1st, 2nd and 5th, served in the Middle Eastern Campaign in Egypt and Palestine. Whilst the 5th was a reserve, training battalion, the 1st and 2nd Battalions took an active part in the fight against the Ottoman Empire, serving in the campaign that resulted in the Ottoman surrender. The 1st saw action at Umbrella Hill, with their machine gun section acting in support of two raids on the Turkish lines. At Dumbell Hill and Two Tree Farm, during the assault on the Gaza Beersheba line which led to the capture of Jerusalem, they came into combat with the Ottoman 58th Regiment stationed at Atawineh Redoubt and helped to cover the retreat of the Imperial Service Cavalry in the face of heavy enemy fire.



A West Indian machine gun crew

During this time, the 2nd Battalion served as troops for the Army Headquarters, guarding both outposts and captured Turkish prisoners. Both Battalions saw combat in the Jordan Valley under the overall command



The men of the British West Indies Regiment in the Middle East

of General Edward Chaytor, where the 2nd were noted for their brave advance in the face of heavy enemy fire towards Bakr and Chalk Ridges. The 1st Battalion secured Grant Ridge and Bagahallah and then played a key role in securing of Damieh Bridgehead over the River Jordan. Meanwhile, the 2nd repelled a Turkish attack over the river. They distinguished themselves through their actions, with several of their number winning awards for bravery and the commendation of the campaign's commanders. A small detachment from these regiments also served in a limited capacity in East Africa.

The other battalions served in Western Europe where, although they were classed as infantry battalions, they operated as labour battalions, ensuring that defences were built and maintained and transporting military supplies, most notably ammunition. This was due in large part to the authorities being unhappy with the idea of Black troops fighting White Europeans, even if they were the enemy, a problem which did not apply in the fight against the Ottomans. Although this lacked the perceived 'glamour' of a fighting unit, the work was by no means less dangerous as such supplies were often the target

of enemy attacks and by its very nature was hard and laborious. Their duties included carrying shells up to the large guns during the Battle of the Somme, whilst under heavy enemy fire. In other instances, the men secured burning ammunition dumps which could have exploded if they had not acted promptly, a dangerous deed for which several won awards for bravery. The men took pride in such work and adopted the moniker of the 'King George Steam Engine', as a sign of their labours and personal connection to the British Monarch. There are some unconfirmed reports that some men of the British West Indies Regiment did engage in some fighting on the Western Front, but this was never officially approved.



Men of the British West Indies Regiment in France

Unfortunately, the story of the British West Indies Regiment came to an unhappy end when, at the end of the war, they were sent to Cimino Camp in Taranto, Italy. In light of harsh and discriminatory treatment, which included, amongst other matters, being denied a pay rise given to other troops and being forced to dig latrines for Italian labourers, some men of the Regiment mutinied, which was not an uncommon occurrence amongst regiments of any origin in the fraught period following the war whilst men were waiting demobilisation. Nevertheless, the Taranto mutiny resulted in the men of the British West Indies Regiment being transported back to the Caribbean under armed guard, even those who had not been present at Cimino Camp at the time.

The contemporary racial divisions meant that regulations were in place to bar men of non-European racial origin, as many from the West Indies were, from holding an officer's commission. However, that rule was broken on several occasions and men of West Indian families in Britain and from the region itself rose to



2nd Lieutenant Euan Lucie-Smith
Royal Warwickshire Regiment

hold commissions. Most famous of these is Walter Tull, the former professional footballer who played for Clapham Town, Northampton Town and Tottenham Hotspur, who died during the German's Spring Offensive in 1918 and whose body was never located. However, he was not the first black officer in the regular Army, that distinction belonging to William Fergusson. Nor was Tull even the first officer of black West Indian ancestry to serve in the First World War. Others include George Bemand, commissioned in May 1915, who was killed by an enemy shell in France on Boxing Day, 1916, whilst serving as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery. Euan Lucie-Smith, who was born in Jamaica in December 1889 and had some black ancestry on his mother's side, served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, being commissioned on 14th November 1914, shortly after the outbreak of war and died on 25th April 1915 during the Second Battle of Ypres. David Louis Clemetson was appointed an officer in the Yeomanry, following in the footsteps of Nathaniel Wells, a West Indian who was born a slave and son of a plantation owner, but inherited his father's wealth and served in the Monmouthshire Yeomanry in the early nineteenth century.

Nor was Tull the highest ranked. That honour belonged to Allan Noel Minns from Norfolk, whose father was one of the first black mayors in Britain. He had just finished his medical training when war broke out and he volunteered to serve in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He served in the Gallipoli campaign and later in Mesopotamia, being mentioned in despatches, and was awarded the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order for his efforts. In the Gallipoli campaign, notable for its dangers and high death toll, he rose to

the temporary rank of Major, allowing him to command his unit, the 39th Field Ambulance, a position that he held for about six months between August 1915 and January 1916. He eventually received the permanent rank of Captain. The reason that these men were able to secure these commissions in a time when racial prejudice ruled that they should be unable to do so, is that they had lighter skin tones than many others due to their creole ancestry. This allowed sympathetic medical officers to circumvent Army regulations, by describing their skin tones in euphemistic terms, such as “*dusky*”. Men with darker skin tones were denied these commissions, including George Bemand’s brother Harold, and G.O. Rushdie-Gray, despite the fact that he was well-suited for a commission in the Veterinary Corps, having served as the Government of Jamaica’s Chief Veterinary Officer as well as in the West India Regiment, and having a recommendation from the Governor of Jamaica. Several white West Indians also held officers’ commissions, some in the British West Indies Regiment such as Arnold E. Thompson of Jamaica.



2nd Lieutenant Arnold Thompson,
British West Indies Regiment

What is notable is that although conscription laws were passed in the Caribbean, they were never activated. Every man who came from the West Indies to support the war effort was a volunteer. It is impossible to accurately number those that did so, but the British West Indies Regiment alone was composed of over 15,000 men. The experiences of these men, both positive and negative, would influence the development of the Caribbean over the coming years, with many of the veterans rising to positions of leadership in civilian life. These men included such figures as Arthur Andrew Cipriani and Tubal Uriah Butler, both served in the British West Indies Regiment and became important figures in Trinidadian politics. Norman Washington Manley, who served in the Royal Field Artillery and saw action at the Somme and Ypres, and later as a politician in Jamaica, helped to secure the island’s independence from Britain in 1962, becoming its first Premier. Manley wrote about his experiences in the war. This included an element of racism, with Manley noting that “*Corporals and Sergeants resented my sharing status with them... It was only the Officer class that I could expect to behave with ordinary decency and both aspects of this phenomenon I fully understood.*” However, he also recorded that some of his comrades were not so prejudiced and were prepared to defend him, “*I have heard a real tough guy get hold of a new arrival, a casualty replacement, who automatically called me ‘Darkie’, and take him aside and say ‘Don’t call him that – he doesn’t like it. We call him Bill and we like him!’*”

For more information on the role of the West Indies in the First World War, both in the Army and beyond, please see the [material](#) produced by the West India Committee during our [Caribbean’s Great War](#) Project.



The badge of the
British West Indies
Regiment

The Second World War

When: 1939-1945

Combatants: Britain and allies vs Germany and the Axis powers

Key campaigns: The North African Campaign, The Home Front

Key places: Italy, North Africa, Egypt, Britain

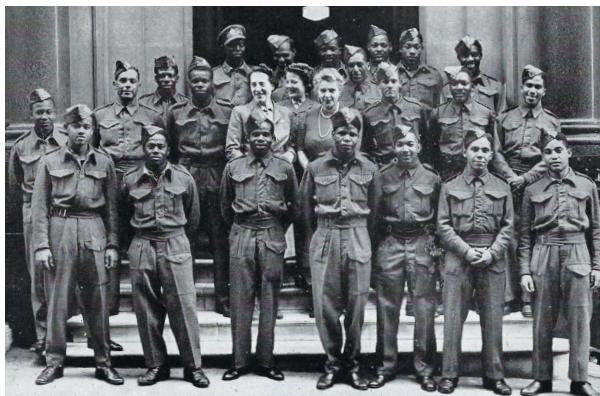
By the outbreak of the Second World War there was no West Indian Regiment left in existence; the British West Indies Regiment had been dissolved shortly after the end of the First World War and the West India Regiment was disbanded in 1927, due to changes in imperial defence policy. It was no longer needed in West Africa owing to the creation of local regiments in that region, and the British Caribbean was now at peace, so no longer required the presence of a regular Army regiment, and had local defence forces on which to rely. There was also the necessity to make stringent reductions as a consequence of increased public spending on defence in the inter-war years. Army Order 317, issued in September 1926, brought the West India Regiment to a close, parading for the last time on 31st January 1927 at Up Park Camp. The regimental colours were presented to King George V and are now kept at Windsor Castle. An attempt was made to resurrect the regiment in the 1930s, as the colonial governments felt it would address some of the issues caused by mass unemployment as a result of the Great Depression, but the War Office refused, arguing that such a move would be poor value for money.

When war came again in 1939, the local defence forces of the Caribbean were divided under two commands. The North Caribbean Force was composed of battalions from the Bahamas, Bermuda, the Leeward Islands and Jamaica, being headquartered on the latter island. The South Caribbean Force was headquartered on Trinidad and also encompassed the Windward Islands and Barbados. As was the case in Britain, many islands created Home Guards to keep watch for enemy shipping and potential invasions. This also included local branches for dependant islands in some territories; for example, the Caymanian Home Guard was a division of the Jamaican Home Guard. These Home Guards received military training and maintained their watch on the coasts of their respective islands, although the exact nature of their operations could differ; the Caymanian Home Guard kept a watch on the coast of Grand Cayman for twenty-four hours a day from a series of watchtowers; the Barbados Home Guard operated only at night, from their own homes. The local forces in the region also had to take charge of Prisoners of War, who were sent to the islands, much as they had been in the First World War.



A replica Caymanian Home Guard watchpost

Despite the negative experiences of many in the previous conflict, thousands of West Indians volunteered again. However, this time the Caribbean contribution would be more evident in the other branches of the military, most notably the Royal Air Force, where by the end of the war 400 West Indians



Jamaican members of the Royal Engineers

served as Airmen and over 5,500 travelled to Britain to serve as aircrew. Many also joined the Merchant Navy. Although there was still some prejudice against recruiting black West Indians into the Army, the joint efforts of the Colonial Office and the West India Committee were able to secure their inclusion, especially as many of them possessed useful skills that were in short supply, such as mechanical engineering. By May 1942, West Indians could be found serving in over 40 different regiments, with a sizeable contingent in the Royal Engineers. Many of these engineers served in the Middle East and North Africa, providing vital support for the efforts of General Montgomery and his Army.

© The West India Committee

Many in the Caribbean, however, again felt the need for their own regiment, with both Jamaica and Trinidad offering to raise contingents in 1940. The experiences of the British West Indies Regiment posed some questions as to whether a new regiment should be raised and some again suggested resurrecting the West India Regiment. The War Office remained opposed to the creation of a new corps, citing issues of climate, accommodation and transport. The latter was a particular concern as German U-Boat activity was rife in the Caribbean, causing serious damage to British shipping, and a slow-moving troop transport would have been an irresistible target and would require a strong escort. By 1943, the War Office was offering to create a garrison unit to serve in either Ceylon or Madagascar, but the Colonial Office continued to advocate a Combat regiment, possibly for a role in the Mediterranean theatre, arguing that a refusal could be seen as an insult to the British Caribbean. Prime Minister Winston Churchill also supported the creation of a West Indian Regiment, suggesting that they could be of use in Singapore.

By December 1943, the War Office approved the unit, although they insisted that they would be primarily used for garrison duties, despite the fact that they were officially a combat unit. The 1st Battalion of the Caribbean Regiment was created, notwithstanding reservations of the military value of such a unit, and the Army informed British Commanders that such value needed to be balanced against political considerations. Thus, the history of the Caribbean Regiment would be defined by the fact that it had been born for political reasons rather than military ones. The colour bar to officers' commissions was suspended during the war, thus making it easier for darker-skinned West Indians to achieve a commission, with Joe Moody, born in London to black West Indian parents, achieving the rank of Major in the Caribbean Regiment.

Whilst training in Virginia in the USA in June 1944, the Regiment made its first public appearance during a parade celebrating the King's Birthday and were sent to Italy the following month. However, they were deemed to need another 6 months training before they were ready for combat, and so helped as labourers, being noted for the quick manner in which they successfully loaded bridge equipment, which led to a speedy river crossing, and the rescue of an important ammunition dump from fire. They were then sent to Egypt in October 1944, but matters were not smooth sailing. On Christmas Eve, a white soldier and a black sergeant of the Caribbean Regiment had an altercation in a dance hall over a woman, which led to a fight lasting several hours. The Caribbean Regiment, outnumbered by their opponents, barricaded themselves in an hotel and refused to surrender to the Provost Marshal until an agreement was brokered by the US military police.



Soldiers of the Caribbean Regiment in the Middle East



Training in Egypt

The following day, with the men all back at camp, Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Nicholson rebuked his men harshly for their actions, emphasising the damage that had been done to the Regiment's reputation, thus endangering their chance to fight in battle. In the end, the Regiment never did fight in combat, being moved to the desert near the Red Sea; the Army was unable to arrange large formation training for them, which was vital for fighting on the battlefield. However, many campaigned for them to be given a fighting role, arguing that it would have an effect not only on the discipline and morale of the men but would also have political consequences back in the Caribbean. In order to mitigate this, the Middle Eastern Command were asked to make it clear that they regretted that the Regiment had never had the opportunity to fight and that they were returning home with honour.

The other great Caribbean contribution was to the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). This was staffed by women in non-combatant roles to support the War effort; they worked as drivers, clerks, orderlies and nurses. As the war progressed, they were given further responsibilities, serving as military police and as part of anti-aircraft gun crews, although they were officially not allowed to fire the guns. Although glad to welcome white West Indian volunteers, the War Office was initially reluctant to accept black recruits. However, after accidentally accepting Miss L. Curtis, a black Bermudian, who they had originally mistaken as white on her papers, from 1943 volunteers of all colours were happily accepted. By the War's end, half of the 600 ATS volunteers from the Caribbean were black.



West Indian ATS volunteers
Noelle Thompson, Sonia Thompson, Alma La Badic and
Sally Lopez in Trafalgar Square

The West India Committee continued to support the West Indian personnel who came to serve in Britain, acting as a place where they could store their belongings and have their post sent, with the Committee arranging to forward it to the camp where they were stationed. It also helped when personnel were on leave, arranging for accommodation, often with a local family, for the ATS volunteers when they wished to travel around the country. Service personnel were also invited to events at the Committee, such as the 'At home' Christmas parties, where some of their number were able to send a radio broadcast back to the Caribbean, thanks to the BBC. The Committee also worked to raise funds to support Caribbean service personnel, including a special showing of *Gone with the Wind* with Princess Margaret in attendance.



The West India Committee Christmas Party
1944



Jamaican and British Honduran ATS volunteers in
London

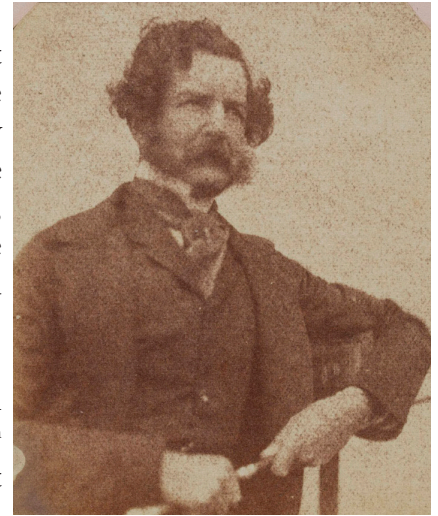
With the end of the Second World War, and the subsequent break-up of the British Empire over the coming decades, the British Army's relationship with the Caribbean would change further, seeing most of the islands becoming independent nations and establishing their own armed forces.

Caribbean Victoria Crosses

Britain's highest award for valour, the Victoria Cross, was introduced in 1856 in the aftermath of the Crimean War. Amongst the many brave West Indians who have fought for Britain since then, seven men have been recognised with this award, two within ten years of its introduction. The backgrounds of these men reflect the diversity of the Caribbean.

Henry Edward Jerome was born on 28th February 1830 in Antigua. Whilst serving as a Captain in the 86th Regiment of Foot, on 3rd May 1858, with the aid of Private Byrne, he rescued Lieutenant Sewell, who had been heavily wounded at Jhansi, India. Furthermore, he was commended for his brave conduct in the storming of the town and in an engagement with rebel forces, in which he, himself, was severely wounded on 28th May. Byrne also won the VC for his actions. Jerome eventually rose to the rank of Major General and died in Bath, England in 1901.

Herbert Mackworth Clogstoun was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad on 13th June 1830. As a Captain in the 19th Madras Native Infantry, on 15th January 1859 he demonstrated "*conspicuous bravery*" for charging rebels at Chichumbah, India during the Indian Mutiny. He was severely wounded, but survived. He later rose to the rank of Major, but was killed in action at Hingoli, India on 6th May 1862.



Captain Herbert Clogstoun
Image © National Army Museum,
London

Samuel Hodge hailed from Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, although nothing is known about his date of birth or family. Hodge was the first member of the West India Regiments to be awarded the VC and only the second black man to win the award, after Canadian William Hall of the Royal Navy. On 30th June 1866, whilst serving in the 4th West India Regiment, he volunteered to break down the stockade at Tubabecolong, the Gambia, with axes. Having effected a breach into the town, he entered with Colonel D'Arcy, his commanding officer, and succeeded in opening two barricaded gates from the inside, allowing the rest of the British force to enter and secure the town. In the aftermath of the action, he was held up by D'Arcy as the bravest man in the regiment and cheered by his comrades. Unfortunately, whilst serving in British Honduras (now Belize), he contracted a lethal fever and died on 14th January 1868.



Samuel Hodge and Colonel D'Arcy in
The Capture of Tubabakalong, Gambia 1866
by Chevalier Louis William Desanges
courtesy of Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance

Captain R.H. Chase of the Commissary of Ordinance on 2nd July 1856 in St. Lucia. On 16th August 1880, whilst serving as a Lieutenant in the Bombay Staff Corps in Afghanistan, he rescued a wounded soldier, with the aid of Private Ashford, and carried him under heavy enemy fire to safety. He served the majority of his career in India and rose to the rank of Brevet Colonel and was even awarded the Order of the Bath. He died at Quetta, in what is now Pakistan, on 24th June 1908.

William St. Lucien Chase was born to Susan Hill and



William St. Lucien Chase
© Australian Army Museum of
Western Australia

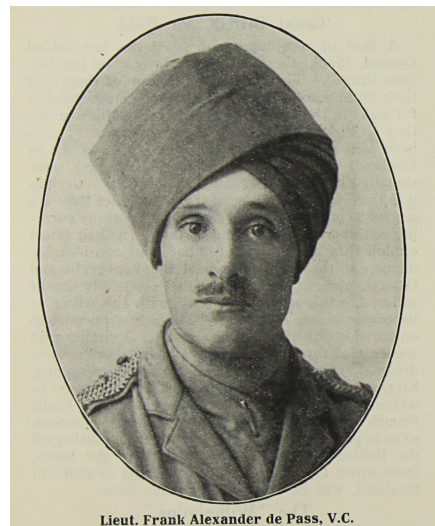


Sergeant William Gordon

William James Gordon was born in Jamaica on 19th May 1864. Whilst serving in West Africa as a Lance Corporal in the West India Regiment, on 18th March 1892, he put himself in harm's way to protect his superior, Major Madden, which probably saved the Major's life. During an attack on the town of Toniataba, Gambia as part of the campaign against local ruler Fodi Kabba, he threw himself between the Major and surprise enemy fire, pushing the Major out the way. He took a shot to his chest, which pierced his lungs. Gordon survived his wounds and later rose to the rank of Sergeant before he was discharged in 1902. He served for a time in the Kingston Militia and eventually joined a recruiting party for the West India Regiments at Up Park Camp, Jamaica. He died in August 1922 and was buried with full military honours, having spent his final years in charge of the Camp's firing range.

family, the Caribbean being home to the oldest Jewish community in the Western hemisphere. As a Lieutenant in the Indian Army, 34th Prince Albert Victor's Own Poona Horse, on 24th November 1914 at Festubert, France, he entered a German-held trench and succeeded in destroying a traverse, a defensive fortification, and rescued a wounded comrade whilst under heavy fire. He died the next day in an attempt to retake the same position that had been re-occupied by the enemy and was granted the VC posthumously.

Frank Alexander de Pass was born on 26th April 1887 to Eliot and Beatrice de Pass. Although born in England, he was a member of a prominent Jamaican Jewish



Johnson Gideon Beharry was born in Grenada in 1979 and moved to Britain in 1999, joining the Army in 2001 and seeing service in Kosovo and Iraq. It was in the latter country, whilst serving as a Private in the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment, that, following an enemy ambush on 1st May 2004, he successfully guided his damaged vehicle and five others out of danger. He then proceeded to rescue his wounded comrades from the vehicle, all the while exposed to heavy enemy fire. On 11th June, he was again ambushed whilst driving and was seriously wounded in the head by an enemy grenade but successfully drove the vehicle out of danger before losing consciousness. He later required brain surgery for his wounds and, at the time of writing, is one of five living VC recipients.

Johnson Beharry
(Photograph by Russel Meiklejohn CC BY-SA 2.0)

To the Modern Day



The Coat of Arms of the West Indies Federation

Following the end of the war, a new polity was planned: to form a West Indies Federation to unite the British Caribbean colonies, with the aim that it would become an independent state. In 1956, although plans had begun 9 years earlier, the British Parliament passed the Caribbean Federation Act and, on 3rd January 1958, the West Indies Federation came into existence. To act as a military force for this new state, the West India Regiments were resurrected, foregoing the Zouave uniform for modern uniforms, with men being recruited from across the Caribbean for its three battalions. Yet, the West Indies Federation was ultimately doomed to failure, with certain issues between the members being too great to overcome. Following a referendum on membership in September 1961, Jamaica opted to become an independent nation, doing so the following year. Shortly after the Jamaican withdrawal from the Federation, Trinidad and Tobago opted to follow suit, becoming independent the same year.

With the two 'pillars' of the Federation opting to leave, it was decided to bring the whole endeavour to an end, and the West Indies Act of May 1962 officially dissolved the Federation. The West India Regiment was disbanded again on 30th July 1962. However, the remnants of the Regiment would become part of the new defence forces of Jamaica and Trinidad. The Jamaica Defence Force was founded with the 1st and 3rd battalions of the West India Regiment at its core when it came into existence on 31st July 1962. The band of the original West India Regiment had survived the dissolution in 1927 and had been renamed the Jamaica Military Band, which too became part of the Jamaica Defence Force. The JDF now upholds many of the traditions of the West India Regiment and, by extension, the British Army. Now headquartered in Up Park Camp, the Defence Force's museum is home to many artefacts of the West India Regiments, including much of the regimental silver and William Gordon's Victoria Cross. The Band still maintains the traditional Zouave Uniform of the West India Regiments, as does the band of the Barbados Defence Force, the island being traditionally associated with the 2nd West India Regiment. The Barbados Defence Force was established on 15th August 1979 and is based at St. Ann's Fort in Barbados Garrison Savannah, another former British military site.

The demise of the British Empire and the West Indies Federation also led to another British military option in the region, during the events of the Anguillian Revolution of 1967. The islands of St. Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla had been in an administrative union since 1825, though never really with full Anguillian consent owing to concerns over a lack of representation in government. This union was set to continue as the island became a unified, independent state. However, the Anguillians were unwilling to remain in it; some favoured their own independence whilst others wished to remain associated with Britain, the majority favouring the latter. Nevertheless, the Government of St. Kitts was determined to keep Anguilla as part of their union, which ultimately led to Anguilla expelling all Kittsonian representatives from their island. Britain attempted to mediate between the two sides, whilst St. Kitts set up their own professional defence force. The situation was largely mishandled by the British Government, resulting in the expulsion of British minister William Whitelock by the revolutionaries after he had snubbed the members of the Anguillian Council.



The badge of the JDF
Image © National Army Museum, London



A member of the Jamaica Military Band

Following this, and operating under some fundamental misconceptions, like the revolutionaries were under the control of organised crime elements from America, the Army was dispatched to land on the island. This led to widespread international condemnation, although some on Anguilla itself had actually encouraged the British to send troops. On 19th March 1969, some 135 paratroopers landed on the island as part of Operation Sheepskin, taking control of the territory, with no shots fired either by soldiers or revolutionaries. It was soon discovered that the situation on Anguilla was far less volatile than had been reported. A new political settlement was reached, with St. Kitts and Nevis becoming an independent nation and Anguilla remaining to this day a British Overseas Territory. Before they departed, the Army assisted with building new infrastructure on the island, including a new jetty at Road Bay as well as the construction of The Valley Primary School, which opened in 1970.



British soldiers in Anguilla
19th March 1969

The British Army has continued to maintain links with the Caribbean defence forces; in some cases British officers have been seconded to serve in them, whilst retired British officers have been offered and accepted positions. Some defence forces are in partnership with British Army Regiments; for example, both the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force and the JDF have partnerships with the Mercian Regiment, who are the successors of the former 38th and 49th Regiments of Foot. The 38th spent many years in Antigua, whilst the 49th was originally formed in Jamaica. In addition, many of the defence forces of the Caribbean send their officer cadets to Britain for training at Sandhurst's Royal Military Academy. The Army is also planning on opening a branch of the Academy in the Caribbean in the near future, to provide such training closer to home.

The British Army continues to recruit from the Caribbean, with citizens from Commonwealth Countries, such as the former British West Indian Islands, being eligible to join. Over the years the Army has run many recruitment drives in the region, with six weeks in Belize, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines producing 600 volunteers, 187 of which were eventually accepted. In recent years, the British Army has been increasing the number of Commonwealth Nationals with specialist skills permitted to join the Army every year. A certain number of years' service gives such servicemen and women the right to stay in Britain, provided they complete the necessary application. The most famous servicemen of Caribbean origin in recent years is Victoria Cross winner Johnson Beharry from Grenada.

The Army itself continues to maintain a presence in the region, despite the independence of many of the islands from Britain. The Army, and the other British armed forces frequently provide relief and aid in the aftermath of natural disasters, such as during Operation Ruman in the aftermath of 2017's Hurricane Irma - the strongest storm on record in the Caribbean. This aid has come in the form of supplies and such basic necessities as tents and blankets for those who have lost their homes, but the Royal Engineers have also helped to repair the damage to important local infrastructure, such as roads or airports. This includes providing support to the five British Overseas Territories in the region. The Army also continues to train in the Caribbean, principally in Jamaica and Belize.

Some of the newest units of the British Army were formed in the Caribbean in 2020; the Cayman Islands Regiment and the Turks and Caicos Regiment are two new territorial regiments which serve in their respective British Overseas Territories. Recruits are expected to attend training every few weeks, as well as an annual camp, much as their predecessors in the militias did centuries before. These new regiments have a lot in common with the local Defence Forces, primarily focussing on matters relating to disaster relief and security, rather than combat operations.

The badge of the Turks and Caicos Regiment,
courtesy of the College of Arms

© *The West India Committee*



Conclusion

The West Indian soldier has been through many permutations over the course of the last 400 years; conqueror, coloniser and defender. British soldiers serving in the Caribbean made great sacrifices, to further British interests in the region, despite the difficulties posed by climate, disease and war amongst unfamiliar terrain. Many did not survive the experience. The conquest, return and reconquest of the various islands of the region also helped to shape local identities thanks to exposure to the varying cultures of conquering powers. The wars fought in the Caribbean throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the conquests arising thereof, had widespread repercussions, as European empires scrambled for position, each aiming to put themselves in the strongest possible position for inevitable peace negotiations.

The British Army's presence in the region presents an interesting dichotomy. On one hand the Army helped maintain the unsavoury aspects of past Caribbean society, being required to put down slave rebellions and later uprisings and through the act of purchasing slaves to serve as both labourers and soldiers. Yet at the same time, the Army was also at the forefront of social change in the region, treating the men that it purchased as slaves as free men like any other in British Uniform and seeking to protect their welfare against those that would return them into bondage, and the accounts written by the soldiers who visited the region encouraged many in Britain to support abolition. Service in the islands' militias also provided an engine of change, slowly helping those at the lower end of the Caribbean's colour-based caste system seize their freedom and rights.

As West Indians themselves joined the regular Army, they demonstrated their capacity as warriors, serving with distinction not only in the Caribbean but in Africa, on the fields of Waterloo and in the East Indies. At the forefront of this was the West India Regiments; despite the occasional naysayer, their actions, helped further Britain's foreign and colonial policies, as well as lend civil aid in the Caribbean in both natural disasters, and controversial events such as the Morant Bay Rebellion. The efforts of these men, coupled with the traditions developed by the local militias, helped the Caribbean shape its own military identity in the same Creole fashion as wider society in the region, which is still preserved today by the defence forces of the now independent former colonies. In the twentieth century, despite the damage done to the Caribbean public's perception of the British Army due to the experiences of the British West Indies Regiment in the First World War, a certain affection was still held for the West India Regiments. The experiences of many West Indian veterans from the world wars were also instrumental in informing their policies and actions as they became political leaders and steered many of their countries towards independence from Britain.

Today, the historical bonds continue to flourish with West Indian recruits in the British Army, and the assistance provided by the Army to the Caribbean in the form of disaster relief, training and partnership. With two new territorial regiments recently being created in the British Overseas Territories of the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the prospect of a branch of The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst being established in Jamaica, the British Army continues to evolve in the region, and with it the story of the West Indian Soldier.