

**Black History
in the
NAM Collections**

Teacher Notes

NATIONAL
ARMY
MUSEUM

About this resource

Purpose

This resource includes four extensive *Source Packs* and *Teacher Notes* (this pack) to highlight black history in the British Army as exhibited in the National Army Museum collections, whether in celebration of Black History Month or to support an inclusive curriculum throughout the year. The *Source Packs* showcase a selection of historic sources from the NAM which offer a rare and important insight into black history in the British Army and add to an inclusive understanding of significant British military conflicts. The *Teacher Notes* provide contextual knowledge in the form of information sheets and also suggest curriculum-linked uses of the resource for KS2 – 5.

Scope

The content of this resource reflects the scope of the NAM's collections. As a leading authority on the history of the British Army, the focus of the museum's collections and articles is on the experiences of the British Army, and this perspective is reflected in the sources which feature throughout this resource. This resource specifically highlights the collections of the NAM and provides contextual knowledge to support the use of sources in learning, in the form of information sheets based on articles written by NAM historians (where these are currently available) and object information. **As such, the resource is extensive though should not be viewed as a complete history of black history in the British Army.** As the museum's collections continue to expand, this resource will be reviewed and updated accordingly. Please be aware that some of the materials in this resource refer to historic racist views which may cause offence.

Content

Early Caribbean and African Soldiers of the Army

Source Pack

This *Source Pack* explores the origins of black soldiers in the British Army through historic sources including photographs, artwork and objects. The sources include historic images of black musicians in Army regiments from the seventeenth century, the West Indies Regiments' roots in slavery and service beyond abolition, as well as the locally raised colonial forces across Africa established to support British imperial rule on the continent, including a selection of sources relating to the service of black South Africans in the Boer War. Information sheets are provided on the following topics:

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Conflict, Resistance and the British Empire in Africa

Source Pack

This *Source Pack* focuses on the Army in Africa in the context of the British Empire, focusing on four imperial conflicts across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the Anglo-Ashanti Wars, the Anglo-Zulu War, the Sudan Campaign and the Mau Mau Revolt. The sources provide insight into relationships between the Army and local populations in Africa, from locally raised forces who supported the British to communities who resisted British imperial rule and expansion. Information sheets are provided on the following topics:

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Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars

Source Pack

This *Source Pack* includes images of historic sources including photographs, artwork and objects relating to the First and Second World Wars. The sources showcase the service of Caribbean and African forces in the First World War, across theatres of war in Europe and Africa, and of Caribbean women in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and African regiments in the Second World War, with a focus on the Far East Campaign. Information sheets are provided on the following topics:

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African Soldiers Remembered (1900 – 1957)

Source Pack

This *Source Pack* includes a variety of photographs of soldiers in African colonial forces across the first half of the twentieth century. These are soldiers about whom we know some

of their personal stories: names, force, rank, service and awards. This Source Pack aims to remember individual soldiers and their contributions to the British Army.

Teacher Notes

For contextual knowledge pertaining to the personal details of the soldiers which feature in this *Source Pack*, such as the force fought in or conflicts participated in, see the relevant information sheets which feature in these *Teacher Notes*.

Uses

This section suggests uses for the historic sources in the four Source Packs as well as the information sheets contained within these Teacher Notes. Suggested activities are listed for KS2 related to the First and Second World Wars, and for KS3 related to History national curriculum topics: British Empire (development and end), slavery (Britain's transatlantic slave trade) and the First and Second World Wars. Sources and information sheets can also be used to support learning for KS4 & KS5, and GCSE and A Level History unit links to the content of this resource are listed. For learners of all ages, this resource can also support SMSC and Fundamental British Values.

Early Caribbean and African Soldiers of the Army

West India Regiments

In the 18th century, as the British Empire grew, more soldiers were required to garrison the new territories coming under British control. The need for men was also increased by the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France (1793-1815), which soon spread to the Caribbean colonies of the European powers. New units were raised in Britain's colonies to meet these demands. They included the West India Regiments, eight of which were embodied between 24 April and 1 September 1795.

Slavery and the Army

The harsh environment of the Caribbean took a heavy toll on European units, with disease resulting in many deaths. The War Office decided to raise regiments of black soldiers, who were believed to be more tolerant of the climate and better suited to tropical service. Many of the first recruits were escaped American slaves who had fought for the British during the American War of Independence (1775-83). Men were also recruited locally in the Caribbean, but not in sufficient numbers to defend the British territories from the enemy. The ranks of the new regiments were filled with Creole and African slaves, purchased from West Indian sugar plantations or from newly arrived slave ships. Between 1795 and 1807, estimates suggest 13,400 slaves were purchased for the West India Regiments. An account in the papers of the Commander-in-Chief of Jamaica details the cost of buying and clothing 272 African slaves for service in the West India Regiments. The price listed on this account was over £32,600 - more than £2 million in today's money.

| Description | Amount |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| To Amount paid for 272 African Slaves | 16370 |
| To Amount paid for 272 African Slaves | 1000 |
| To Amount paid for 272 African Slaves | 9200 |
| To Amount paid for 272 African Slaves | 600 |
| Total | £32,600 |

Account detailing the cost of buying and clothing 272 African slaves in Jamaica for service in the 5th and 6th West India Regiments, March 1801

From a collection of papers relating to the Earl of Balcarres' period as Commander-in-Chief Jamaica, 1794-1801.

After Abolition

Prior to the abolition of the slave trade within the British Empire in 1807, there was much debate about the legal status of the West India Regiments' soldiers, and whether they were subject to slave laws or not. But on discharge from the regiments the men were free and, in some cases, awarded pensions and other support. In 1807, all serving black soldiers who had been recruited as slaves were freed under the Mutiny Act of that year. The act established that the black soldiers were

freemen and should be treated like any other soldiers. In the years after abolition, the British also recruited in West Africa, from among Africans freed when the Royal Navy intercepted foreign slave ships en route to the Americas, and black soldiers captured from enemy French and Dutch colonies. Former slave soldiers were increasingly given the same enlistment bounty, pay and allowances as white soldiers. They were recognised as a formal part of the British Army, unlike their counterparts in India and other British colonies.

Uniform

Until 1858, soldiers of the West India Regiments wore uniforms similar to the rest of the British Army. But Queen Victoria, impressed by the 'exotic' appearance of the French North African Zouave infantry, instructed them to adopt the elaborate Zouave uniform. This uniform was only worn by black soldiers, who were not permitted to rise beyond non-commissioned rank. The white officers never formally adopted the Zouave uniform, although many wore parts of it on active service. It remained a part of the West India Regiment Dress Uniform until 1914, and was worn by the regimental band until disbandment.



Private in full dress, 1st West India Regiment, 1900

Lithograph after Richard Simkin (1850-1926), 1900.

Service in the 19th century

Initially, the West India Regiments were used to protect the slave plantation economies of Britain's Caribbean colonies. But they also took part in the wars against France, helping to seize enemy colonies and expand the Empire. West India Regiments fought at St Lucia in 1803, the Danish Virgin Islands (now US Virgin Islands) in 1807, Martinique and Les Saintes in 1809, and Guadeloupe in 1810. They also served in America during the War of 1812 (1812-15), joining the attack on New Orleans. But, after this, their numbers were steadily reduced and most regiments were disbanded. For the majority of the 19th century, the remaining regiments were based in Trinidad and Jamaica. But, after taking part in the Third Ashanti War (1873-74) in West Africa, they established a base in Sierra Leone for the recruitment and training of African volunteers. In 1888, the two remaining West India Regiments were merged into a single regiment comprising two battalions. These were then rotated; one was based in the Caribbean, and one was based in Sierra Leone. West India Regiment troops were generally perceived as good soldiers by the British. But for many white British officers, serving with the West India Regiments was unpopular. While fear of tropical diseases played a large part in this, the attitudes of the time meant some were unwilling to serve alongside black troops.

Early Caribbean and African Soldiers of the Army

Colonial Forces in Africa

As the British Empire expanded its colonies and protectorates in Africa in the nineteenth century, local forces comprised of indigenous soldiers were raised to maintain security and safeguard imperial rule. Listed below are some of the forces who fought for the British in imperial conflicts over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Forces

Natal Native Contingent (NNC)

The NNC was formed in 1878 to bolster the defences of the British south-eastern African colony of Natal (now the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal). Most recruits came from the Basuto and Mponso tribes. NNC troops wore their traditional tribal apparel with a red cloth bandanna around their foreheads, the only clothing item to distinguish them from Zulu warriors who were traditional enemies of the Basuto and Mponso. Natal's white population had long feared that arming the black population would constitute a security risk, and as a result only a small percentage of NNC soldiers were issued with guns. These were obsolete muzzle-loading muskets rather than modern rifles. Soldiers issued with firearms were only given four rounds of ammunition at any one time. Most NNC soldiers fought with traditional African weapons during the Anglo-Zulu War (1879).

Sudanese Battalion (Egyptian Army)

Part of the Egyptian Army, the 10th Sudanese Battalion was recruited in the Sudan, but commanded by British officers. It had been raised in 1883 by Captain B D A Donne and saw much action in the Sudan from 1884 onwards.



Members of the West African Frontier Force, 1900 (c)

Photograph, 5th Ashanti War, 1900 (c).

West African Frontier Force

The West African Frontier Force was formed in 1900 to administer the colonial forces of West Africa. The latter consisted of The Northern Nigeria Regiment, The Southern Nigeria Regiment, The Gold Coast Regiment, The Sierra Leone Battalion and the Gambia Regiment. The parade uniform of the Force comprised khaki drill with red fezes, scarlet zouave style jackets edged in yellow and red cummerbunds. Artillery units wore blue jackets with yellow braid and engineers red with blue braid. African warrant officers were distinguished by yellow braiding on the front of their jackets.

King's African Rifles

The East African Rifles were raised in 1895 at Mombasa, Kenya, from irregular troops of the British East Africa Company. On 1 January 1902 they were united with the Central Africa Regiment and Uganda Rifles to form The King's African Rifles. The East Africans were designated as the 3rd Battalion. In 1902 the King's African Rifles were formed of units from East Africa, with battalions of soldiers from Nyasaland (Malawi), Kenya, Uganda and Somaliland (Somalia). The officers and some of the non-commissioned officers were British, while the 'other ranks' were made up of local Africans.

Boer War (1899-1902)

Between 1899 and 1902, the British Army fought a bitter colonial war against the Boers in South Africa. On the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899, the British had made a tacit agreement with their Boer enemies that both sides would not arm the black population. As the war progressed, however, this stance proved difficult to maintain and they began employing armed black men as scouts. It is estimated that between 15,000 and 30,000 black Africans were serving under arms with the British Army as scouts and sentries, while another 100,000 worked as labourers, transport drivers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, farriers and builders, as well as with medical services as orderlies and stretcher bearers.

Black South African soldiers seated outside a blockhouse, 1900 (c)



Photograph, Boer War (1899-1902), 1900 (c).

Conflict, Resistance and the British Empire in Africa

Anglo-Zulu War (1879)

In 1879, the British fought a war against the Zulu kingdom in Southern Africa. The Zulus resisted bravely and were only defeated after a series of particularly bloody battles that have gone down in the annals of colonial warfare.

Outbreak

In 1877, Lord Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wanted to extend British imperial influence in South Africa by creating a federation of British colonies and Boer Republics. He appointed Sir Bartle Frere as British High Commissioner there to execute his plan. Carnarvon's policy required Frere to gain control over Zululand, a warrior kingdom bordering Natal and the Transvaal. King Cetshwayo refused Frere's demands for federation, or to disband his Zulu army, as it would mean losing his power. War began in January 1879, when a force led by Lieutenant-General Lord Chelmsford invaded Zululand to enforce British demands.

Battles

Lord Chelmsford split his invasion force into three columns. He planned to surround the Zulus and force them into battle before capturing the royal capital at Ulundi. The right column crossed into Zululand near the mouth of the Tugela River to secure an abandoned missionary station at Eshowe as a base. The left column entered Zululand from the Transvaal and made for Utrecht. Finally, the centre column, led by Chelmsford himself, crossed the Buffalo River at Rorke's Drift mission station to find the Zulu army.

Battle of Isandlwana

On 22 January 1879, Chelmsford established a temporary camp for his column near Isandlwana but neglected to strengthen its defence by encircling his wagons. After receiving intelligence reports that part of the Zulu army was nearby, he led part of his force out to find them. Over 20,000 Zulus, the main part of Cetshwayo's army, then launched a surprise attack on Chelmsford's poorly fortified camp. Fighting in an over-extended line and too far from their ammunition, the British were swamped by sheer weight of numbers. The majority of their 1,700 troops were killed. Supplies and ammunition were also seized. The Zulus earned their greatest victory of the war and Chelmsford was left no choice but to retreat. The Victorian public was shocked by the news that 'spear-wielding savages' had defeated their army.



The Battle of Isandlwana, 22 January 1879

Oil on canvas by Charles Edwin Fripp (1854-1906), 1885 (c).

Further conflict

After their victory at Isandlwana, around 4,000 Zulus pressed on to Rorke's Drift, where a small British garrison held them back for 12 hours. Although a welcome boost to British morale, the siege had little effect on the overall campaign. After Colonel Charles Pearson's right column defeated 6,000 Zulus at Nyezane, it occupied Eshowe station, but was then besieged by the Zulus for two months. Upon hearing news of the defeat at Isandlwana, Colonel Evelyn Wood's left column established a fortification near Khambula. His men were the only effective British force left in Zululand. Chelmsford began preparations for a second offensive into Zululand. The same day, news of the defeat at Isandlwana reached London and reinforcements were dispatched to South Africa. Chelmsford ordered Wood's column to distract the Zulus with a diversionary attack near Hlobane, while he marched to relieve Eshowe. Wood was forced to retreat, but lured the Zulus back towards Khambula where his men had dug in. Wood's column, firing from entrenched positions, repelled over 20,000 Zulus at Khambula. Their concentrated fire inflicted around 3,000 Zulu casualties. As the Zulus fell back, their retreat was turned into a rout by the cavalry. Khambula proved a crushing blow to Zulu morale. Marching to Pearson's relief, Chelmsford defeated an attack by the Zulus at Eshowe was evacuated following the arrival of Chelmsford's relief force. By the end of the month, most of Chelmsford's men were back in Natal, where preparations were made for a second invasion of Zululand.

Outcome and Legacy

The British government was concerned about the lack of military progress and possible Zulu threats to British territory in Natal. Orders were issued for Lord Chelmsford to be replaced by Sir Garnet Wolseley. The Zulus were aware that Chelmsford was planning a second invasion and King Cetshwayo sent envoys to negotiate peace. But, eager to redeem himself before his replacement arrived, Chelmsford ignored Cetshwayo's pleas and invaded again at the end of May 1879. His reinforced army made steady progress, despite supply problems and constant skirmishing.

On 4 July, Chelmsford drew up his 5,000-strong army in a large square opposite Cetshwayo's capital at Ulundi. Around 20,000 Zulus attacked in their usual fashion. But faced with Gatling guns and artillery, their brave charges soon petered out. The cavalry then drove the survivors from the field. Around 6,000 Zulus had been slain for the loss of 10 men killed and 87 wounded. The British were so impressed by the courage of their opponents that they built a memorial to the Zulus at Ulundi along with their own. After the Battle of Ulundi, King Cetshwayo was hunted down and captured. The Zulu monarchy was suppressed and Zululand divided into autonomous areas. Cetshwayo's possessions were seized, and he was sent into exile in Cape Town, and later London. In the king's absence, civil war ensued. In 1883, the British attempted to restore order by returning Cetshwayo to his throne. However, his powers were now greatly reduced and he died the following year. In 1887, Zululand was declared British territory and finally annexed to Natal ten years later.



King Cetshwayo in exile at Cape Town, 1879

Photograph by James Bruton, 1879.

Conflict, Resistance and the British Empire in Africa

Sudan Campaign (1884-1898)

British forces occupied Egypt in 1882 to safeguard the Suez Canal and British financial interests. This invasion led to further intervention in the neighbouring Sudan, where British, Egyptian and Indian troops fought two bitter wars against the Sudanese Mahdists. The name 'Sudan Campaign' refers to the period of British involvement in a pre-existing conflict between Egyptian and Sudanese forces.

Britain and Egypt

Britain's strategic interest in Egypt increased after the construction of the Suez Canal. Opened in 1869, the Canal considerably shortened the trade and military routes to India and the East. In 1875, the British government bought shares in the Suez Canal Company. Egypt, which owed nominal allegiance to the Ottoman sultan, had become virtually bankrupt by 1878. The dire economic situation led to Britain and France taking control of Egyptian finances and, in effect, running the country. This caused outrage among large numbers of Egyptians. Their anger was exacerbated by the decision of their ruler, the Khedive (Viceroy), to get rid of many Egyptian Army officers as a money-saving measure. In May 1882, one Egyptian officer, Colonel Ahmed Arabi, overthrew the Khedive and led a revolt against what he and his supporters saw as unwarranted foreign interference in Egypt's affairs. The British government concluded that in order to protect its strategic and financial interests in the region, military intervention was unavoidable. The battle's outcome was in the balance until British reinforcements arrived and secured victory just as darkness began to fall. The authority of the Khedive was restored, but the British remained in Egypt to ensure stable and co-operative government.



The Battle of Tamai, Sudan Campaign, 1884

Oil on canvas by Godfrey Douglas Giles (1857-1941), 1885 (c).

Mahdist Rising

In occupying Egypt, Britain had also assumed responsibility for the Egyptian Sudan. An Islamic revolt had begun there in 1881, led by Mohammed Ahmed, who styled himself the 'Mahdi' or 'guide'. By the end of 1882, the Mahdists controlled much of the Sudan. And on 5 November 1883, at El Obeid, they annihilated an Egyptian force that had been sent to restore order. The Mahdi was supported by Osman Digna, leader of the Beja people of the Red Sea area. In January 1884, the Beja wiped out an Egyptian force under Colonel Valentine Baker outside the Red Sea port of Suakim. To rectify the situation, a 4,000-strong British-Indian force under Major-General Gerald Graham was sent to Suakim. On 29 February 1884, it defeated Osman Digna at El Teb. But two weeks later, on 13 March, it was almost overwhelmed at Tamai. The British fought in two brigade squares, one of which was temporarily broken by the Mahdists. The situation at Tamai was only

retrieved when the second square moved up in support. These two victories were a boost to British public morale, but they had little long-term effect. Osman Digna was able to recover from his losses and Graham's force was withdrawn, leaving only a small garrison at Suakim.

Meanwhile, Major-General Charles Gordon had been sent to Khartoum with orders to oversee the evacuation of the Sudan. Instead, he elected to stay and defend the Sudanese capital. In May 1884, Khartoum was invested by the Mahdi and Britain was forced to organise a relief expedition to rescue Gordon. Wolseley's relief column set off from Cairo in October 1884. Realising that his infantry, travelling in boats up the Nile, might not reach Khartoum in time to save Gordon, he detached a desert column to travel overland by a faster, but more dangerous route. This force, commanded by Brigadier-General Sir Herbert Stewart, was composed of four regiments of camel-mounted troops formed from the various units in Egypt and a detachment of the 19th Hussars.

On 17 January 1885, the column was attacked by the Mahdists at Abu Klea. Despite suffering heavy losses to British rifle fire, the Mahdists succeeded in penetrating the British square, which was closed only after desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The British suffered 168 casualties, the Mahdists about 1,100. The column finally reached Khartoum on 28 January 1885, two days after Gordon had been killed and the town had fallen. For Britain, the death of Gordon at Khartoum was a national humiliation. There was strong public pressure on the government to send an expedition to avenge him and restore Egyptian rule. A Mahdist invasion of Egypt was defeated during 1888-89. But it was not until 1896 that the government authorised military action. This decision may have been influenced by concerns that if Britain did not conquer the Sudan, then the Italians and French would.

Outcome and Legacy

In 1896, an Anglo-Egyptian army, led by Major-General Herbert Kitchener, entered the Sudan. Kitchener understood the importance of keeping his force supplied, and he built a railway as he advanced and used steamers to move his troops and equipment down the River Nile. Progressing slowly but surely, he inflicted a number of defeats on the Mahdists. On 8 April 1898, Kitchener's force of about 12,000 attacked the fortified camp of a Mahdist army at Atbara. After a fierce struggle, the forces were completely routed. Their commander, Emir Mahmud, and 4,000 of his men were captured. Finally, on 2 September 1898, at Omdurman, Kitchener inflicted a crushing defeat on the forces of the Khalifa, Abdullah Ibn-Mohammed, who was the successor to the Mahdi. Although they attacked with much bravery, the Mahdists were no match for the rifles and Maxim machine guns of Kitchener's army. By the end of the day, they had suffered approximately 27,000 casualties. The Anglo-Egyptians lost only 43 dead. The Battle of Omdurman broke the power of the Mahdists. And although the Khalifa remained at large until the following November, the Sudan was quickly pacified.

Mahmud captured at the Battle of Atbara, under the guard of the 10th Sudanese Battalion, 8 April, 1898

Photograph, 2nd Sudan War, 1898.



Conflict, Resistance and the British Empire in Africa

Mau Mau Revolt (1952-1960)

The Kenya Emergency (1952-60), or Mau Mau Revolt, was one of the British Army's bloodiest post-war conflicts. Although the rising was defeated, for many Kenyans it remains a significant step towards the independence of their country.

Outbreak

In 1952, elements of the Kenyan Kikuyu people amongst other groups, known as the Mau Mau, began a guerrilla campaign against European colonists. It contained many elements of anti-colonialism, and disputes about land ownership and who was to rule Kenya once the British withdrew. Many Kikuyu had lost land to white settlers during the previous decades. The Mau Mau murdered a number of white settlers, as well as fellow Africans. By the end of the emergency, 32 European civilians had died at the hands of the Mau Mau as well as over 1,800 Africans. Mau Mau guerrillas may have totalled 25,000, but they had few modern weapons. Some were armed with homemade guns, swords, spears and bows and arrows. It took over four years to defeat them.



'The Mau Mau Want Your Gun!', 1952 (c)

Anti-Mau Mau poster published by The African Information Services (Kenya), 1952 (c).

British Response

A State of Emergency was declared in October 1952 after the Mau Mau murdered a Kikuyu chief who was loyal to the British. It took some time for an effective response to be formulated. The Kenyan police were few in number and unused to operating in the tribal areas. At the same time, the British military garrison in Kenya only consisted of three battalions of the King's African Rifles. In June 1953, Lieutenant-General Sir George Erskine was appointed Commander-in-Chief with powers over all security forces in Kenya. The garrison was also reinforced by three more battalions of the King's African Rifles and a brigade of British infantry. A second brigade was added as the campaign progressed.

Tactics and Support

At first, the troops were used in small numbers to guard farms and isolated settlements. They also took part in ineffective sweeps through the jungle, while the Royal Air Force (RAF) dropped bombs with little effect. This was largely the result of a lack of intelligence about the Mau Mau's activities. To fix this, Erskine integrated police and military intelligence organisations under a single head,

while the authorities began to deprive the Mau Mau of support by addressing some of the Kikuyu's grievances. The British believed many Kikuyu had been intimidated into supporting the Mau Mau. When offered government protection and agrarian reform, some were prepared to inform on the Mau Mau and even fight against them. A local Kikuyu Home Guard was formed, which eventually totalled 25,000 men. This freed up the security forces for offensive operations. Many members of the Home Guard used violence as a means of controlling the population.

Detention and Torture

In April 1954, the authorities launched Operation Anvil, a massive cordon and search operation in Nairobi. It destroyed Mau Mau strength in the capital and detained over 16,000 suspects. The information they provided, including through torture, allowed military units to take the offensive against the Mau Mau in a much more effective manner. Many Mau Mau suspects were placed in detention camps where conditions were brutal. Disease was rife and food in short supply. Maltreatment also included extreme torture and summary executions. The most notorious incident occurred at the Hola camp, where 11 detainees were killed by prison warders. The Kenya Human Rights Commission stated that 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured or maimed during the crackdown, and that 160,000 people were detained in poor conditions. In 2011, legal action was taken against the British government to secure compensation for several Kenyans tortured. The government settled the case in 2013.



King's African Rifles training with a light mortar, 1956

Photograph by Lieutenant Roger Perkins, 4th (Uganda) Battalion King's African Rifles, 1956.

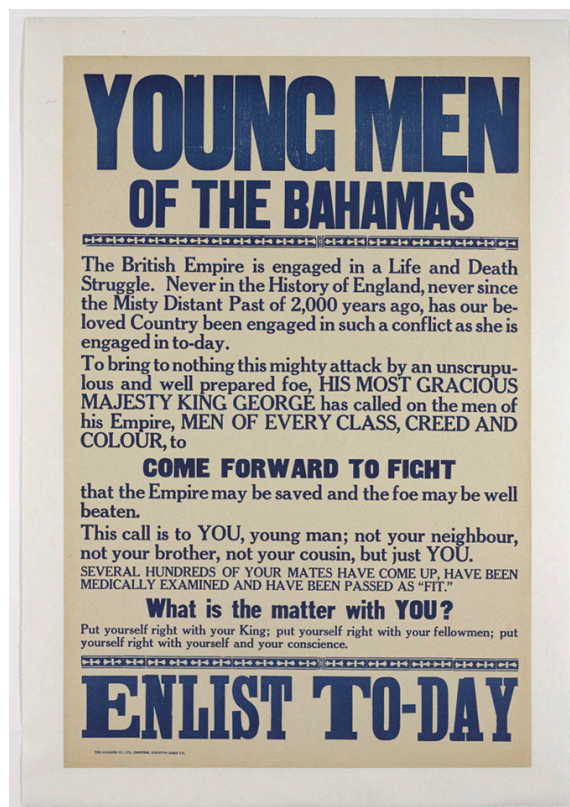
Outcome and Legacy

Government efforts were concentrated against the rebels in the forests around Mount Kenya and the Aberdares. These were designated 'Prohibited Areas', where the security forces operated a shoot-on-sight policy. Meanwhile, the concentration of the rural population into defended villages forced Mau Mau rebels out of hiding in order to get supplies. By April 1955, the back of the rebellion had been broken. And by the end of the year, Mau Mau strength had been reduced to about 2,000. To defeat the remaining hardcore guerrillas the authorities employed 'pseudo-gangs', often consisting of surrendered Mau Mau whose local knowledge proved invaluable. The rebellion was largely over by the end of 1956, but the Emergency remained in force for another four years as the remaining rebels were hunted down. Altogether, around 600 members of the security forces and nearly 2,000 civilians were killed during the Emergency, the vast majority of them African. Over 10,000 Mau Mau died. However, unofficial figures suggest a much larger number were killed in the counter-insurgency campaign. The rising had been defeated, but it had taken 10,000 British and African soldiers, 20,000 police and 25,000 Kikuyu Home Guard to do it. The revolt, and the way the British dealt with it, boosted the campaign for Kenyan independence, which was finally granted in 1963. Independent Kenya's first Prime Minister, Jomo Kenyatta, was one of those arrested during the Emergency for his alleged Mau Mau links, even though he was a moderate.

Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars

First World War: Caribbean Regiments

Around 15,000 West Indians enlisted, including 10,000 from Jamaica. Others came from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the Bahamas, British Honduras (Belize), Grenada, British Guiana (Guyana), the Leeward Islands, St Lucia and St Vincent. Although a few served in regular British Army units, most men from the Caribbean served in the West India Regiment and the British West Indies Regiment.



'Young Men of the Bahamas'

Recruiting poster, First World War

West India Regiment

The West India Regiment was mobilised on the outbreak of war in 1914. The 1st Battalion, based in Sierra Leone at the start of the conflict, saw service in the German Cameroon. The 2nd Battalion replaced them there in late 1915, and would participate in the capture of the capital, Yaoundé, in January 1916. Later that year, the 2nd Battalion transferred to the campaign in East Africa. In 1918, it went north to Suez, and eventually completed its wartime service at Lydda in Palestine. After the war, in 1920, the 1st and 2nd Battalions were amalgamated. But with the Caribbean peaceful, and local forces in West Africa expanding to fill the roles previously undertaken by its soldiers, the West India Regiment was disbanded in 1927. This brought to an end more than a century of service to the Crown.

British West Indies Regiment

Twelve battalions of the British West Indies Regiment were raised, mainly as labourers in ammunition dumps and gun emplacements, often coming under heavy fire. The British West Indies Regiment had been raised in October 1915 and its battalions served in France, Italy, Africa and the Middle East. When the British West Indies Regiment served on the Western Front there was an official reluctance to deploy its men in front-line positions, rather than as labourers in the rear. These attitudes were based on racial stereotypes about the lack of 'martial spirit' possessed by Caribbean men. Such views resulted in a mutiny at Taranto in Italy in 1918 where members of the regiment were being used on labouring duties that included the cleaning of latrines for white troops and Italian labourers. Towards the end of the war, two battalions saw combat in Palestine and Jordan against the Turks of the Ottoman Empire.



Members of the British West Indies Regiment observing aircraft, September 1918

Lantern slide, World War One, Western Front (1914-1918), 1918.

Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars

First World War: Campaigns in Africa

African troops played a key role in containing the Germans in East Africa and defeating them in West Africa. Europeans and Indians struggled in the harsh African climate, but the local inhabitants had the skills to survive and prosper. By November 1918, the 'British Army' in East Africa was mainly composed of African soldiers. The units involved were the West African Frontier Force drawn from Nigeria, the Gold Coast (Ghana) and Sierra Leone, and the King's African Rifles, recruited from Kenya, Uganda and Nyasaland (Malawi). At least 180,000 Africans also served in the Carrier Corps in East Africa and provided logistic support to troops at the front. Over 60,000 labourers came from South Africa. Black South Africans were restricted to a logistical role because the South African government feared arming them. Around 25,000 black South Africans were also recruited to the South African Native Labour Contingent that served on the Western Front in 1916-17.

East Africa Campaign

During the First World War, British Empire soldiers fought a four-year guerrilla campaign against a small German force in East Africa. Despite being outnumbered, the German commander, Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, skillfully ran rings around his enemies, inflicting many casualties and avoiding defeat. On the outbreak of war in 1914, Lettow-Vorbeck was the commander of a small army in German East Africa (Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda). He was determined to tie down as many Allied troops as he could in the region to prevent them from being deployed elsewhere. With an army that never numbered more than around 14,000 men - comprising about 3,000 Germans and 11,000 askaris (African soldiers who fought for European powers) - he succeeded in occupying ten times that number of Allied troops.

In August 1914, Lettow-Vorbeck raided British positions around Mount Kilimanjaro and Lake Victoria in British East Africa (Kenya). In response, a British-Indian force under Major-General Arthur Aitken landed near the German East African port of Tanga on 3 November 1914. Aitken made no attempt at concealing his plans and Lettow-Vorbeck was given time to reinforce his defences. When they came under fire, Aitken's poorly trained Indian troops panicked and ran. Although they were outnumbered, the Germans counter-attacked. Aitken's troops were driven back to their boats, where they re-embarked on 5 November. At a cost of 150 casualties, Lettow-Vorbeck had inflicted 850 casualties and captured hundreds of rifles and machine guns, and 600,000 rounds of ammunition. The supplies left behind helped equip his army for the next year. Britain commanded the sea and was able to send reinforcements. Lettow-Vorbeck, heavily outnumbered and with limited resources, switched to a guerrilla campaign, mounting raids in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). At the same time, the German cruiser 'Königsberg' attacked Allied shipping off the coast. She was eventually sunk in July 1915.

In March 1916, General Jan Smuts assumed command of the Allied forces. He brought with him South African troops who were now available following the conquest of German South-West Africa. A large Carrier Corps of African porters carried supplies for Smuts into the interior, much of which lacked railways or roads. Smuts himself was an old hand at this type of warfare, having fought against the British in the Boer War (1899-1902). In May 1916, Smuts attacked from the north out of Kenya, while troops from the Belgian Congo (part of Democratic Republic of the Congo) advanced

from the west. A column also advanced from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) in the south-west. By August 1916, Smuts had captured the railway line from Dar es Salaam to Morogoro and Dodoma. Despite this, Lettow-Vorbeck always managed to disengage his forces before they were overwhelmed, fighting a series of rearguard skirmishes and carrying out many ambushes.



Askaris moving a field gun into position, 1914 (c)

Photograph, World War One, East Africa, 1914 (c).

Many troops suffered from the climate and tropical diseases. One unit, the 9th South African Infantry, began the campaign with 1,135 men in February 1916. By October, it was down to 116, having hardly engaged the enemy. For every man the Allies lost in battle, a further 30 were lost through sickness. Lettow-Vorbeck's askaris, on the other hand, were more resistant to local diseases. At this time, Smuts began to withdraw many of his South African, Rhodesian, and Indian troops and replace them with Africans from the King's African Rifles, Gold Coast and Nigerian Regiments, who were more resistant to the climate and local diseases. By November 1918, the 'British Army' was mainly composed of African soldiers. By the end of 1916, the Germans were confined to the southern part of German East Africa. Early in 1917, new moves were made against Lettow-Vorbeck from Kenya, Nyasaland (Malawi) and the Belgian Congo (part of Democratic Republic of the Congo). His forces divided into three groups. Two of them managed to escape the offensives. But the third, of around 5,000 men, was forced to surrender.

As the British closed in, Lettow-Vorbeck crossed south into the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. Small detachments of Germans attempted to join him there. The British columns continued to pursue these for the remainder of the war, engaging in a series of skirmishes. Both sides were continually hampered by logistical problems and food shortages. Medical provisions were basic. Although groups of Germans began to give themselves up, Lettow-Vorbeck was still raiding in 1918 when he learned of the Armistice, reputedly from a British prisoner. On 25 November 1918, he surrendered his unbeaten force - now reduced to about 1,500 men - to the British in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). During the East Africa campaign, British Empire forces lost over 10,000 men. German losses were about 2,000. East Africans suffered the most. One estimate is that around 100,000 carriers and camp followers died on both sides. There were also thousands of civilian casualties.

West Africa Campaign

In February 1916, the Allies finally completed the conquest of Germany's West African colonies. One of the First World War's forgotten sideshows, this campaign was fought in hostile terrain and disease-ridden jungles. The contribution of Britain's colonial troops was crucial in securing victory. Germany's West African territories consisted of Togoland (now Togo) and Kamerun (now Cameroon). They were poorly defended and surrounded on all sides by French and British colonies.

Togoland was quickly conquered in August 1914 by forces from the British Gold Coast (now Ghana). Three British columns then attacked Kamerun from Nigeria but were defeated by a combination of rough terrain and German ambushes. Kamerun had a garrison of about 1,000 German soldiers supported by about 3,000 African troops. British forces included the Nigeria and Gold Coast Regiments of the West African Frontier Force, and eventually Indian and British troops. The British forces greatly outnumbered the Germans. They were supported by an army of carriers, many of whom regularly carried heavy loads for long distances and over rough terrain. Without their contribution, the campaign would never have succeeded. The conflict was fought in inhospitable jungle conditions that took a heavy toll on the troops involved. The climate, along with virulent diseases and the dangerous wildlife, caused more casualties than the enemy.

In September 1914, the French attacked south from Chad and captured Kusséri in northern Kamerun. Early that same month, a Belgian-French force from the Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo) captured Victoria (now Limbe) on the coast. With the aid of four British and French cruisers acting as mobile artillery, this force captured the colonial capital of Douala on 27 September 1914. The Belgian-French troops then followed the German-built railroad inland, beating off counter-attacks along the way. By November 1914, Juande (now Yaoundé) was captured. Most of the surviving Germans had either retreated into neutral Rio Muni (now Equatorial Guinea) or to the interior, where they held out in posts at Banjo, Fumban, Jokoo and Garua. During the next year, the reinforced Allies gradually captured these positions. As territory was conquered, it was secured by establishing new outposts that guarded Allied lines of communication. Despite being outnumbered and increasingly isolated, small groups of Germans continued to put up stout resistance at more than one place, notably on the Juande Road and at Banjo. But after many skirmishes, ambushes and long marches through inhospitable terrain, the last surviving German post surrendered on 18 February 1916. German Kamerun was no more.



The Nigerian Regiment Artillery under Lieutenant O T Frith with a field gun, 1914 (c)

Photograph, World War One, West Africa, 1914 (c).

Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars

Second World War: Caribbean Women of the ATS

The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was established in 1938 as the threat of war increased. Formed in 1938, the Auxiliary Territorial Service tasked women with a range of vital roles during the Second World War. After initial training, recruits were asked to carry out trade tests to establish which area they should go into. Experience in civilian life was usually crucial. For example, if a woman had been a typist she would be assigned clerical duties. During the course of the war the range of duties undertaken by the ATS expanded and women worked as telephonists, drivers, mess orderlies, butchers, bakers, postal workers, ammunition inspectors and military police. By June 1945, there were around 200,000 members of the ATS from all across the British Empire, including the Dominions, India and the West Indies. They served in many overseas theatres of operation as well as on the Home Front. 335 ATS women were killed by enemy action and many more injured. Despite their vital contribution, ATS women were not treated the same as men. On average they received two-thirds the pay of male soldiers of similar rank. They also received 20 per cent less rations. ATS women were also subjected to many derogatory comments, even being called 'officers' groundsheets' by some male soldiers.



**West Indies Auxiliary
Territorial Service
office workers, 1943
(c)**

Photograph, World War
Two, 1943 (c).

Black women from the West Indies had to overcome the additional challenge of institutional prejudice. Initially rejected as recruits by the War Office on race grounds, they later faced the prejudiced argument that they would find it difficult to adapt to the climate and culture of Britain and so would be unable to discharge their duties effectively. However, the growing demand for service personnel and Colonial Office pressure for a non-discriminatory recruitment policy - on the grounds that it would improve relations between Britain and the Caribbean - ended this. In 1943 the War Office agreed to recruit black West Indian women into the ATS. In October 1939 the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Malcolm MacDonald, announced that, for the duration of the war, British colonial subjects including those 'not of pure European descent', could enter the British armed forces. This was a relaxation of the so-called 'colour bar'. The War Office was more reluctant to recruit black people than the Colonial Office, and this delayed the arrival of volunteers from the

Caribbean to Britain. It was not until 1943 that the War Office agreed to a scheme for the recruitment of black West Indian women into the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

The first contingents of West Indian women to serve in Britain's armed forces arrived in Britain in 1943. Approximately 70 served with the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) and 80 with the RAF (Royal Air Force). Significant numbers of other West Indians arrived in Britain during the Second World War, serving in the armed forces or war industries. Many of these, together with other workers from across the Empire and Commonwealth, chose to stay in Britain after the war. West Indian women already living in Britain worked as nurses and in factories. Six hundred West Indian women volunteered of whom half stayed in the Caribbean while 100 served in Britain. Back in the West Indies, women helped the war effort by working in hospitals and agriculture. However, British acceptance of the United States' 'color bar' meant only white West Indian women were recruited to serve in the ATS section attached to the British military mission in Washington. Caribbean women served in Britain as clerical workers, telephonists, cooks and drivers. They also staffed anti-aircraft guns and barrage balloons. West Indian women also served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF).



**West Indies
ATS personnel
exercise on a
beach, 1943-
1947**

Photograph from
a collection of 69
photographs
relating to the
West Indies
Auxiliary
Territorial
Service, 1943-
1947.

Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars

Second World War: Deployment of African Forces

East African Campaign

The East African campaign was fought between the British with their allies, including the exiled Emperor of Abyssinia Hailie Selassie, and the Italians, between June 1940 and November 1941. Although the Italians enjoyed numerical superiority and some initial successes, the geographical isolation of the region, which made supply and re-enforcement difficult, coupled with poor equipment, leadership and morale, led to their total defeat in the face of a determined and well co-ordinated British invasion.

The King's African Rifles played a prominent role in this campaign. Several battalions formed parts of 11th and 12th African Divisions and together with 1st South African Division they advanced into Italian Somaliland (now Somalia) on 24 January 1941. The invasion force swept rapidly through Italian territory and by 3 April 1941 they had captured the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) capital Addis Ababa. In just 53 days a remarkable advance of 1725 miles had been achieved. Co-ordinating their efforts with another invasion force from the north the last Italian pockets of resistance capitulated between April and November. An Italian Army of more than a quarter of a million men had been destroyed, the Emperor Haile Selassie was reunited with his throne and the Italian colonisation of the region was brought to an end.



A detachment of the King's African Rifles marching from Garsen to Galbanti, 1939-1941 (c)

Photograph, World War Two, East Africa, 1939-1941 (c).

Battle of Madagascar

The Allied invasion of Vichy French-controlled Madagascar began on 5 May 1942. It was launched in order to prevent the island being used by Axis naval forces. The 13th, 17th and 29th Infantry Brigades effected widespread landings on the west coast of Madagascar, capturing the ports of Majunga and Morondava in the process. However, fighting continued for several months until all the Vichy forces on the island surrendered.

Far East Campaign

Between December 1941 and August 1945, British Commonwealth troops and their allies fought a bitter war against the Japanese in Asia. The fighting took place in malaria-ridden jungles during drenching monsoon rains and on remote islands in searing tropical heat, but always against a tenacious and often brutal enemy.

On 7 December 1941, the Japanese attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbour and later declared war on Britain and the United States. In the days and weeks that followed, the Japanese invaded European colonies across East Asia, including the British territories of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma. They hoped to create a fortified perimeter around a self-sufficient Japan, which could be defended until the Allies tired of war. The British had long thought a Japanese land invasion of Burma unlikely, so its defences had been neglected. When the attack began in January 1942, the British position quickly deteriorated. By March, the capital Rangoon and its vital port had been lost. As the Japanese pushed northwards, the surviving Allied troops carried out a five-month fighting retreat to India across 1,000 miles (1,600km) of difficult terrain.

In November 1943, a new phase of the war in the Far East began for the British with the formation of South East Asia Command (SEAC) under Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. SEAC replaced India Command in control of operations. Under its leadership, the prosecution of the war against the Japanese took on a new energy. More men, aircraft, equipment and supplies were also now available. In March 1944, the Japanese 15th Army began an advance against India's north-east frontier to forestall a planned British invasion of Burma. The Japanese intended to capture the British supply bases on the Imphal Plain and cut the road linking Dimapur and Imphal at Kohima. With Imphal in their hands, the Japanese would also be able to interrupt air supplies to China. It would also give them a base from which to conduct air attacks against India. A Japanese diversionary attack in the Arakan was defeated in February (the Battle of the Admin Box), but in early April the troops at Kohima and Imphal were cut off.



Troops of the Royal West African Frontier Force in the Arakan, Burma, 1944 (c)

Oil on canvas by Captain Hugh Micklem, 1991.

Supplied by air, the garrisons threw back the Japanese attacks in bitter close-quarter fighting until relief forces reached them. At Kohima, a scratch force of 1,500 troops held a tight defensive perimeter centred on Garrison Hill. Facing them were 15,000 Japanese soldiers. Between 5 and 18 April, Kohima saw some of the bitterest close-quarter fighting of the war. In one sector, only the width of the town's tennis court separated the two sides. When relief forces finally arrived, the

defensive perimeter was reduced to a shell-shattered area only 350 metres square. Despite the arrival of British reinforcements and supplies, the battle continued to rage around Kohima until 22 June, when the starving Japanese began a desperate withdrawal. The opening of the road at Kohima ensured the relief of Imphal. The Japanese lost over 60,000 men and the momentum gained allowed General Slim's 14th Army to begin the reconquest of Burma.

After their defensive victory, the British planned a new offensive to clear the last Japanese forces from northern Burma and drive them south towards Mandalay and Meiktila. Fighting through the monsoon and supplied by air, troops of the 14th Army now crossed the River Chindwin. The 15th Corps took Akyab in the Arakan following a series of amphibious landings in December 1944, while 4th and 32nd Corps won bridgeheads across the River Irrawaddy in February 1945. After fierce fighting, Meiktila and Mandalay were captured in March 1945. It was a decisive victory, won through the courage and endurance of the troops and the superb generalship of their commander William Slim. The route south to Rangoon now lay open. And 4th Corps was only 30 miles (48km) from the city when it fell to a combined air and seaborne operation in early May 1945. Following their victory, the British began planning for new landings in Malaya (now Malaysia) and for the recapture of Singapore. But these were forestalled by the Japanese surrender in August 1945. The Burma campaign was one of the longest fought by the British during the war. Remote from the experience of most people at home, and often sidelined in the contemporary press, it became known as the 'Forgotten War'; the troops serving there were the 'Forgotten Army'.

Resource Uses

This resource can be used to support learning in History and across the curriculum, as well as contributing to SMSC and an understanding of Fundamental British Values.

KS2

The following suggested activities could be given as individual or group tasks, and could together form a classroom display. These could be included as part of a History topic on the First World War/Second World War, or linked to study in Geography, Art and English, as applicable.

Suggested activities

- Create a map showing countries where African and Caribbean forces were recruited from and/or contributed to the British war effort during the First World War/Second World War (See [Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars](#))
- Create a portrait to commemorate one of the individual African soldiers who fought for Britain in the First World War/Second World War (See [African Soldiers Remembered \(1900 – 1957\)](#))
- Write a poem celebrating the contributions of African and Caribbean forces to Britain's victory in the First World War/Second World War (See [Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars](#))
- Write a fact file on one of the forces which contributed to the British war effort in the First World War/Second World War (e.g. King's African Rifles or Caribbean women in the Auxiliary Territorial Service) (See [Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars](#))

KS3

The following suggested activities can be used in lessons to develop knowledge of black history in the British Army in relation to key History curriculum subject areas. In addition, the information sheets above can be used for classroom/homework readings.

History national curriculum links

- British Empire (development and end)
- Slavery (Britain's transatlantic slave trade)
- First World War
- Second World War

Suggested activities

- Imagine you work as a museum curator and are creating an exhibition on the history of Britain in the Caribbean. Using one of the objects relating to the West India Regiments, write a caption explaining to the museum audience: what the object is and how it links to

the West India Regiments, how the West India Regiments were formed, and information about their uniform and service (See *Early Caribbean and African Soldiers of the Army*)

- In pairs, each read about a different British imperial conflict in Africa, e.g. the Mau Mau Revolt. Then, in turn, teach your partner about your conflict. Information to include: who the conflict was between, why the conflict broke out and its key events, the outcome of the conflict and its significance. Together, decide whether each conflict is evidence of a stage where the British Empire was gaining power or losing power (See *Conflict, resistance and the British Empire in Africa*)
- Imagine you are a journalist reporting on the events of the First World War from Africa, just after it has ended. Write a newspaper article on either the East Africa Campaign or West Africa Campaign to inform the British public. Information to include: why European nations at war with each other were fighting in Africa, where the soldiers fighting for Britain were from, what the key events and battles were, and why the campaign was important to the British victory in the war (See *Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars, African Soldiers Remembered (1900 – 1957)*)
- Design a memorial (e.g. a plaque or a statue) to commemorate the West Indian detachment of the ATS who contributed to the British war effort in the Second World War. Your memorial should include an inscription (prose or poetry) and can include drawing. Consider how you will show: where the women came from and why they were recruited to the ATS, the different types/one particular type of role women in the ATS performed, why the contribution of the women was important to the British war effort (See *Army and Empire in the First and Second World Wars*)

KS4 & KS5

This resource can be used to support History learning at GCSE and A Level. Consider using the sources provided and information sheets above, as applicable.

GCSE unit links

- *Edexcel* – Warfare and British society, c1250 – present, British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution
- *AQA* – Conflict and tension: the First World War, 1894 – 1918, Britain: Migration, empires and the people: c790 to the present day, Elizabethan England, c1568–1603
- *OCR A* – Migration to Britain c.1000 to c.2010, War and British Society c.790 to c.2010, The Impact of Empire on Britain 1688–c.1730
- *OCR B* – Migrants to Britain, c.1250 to present, Britain in Peace and War, 1900–1918

A Level unit links

- *Edexcel* – Britain transformed, 1918–97, Britain: losing and gaining an empire, 1763–1914, The British experience of warfare, c1790–1918
- *AQA* – The British Empire, c1857-1967, Wars and Welfare: Britain in Transition, 1906-1957, The Making of Modern Britain, 1951-2007
- *OCR* – Britain 1930–1997, International Relations 1890–1941, The Origins and Growth of the British Empire 1558–1783, The Changing Nature of Warfare 1792–1945, From Colonialism to Independence: The British Empire 1857–1965

Further learning

To increase understanding of the military terminology used throughout this resource, explore the following articles:

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/army-organisation>

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/regimental-system>

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/british-army-ranks>

To find out more about black history in the British Army from the National Army Museum, explore the museum's online collections:

<https://collection.nam.ac.uk/>

Explore our other online learning resources for schools, including our live interpretation film of Walter Tull:

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/schools/learning-resources?ages=All&type=110&level=All>

Our school learning programme offers a range of workshops which link to First and Second World Wars and the British Empire. To view and book a school workshop visit:

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/schools/workshops>