Researching the British Empire in the First World War
In 2012 IWM (Imperial War Museums) led the project *Whose Remembrance?*, an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded investigation into the state of research on the contribution made by colonial troops and others recruited in the two world wars, and the understanding and availability of this research to audiences and communities today. A specially commissioned film was created to showcase the study’s findings, which has since been shown at public dissemination events across the United Kingdom and internationally.

Following many enquiries from community groups in response to the publication of *Whose Remembrance?* and the subsequent film, we have created this guide to help those wishing to conduct their own research in this area.

The scope of the guide has been limited to the First World War, in view of the large amount of public attention on the centenary of the conflict. Additionally, the Heritage Lottery Fund have launched grants to help groups, communities and organisations mark the centenary by exploring, conserving and sharing the heritage of the First World War, from memorials, buildings and sites, to photographs, letters and literature, ranging from £3,000 to over £100,000.

Alongside this guide we have also established ‘The British Empire at War’ forum – an online discussion group on the First World War Centenary Partnership website, focusing on stories from across the British Empire during the First World War. Here community groups can share their research and highlight any forthcoming events or new discoveries. Organisations can sign up as a member of the Centenary Partnership for free, by visiting: [http://www.1914.org/partnership/](http://www.1914.org/partnership/).

We hope you find this guide useful and we would be pleased to know more about how you are using it in your work. Please contact research@iwm.org.uk with any feedback.
Africa was the site of the first military action by British land forces in the First World War. Alhaji Grunshi of the Gold Coast Regiment fired the first shot on 12 August 1914\(^1\) in the German colony of Togoland. Grunshi survived the war to become a regimental sergeant major decorated with the Military Medal, Distinguished Conduct Medal and a Mention in Despatches. The first confirmed Commonwealth casualty under fire was his comrade Private Bai, who was killed on 15 August 1914, probably at Agbeluvoe, 50 miles north of the city of Lomé, capital of Togo. A reasonable amount is known about Alhaji Grunshi because of his decorations and a photograph of him exists at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alhaji_Grunshi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alhaji_Grunshi). Virtually nothing is known of Bai – only one name is given – although his name is recorded on paper and online by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Bai’s name does not appear on any memorial, however, for no African names were engraved on the memorial to the Gold Coast Regiment’s fallen at Kumasi in Ghana.

![Men of the 1/4th Battalion King’s African Rifles at Njombe, German East Africa © IWM (Q 34470)](image)

Traditionally the First World War brings to mind mud, trenches and the Somme, but men from across the Colonial Empires served in China, Africa, Egypt and Palestine, Gallipoli, Macedonia and Mesopotamia. Both world wars were global events that drew on manpower from every continent and were fought on a far wider scale than just Europe. Britain’s colonies provided vital resources and their ports, airfields and sea-routes were vital to Britain’s strategic interests. But it was the people of the British Empire who provided its greatest contribution. India fielded the largest volunteer army in both wars with around 1.4 million serving in the First World War and over 1.8 million in the Second World War. Almost 140,000 Chinese labourers served in France during the First World War under the British and French governments. Over 2 million Africans served in the war under the French, British and German flags. Over 16,000 men from the West Indies served in the First World War.

The object of this resource guide is to provide information on what is held in the collections of Imperial War Museums and other institutions, and how this material can be used. It aims to explain some of the difficulties that might be found during research, provide advice for working in this area, and suggest helpful reading material and websites.

\(^1\) *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force*, A Haywood and F A S Clarke (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1964)
Hindi language recruiting poster from India dating from the First World War
© IWM (IWM PST 12583)

The left hand caption reads: ‘Before enlistment…’ The right hand caption reads: ‘Ten days after enlistment… This person has been a recruit for ten days and with his bonus and his uniform he is going to enlist others of his locality and he is happy.’

The main body of the text reads:
‘Brothers, rush, run to enlist or you will regret it later. The Sarkar Bahadur [the honourable Government] has now raised the enlistment bonus from Rs.50/- to Rs.65/-. You will get Rs.10 on enlistment, Rs.40/- when you join your regiment, and Rs.15/- on completion of training. The pay has also been increased. In addition to the monthly wage of Rs.11/- you will get Rs.24/- every six months for the period of the war. Your monthly wage therefore is not Rs.11/- but Rs.15/-. In addition on going on active service you will get a monthly allowance of Rs.5/-. Clothes and food are free whether you are in India or have been sent to the war.

The following can enlist in the infantry: Muslims (Shaikh, Saiyyid, Mughal, Pathan), Brahmin, Rajput, Bhumihar, Ahir, Kurmi, Pasi, Lodhi and Gaderiya. In the artillery anyone can enlist from whose hands Hindus would accept a drink of water. The age should be between 18-30 years, height 5ft 2” and chest 32”.

Enlist speedily in whichever unit you choose, and earn rupees and respect, or you will rue the loss of this opportunity. For further details contact us. Come on your own or with some recruiter. Come quickly. Mohammad Nazir, District Recruiting Officer, Ballia.’

The text has kindly been translated by Professor Radhika Singha, who comments that it provides an interesting insight into the widening social arc of recruitment, specifically appealing to lower castes. You can read more on Professor Singha’s work on p.13.
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1. General Observations

- The twenty-first century world is very different from that of 1914. Unfortunately it is the case that in old photo captions, catalogue entries and even within the collections themselves such as in medal inscriptions or painting titles, language is used that will sound insensitive to modern ears, often patronising or even racist. To study history effectively, you need to try to understand how a situation was perceived at the time. What makes this area of history particularly interesting to study, is the fact that the treatment of colonial troops during the war usually influenced the liberation movements of the post-war years.

- When searching through catalogue entries it is necessary to remember that names have changed over the years and entries may not have been updated to reflect this change – for example, reference may be made to ‘Gold Coast’ as well as to ‘Ghana’, to ‘Salisbury, Rhodesia’ as well as to ‘Harare, Zimbabwe’.

- Records – especially service records – were usually retained in the country of origin. Sometimes these have been well preserved (e.g. in South Africa), but often they can be difficult to access or may not have survived.

- Most of the countries concerned have become independent or have had changes of government. There are often ‘challenging histories’ to be negotiated, where after independence, those who had served with the British were often regarded as having been on the ‘wrong side’. As a result, information about the colonial period was in some cases destroyed.

- Independence and subsequent changes of regime may have brought in different names and different borders, which can complicate research.

- Under British governance, English would have been the official language but this will frequently have changed after independence. English was the language of the officer class but items in the first language of the country may also be held in institutions. Radhika Singha’s on-going work on the Indian Labour Corps, which is throwing light on this previously poorly documented formation, is an example of this.

Indian Concert Party at the Royal Army Ordnance Corps Theatre in Baghdad, 1917
© IWM (HU 95840)
As with all archives, the recording of names can also cause problems, due to the use of shortened or anglicised names, or variations in transliteration, so it can be useful to try variant spellings, ordering and check for international name variations.

Many of the communities from whom soldiers and labourers were recruited had low literacy rates, with an oral tradition being more common than paper accounts that could not be read.

The history of the First World War was written up principally by historians from elite backgrounds, who lived in a socially much more stratified age than we do today. Their view of events was usually one-sided, but there is still much that can be learned or inferred from it.

The British officers were often dedicated to their men and there were frequently good relationships between the two. Only the top military graduates were selected to serve in the sought-after Indian Army, and they had to learn and speak at least Hindustani or Urdu – knowledge of the language and culture of their men was essential.

Officers and civil servants would be at the top of the social pyramid with those involved with trade and business below them, and missionaries at the lower end. The term ‘white officer class’, which has historically been used to refer to the top of the military hierarchy in the First World War, is a generalisation. There were also Indian officers in the Indian Army (commissioned by the Viceroy rather than the King). The military is a very stratified organisation and British non-commissioned officers were also a feature of many colonial regiments. British Army regiments were also stationed all over the world and British rank and file did not hold an elevated position in society.

Confusion can be caused with the names and correct designations of regiments. For example, the Indian Army had large reorganisations in 1903 and 1922 and was then divided between India and Pakistan on partition in 1947. There is often confusion between the West India Regiment (originally raised in 1795, and disbanded in 1927) and the British West Indies Regiment, which served only in the First World War.

Indian labourers and butchers from Manipur at work near Arras, 20 October 1917 © IWM (Q 6120)
Experiences of service varied enormously. For those who served as soldiers in an infantry regiment there will usually be published histories of regiments (though, as with the British Army, these seldom name individuals) but the stories of the many men who served as labourers is less well documented. Labourers were given lesser forms of tangible recognition – in the First World War they were issued with a bronze British War Medal rather than the silver, which went to soldiers.

Many men from the Empire (especially from Bengal) served in the Merchant Navy. In the First and Second World Wars respectively, 3,000 and 4,700 British-flagged ships were sunk and many lascars (peoples of Asia or Africa contracted from Asia) died or were taken prisoner. After their service some settled in port areas, providing facilities for their countrymen when they docked and also forming a vanguard for communities that grew up in these areas.

While the men were away at war, the women had to cope on the home front without them. Interesting work is emerging drawing on Indian sources depicting the impact of the First World War on women’s lives in places such as Punjab where there was very heavy recruiting.

Crew of the SS Chyebassa – a merchant ship of the British India Line – in 1917
© IWM (Q 92607)
2. **Tips for Researching the Colonial Experience of the First World War: an Expert’s View**

The community historian Stephen Bourne has worked with IWM for many years, delivering talks on the experiences of black people during both world wars. We asked him to share his thoughts on researching this challenging but rewarding topic.

**Q**

If you wanted to do a project on the colonial experience of the First World War, how would you go about finding a topic?

**A**

To begin you could choose a particular episode of the First World War to research. An example might be the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915 during which the Allied forces suffered 11,200 casualties (7,000 British and 4,200 Indian) or the British West Indies Regiment mutiny at Taranto in 1918.

*Undertaking research focused on a place can also be rewarding* – for example by investigating the experiences of Black and Ethnic Minority (BEM) peoples in your nearest city during the First World War. Visit the Black Cultural Archives in London (www.bcaheritage.co.uk) and work with your local library. Ask if there is a local history library and encourage them to think about BEM history and initiate a relevant collection, if they have not already done so.

*For individuals, I would suggest starting with a personal, anecdotal approach,* for example, by thinking about your family and trying to **draw a simple family tree.** With access to the internet, it has never been easier to undertake genealogical research.

I would recommend using a website such as www.ancestry.co.uk (there are many others) for your research. This is a subscription service but often public libraries provide free access (when searching through records it obviously helps if you have an unusual surname). It can also be useful to speak to relatives – if you have older members of your family make an effort to contact them in person, by letter, email or telephone and record their memories, even if they live overseas. **IWM’s Lives of the First World War** is an interactive online platform where you can record details of an individual’s service, as well as access the stories of over 8 million individuals from many different backgrounds who took part in the conflict (https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/).
If you are unable to establish a family connection with the First World War, or you wish to undertake research as a group, it may be easier to choose one or two individuals who you can focus your research on. Perhaps look through Richard Smith’s book *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War* (Manchester University Press 2004), for inspiration. Back issues of the magazine *West Africa* which ran from 1917, also include names of First World War soldiers and an archive is available at SOAS (The School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London. *The Jamaica Gleaner*, a publication established in 1834, holds relevant information and past issues of the paper are available (for a fee) from their digital archive: [http://gleaner.newspaperarchive.com/](http://gleaner.newspaperarchive.com/). Similarly, British publications such as *The Pan-African*, *The African Times and Orient Review*, and *The African Telegraph*, can shed light on individual colonial experiences of the First World War. Further information on the black British press can be found in Ionie Benjamin’s *The Black Press in Britain* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1995). The British Library has significant holdings in the languages of Asia, the Middle East and Africa and many newspaper reports made during the First World War can be found in the Asia, Pacific & Africa Collections.

Don’t be put off if you follow one individual’s story so far and it peters out. That happens a lot. To collect a group of stories can make for a very rewarding project.

**Q**

How can you ensure the colonial experiences of the First World War are presented in a balanced way?

**A**

As with all histories there are a range of different viewpoints and experiences and it’s important to capture these. A good example of this can be found in *Mutiny* (1999), a documentary produced by Sweet Patootie for Channel 4, which explores the role of the British West Indies Regiment in the First World War. What makes the documentary so compelling are the numerous interviews with veterans of the conflict residing in the Caribbean. These veterans all had different feelings towards their involvement in the First World War with some citing disillusionment and humiliation but others left feeling an overwhelming sense of pride at having served in the conflict. By recording these different perspectives, the producers got a balanced point of view.

**Q**

Have you found it useful to look at records of industry when undertaking research into the black British population?

**A**

Yes, this is a rich area to look at. Black people living in Britain had to be resourceful and as a result they often had many different jobs. The black population in major ports such as Liverpool and Cardiff was particularly high and men were often employed as merchant seamen. However, there was black representation throughout British society and those at the higher tiers included doctors, lawyers and wealthy African traders. In the article ‘John Alcindor (1873-1924): a Migrant’s Biography’ (*Immigrants & Minorities* 6:2, 1987), Jeffrey Green recounts the story of a Trinidad-born doctor who served with the Red Cross during the First World War and was awarded their medal and later went on to lead the black-rights group the African Progress Union. Green’s book *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914* (London: Routledge, 1998) also provides a useful overview of what it was like for black people in the period before the outbreak of the First World War. There is also a great deal of information to be found on Green’s website [www.jeffreygren.co.uk](http://www.jeffreygren.co.uk).
As far as we know, there were no black British nurses in the First World War and in general there were very few opportunities for black women at this time. Black women in Britain often became seamstresses or entertainers. One interesting example is Mabel Mercer (1900–1984), an English-born singer of mixed race, who joined a music hall troupe and worked throughout the First World War. Later in her career she became one of the most influential singers of the twentieth century.

Q
If you came across a really interesting photograph from the First World War, would this be a valuable way of accessing the history?

A
Definitely. The whole colonial experience of the First World War needs to benefit from much more in-depth research, and often photographs or film clips can be a starting point for this. Many of the First World War army records were destroyed in an air raid in the Second World War, so any snippets of evidence are even more valuable. I would suggest taking one piece of evidence, like IWM’s photo of British West Indies Regiment men cleaning their rifles on the Albert-Amiens Road, from September 1916 (as featured on the cover) and ‘burrowing’ into it – asking questions about the picture and what it is showing.

Q
Is there room for imaginative histories – e.g. creative responses such as plays, fictional stories, musical and artistic responses?

A
I would certainly think so. If you took a large British city like Liverpool and followed the story of a black family, with the father a merchant seamen, it would be interesting to explore what their journey through the First World War would have been like, possibly ending with the 1919 riots.


Questions asked by Suzanne Bardgett, IWM Head of Research.
Interview transcribed and edited by Emily Peirson-Webber, IWM Research Manager.
More advice from leading researchers and insights into their work in the field

Dr Santanu Das
Reader in English Literature, King’s College London

More than 4 million non-white men – from Asia to Africa to the Caribbean and Pacific Islands – were drafted into the armies of Europe and America during the First World War. What has fired my research is to excavate and understand the experience of these people, with a focus on South Asian sepoys, through a diverse range of material – objects, photographs, sound-recordings, letters, memoirs. It is often helpful to focus on a particular event, person or even ethnic or national group and piece together the more intimate story from diverse sources – relevant books and bibliographies (listed in this document), the net, museum collections, and war memorials. Often there is more material than you think!

Clifford J Pereira FRGS
Freelance Consultant and Researcher

Inspired by my own family history, my research in London over the last 15 years has been focused on the employment of seamen of African and Asian origin in the Royal Navy from the eighteenth century onwards. This has led to some interesting work on Africans and Arabs in the Royal Navy in the Indian Ocean during the abolition of slavery. From this basis I have specialised in looking at the roles of seamen who hail from the former Portuguese colony of Goa in the Royal and Merchant Navy in the two world wars. I am now based in Vancouver, Canada.
David Killingray
Professor Emeritus, Goldsmiths London

I am interested in the interface of global and local studies of the First World War. At the global level I continue to research and write on the contribution of colonial subjects as soldiers and labourers to what was not only a world but also an imperial conflict. Non-European manpower (very few women were active participants, although invariably they were ‘victims’) from the European empires was employed to labour and to fight for distant rulers in a war that was not their own. At the other end of the spectrum, and using the skills from both African and British local history, I examine the links between British localities and a global conflict.

Professor Radhika Singha
Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

I wanted to explore the particular texture of the war experience for the 563,369 non-combatants from India who supported Allied efforts in the First World War. Among this group were regimental followers, auxiliary departments such as the Mule Corps and the Army Bearer Corps, and the Indian Labour and Porter Corps. I suggest that the dynamic of colonial frontier-making and the circulation of labour, including military labour, within India and around the Indian Ocean can help us to locate India more centrally in the First World War instead of viewing it as an external event to which she ‘contributed’. My work has benefitted from colleagues who have encouraged me to bring labour history into conversation with military history.
Patrick Vernon OBE
Clore Fellow and founder of Every Generation Media

I am truly passionate about discovering more about the African and Caribbean contribution to the First and Second World Wars, as well as modern day conflicts and I have developed a number of projects and activities connected to this. My work includes *A Charmed Life*, a documentary on the life of Eddie Martin Noble, who served in the Second World War; articles in *The Voice* and *The Guardian* on the black contribution in the world wars, as well as numerous workshops and events over the last few years at the National Archives, BFI, IWM London, National Portrait Gallery and local archives. I am currently working on research exploring the post traumatic impact of war and mental health services for Black and Minority Ethnic ex-service personnel and looking at monuments, family genealogy and hidden narratives of the African and Caribbean contribution to the world wars.

Guoqi Xu
Professor of History, University of Hong Kong

I am Professor of History at the University of Hong Kong and I have been researching China's role in the First World War for over 20 years. My research has involved using many different sources including archives in Europe, Asia, USA, Canada, and elsewhere. My books have explored Chinese workers in the First World War, and China's pursuit of a new national identity and internationalisation during this period. At present I am engaged in research for the following two works: *Wei Wenming Chu Zheng: diyici shijie dazhan zhong xixian zhanchang de zhongguoren jiqi lücheng* (Journey in the name of Civilizations: Chinese in the Western Front during WWI) (Beijing: Inter-Continental Press) and *Asia and the Great War*, under contract for Oxford University Press.
3. IWM

The Imperial War Museum was established in 1917 to form a record and memorial of the efforts of Britain and her Empire between 1914 and 1918. It was originally to be called the National War Museum, but the name was changed at the request of what were then known as ‘the Dominions’ (self-governing territories under the sovereignty of the British crown), to reflect the wider involvement that had taken place. The practicalities meant that, while the museum acquired what it could, it could not systematically cover all the Empire’s efforts. There is an excellent collection of Indian regimental histories, for example, and some early publications documented colonial involvement, such as Jamaica’s Part in the Great War, 1914-1918 by Frank Cundall (1925) and The Maoris in the Great War: A History of the New Zealand Native Contingent and Pioneer Battalion by James Cowan (1926). However other stories are less completely told, especially after the museum’s remit broadened to cover the Second World War and later conflicts, including independence struggles. We are working to expand our collections to fill the gaps, and the centenary of the First World War offers an excellent opportunity for community groups and individuals to help uncover new stories. This is a popular field of current research and this greater interest is widening our knowledge of a neglected area.

The British Empire Roll of Honour, bedecked with flags and wreaths at Crystal Palace, when the Imperial War Museum was situated there between 1920 and 1924 © IWM (Q 37052)
A close-up (right) shows the numbers of men from across the Empire who enlisted in the First World War © IWM (Q 36941).
4. Using IWM’s Online Catalogue

There is a useful online catalogue on IWM’s website at [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk). The ‘Collections and Research’ tab at the top of the screen will take you to the Collections pages. Increasing numbers of digitised images and some interviews are available onscreen and for in-depth research you can make an appointment to visit one of our Research Rooms. Digitised material (i.e. entries with attached images or sound) automatically comes to the front of the listing, so please be aware that what you are looking for may not be digitised and may be at the end of a long listing. Documents and books are available in the Research Room (Monday–Friday, 10am–5pm) as is sound material, while photographs can be viewed in the Photography Archive Visitors Room in the All Saints Building (Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am–5pm). Researchers may also view art, exhibits and film but appointments should be made some time in advance. Visit [http://www.iwm.org.uk/ask](http://www.iwm.org.uk/ask) or call 020 7416 5342 for more information about this.

Once on the ‘Collections and Research’ page, you can utilise the tabs on the left hand side of the page.

- Click on ‘Collections Search’ to reveal the search box where you can input your term – keep it simple for best results. Try a variety of different terms if the first one yields few results.
- Often there will be a very large number of hits. These can be narrowed down by using the tabs on the left-hand side.
- ‘Subject period’ enables you to choose between a number of periods including the First World War and Second World War.
- ‘Category’ will allow you to select a type of material, such as photographs or personal papers. Uniforms and insignia will often show you the cap badge or divisional flash that may have been worn, and you may have the option to listen to part of an interview with someone who served in a particular theatre or unit.
- ‘Place’ may also be useful here as you can pinpoint the geographical location that is of particular interest to you.
- As our collection grows it is always worth making repeat visits to the catalogue.

- There is a selection of optimised photographs from IWM’s collections relating to colonial involvement in the First World War, which are available for community groups in the ‘Resources’ section on the Centenary Partnership extranet. Organisations can sign up as a member of the Centenary Partnership for free, by visiting: http://www.1914.org/partnership/.

- If you can’t find what you are looking for, contact the Collections Enquiry Service at www.iwm.org.uk/ask or 020 7416 5342. Our knowledgeable staff should be able to point you in the right direction.
5. Useful Information Sheets

The only detailed information sheet available at the moment is listed below. More will follow in due course.


Men of the British West Indies Regiment in camp on the Albert-Amiens Road, September 1916
© IWM (Q 1202)
6. Other Institutions

Librarians, archivists and curators can be extremely helpful and like to share information. As well as being able to get the best out of their collections, they are usually aware of who might be doing research in a particular field and also what might be available elsewhere. Local history archives and local studies collections in libraries should have holdings relating to local communities.

Access to Archives
For collections in England and Wales
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/

Black Cultural Archives
Founded in 1981, the Black Cultural Archives’ mission is to collect, preserve and celebrate the heritage and history of Black people in Britain. They opened the UK’s first dedicated Black heritage centre in July 2014, and their growing archive collection includes personal papers, organisational records, rare books, photographs and a collection of small objects.
1 Windrush Square, Brixton, London SW2 1EF
020 7582 8516
www.bcaheritage.org.uk

Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House
The Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies opened in 1929 and covers the history of the Commonwealth and Sub-Saharan Africa, but not the Indian sub-continent and Burma (which is covered by the Oriental Institute Library).
Rhodes House, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3RG
01865 70908
www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/rhodes

British Empire and Commonwealth Museum Collection
This collection is now held at the Bristol Record Office. This is also the home of the Bristol Black Archives Partnership.
Bristol Record Office, ‘B’ Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Road, Bristol BS1 6XN
01179 224224

British Library
The Asia and Africa Department of the British Library holds useful material including the records of the India Office
96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB
020 7412 7873
www.bl.uk

Centre of African Studies Library
Established in 1965, and one of the world’s leading centres for study of Africa
Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DT
01223 334398
www.library.african.cam.ac.uk
Centre of South Asian Studies
University of Cambridge cross-disciplinary research centre concerning South and Southeast Asia
Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DT
01223 338094
www.s-asian.cam.ac.uk

Gurkha Museum
This museum tells the story of Gurkha service in the Indian Army and then the British Army, following partition in 1947
Peninsula Barracks, Romsey Road, Winchester SO23 8TS
01962 842832
www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk/

Institute of Commonwealth Studies
The only postgraduate academic institution in the United Kingdom devoted to the study of the Commonwealth
School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2nd Floor, South Block, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU
020 7862 8844
http://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk

National Army Museum
Although this museum is dedicated to the history of the British Army, it had its origins in the Indian Army Room at Sandhurst, so has good collections relating to the Indian Army and all aspects of the Empire and Commonwealth.
Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HT
020 7730 0717
www.nam.ac.uk

National Maritime Museum
Extensive holdings, especially relating to the Merchant Navy
Romney Road, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF
020 8312 6516
www.rmg.co.uk

National Register of Archives
Offers a useful way of locating collections right across the UK
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/

Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland
A forum for those who are interested in the history, languages, cultures and religions of Asia to meet and exchange ideas. It offers lectures and seminars and provides facilities for research and publishing.
14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD
020 7388 4539
www.royalasiaticsoociety.org

Royal Commonwealth Society Library Collections
Founded in 1868, the Royal Commonwealth Society Library Collections moved to the Cambridge University Library in the early 1990s
Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR
01223 33146 (Wednesdays and Thursdays only – email contact preferred at rcs@lib.cam.ac.uk)
www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/rcs/
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
The Royal Geographical Society has widened understanding of how ‘discoveries’ by Western explorers in earlier centuries relied to a large extent on the knowledge of local guides and other intermediaries.
1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR
020 7591 3000
www.rgs.org

School of Oriental and African Studies
The world’s leading institution for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East
University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG
020 7637 2388
www.soas.ac.uk

Sudan Archive at Durham
Founded in 1957, the year following Sudanese independence. Some digitised material is online.
Special Collections, Palace Green Library, Palace Green, Durham DH1 3RN
0191 334 297
www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/sudan/

The National Archives
The repository of official archives. Material is arranged according to the government department that originated it. There is an online catalogue and guidance on how to use the collections on the website.
Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU
020 8876 3444
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Indian Army Wounded in Hospital in the Dome, Brighton, 1919 by Douglas Fox-Pitt
This was painted in 1919, long after the Indian soldiers had left the Pavilion in early 1916. It was hoped that the overblown architecture and exotic surroundings would make the Indians feel at home, and it was one of the few places where the imperial contribution to the war could be be directly seen by the British public © IWM (IWM ART 323)
7. Useful Websites

Africa and the First World War
A network for the international study of Africa during the First World War, promoting connection and collaborative research between members
africagreatwar.wordpress.com

Africa Centre
A charity that promotes Africa’s cultural diversity and raises awareness of issues affecting Africans in Africa and the diaspora
www.africacentre.org.uk

African Heritage and Cultural Centre
A London-based project, which aims to help people of all generations and backgrounds understand more about African culture and heritage
www.ahec.org.uk

African Studies Association of the UK
A scholarly organisation with a wide range of members in academia, media and policy-making for those with an interest in Africa
www.asauk.net

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre
An open-access library specialising in the study of race, ethnicity and migration
www.racearchive.manchester.ac.uk

Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trail
For the promotion of a greater awareness of the shared heritage between the Sikhs and Britain
asht.info/homepage

Association of Black Photographers
A charity that works internationally in photography, cultural identity, race, and human rights
autograph-abp.co.uk

British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA)
Organisation supporting the conservation and recording of British and other European cemeteries, graves and monuments in South Asia
www.bacsa.org.uk

Birmingham Ethnic Minorities Association
BEMA works to appreciate difference through awareness and education
bemaonline.wordpress.com

Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA)
An association to foster research and to disseminate information on the history of Black peoples in Britain. BASA also have a mailing list, which is free to join, where members regularly share forthcoming events, publications and exchange views on current research and developments in the field.
www.blackandasianstudies.org
Black History Canada
A portal site featuring resources relevant to Black history in Canada
www.blackhistorycanada.ca

Black History 4 Schools
Black History 4 Schools is dedicated to the promotion of Black and Asian British history in schools
www.blackhistory4schools.com

Black History Month
Features and events occurring during National Black History Month
www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk

Black Presence in Britain
Historical website that documents the contribution of Black people to British history
www.blackpresence.co.uk

British and Caribbean Veterans Association (West Midlands)
Business and events of the association, formerly the West Midlands Branch of the West Indian Ex-servicemen and Women Association, a charity formed (in Birmingham) in 1995
bcva.weebly.com

British Chinese Workforce Heritage
Charting the history of the Chinese workforce in Britain
www.britishchineseheritagecentre.org.uk

Caribbean Aircrew in the RAF during WW2
An overview of volunteers from the West Indies who flew with the RAF during the Second World War
www.caribbeanaircrew-ww2.com

Caribbean Communities in Europe (CACOUE)
Sharing and preserving knowledge, culture and tradition across the Caribbean communities in Europe
www.caribbeancommunities.eu

Caribbean Family History Group
Events and training sessions in Lambeth, Solihull and Birmingham about the research of Caribbean family history
caribbeanfamilyhistorygroup.wordpress.com

Caribbean Roll of Honour
Database with on-going research into Caribbean participation in both world wars as well as links to memorials, photos and films
caribbeanrollofhonour-ww1-ww2.yolasite.com

Caribbean Studies, Black and Asian History (CASBAH)
A pilot web site for research resources where you can search and browse the CASBAH database and view the full text survey reports
www.casbah.ac.uk

Chattri
Website for the Chattri memorial to the Indian soldiers who died in the First World War, located on the downs near Patcham, Brighton
www.chattri.com
Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire
IWM was a partner on this project to create a new catalogue of films relating to the British Empire and the subsequent website holds information on over 6,000 films, showing images of life in the British colonies. Over 150 films are available for viewing online.
www.colonialfilm.org.uk/home

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
The CWGC Debt of Honour database contains details of all service personnel who died in the world wars (the date range covers 4 August 1914–31 August 1921 and 3 September 1939–31 December 1947) and Second World War civilians.
www.cwgc.org

Crossing the White Line: the Walter Tull Story
Part of a project raising awareness of the life of Walter Tull, including resource packs, details of the exhibition as well as the play that has been written about him
www.crossingthewhiteline.com

Diverse Cymru
Wales’s first equality charity, that attempts to reduce inequality and improve opportunities for participation and development
www.diversecymru.org.uk

Doctor Brighton's Pavilion
Virtual tour, photographs and analysis of the Indian experience of staying at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, which was converted into a hospital for the wounded soldiers of the Indian Army
www.sikhmuseum.com/brighton/index.html

Europeana 1914-1918
Mixes resources from libraries and archives across the globe with memories and memorabilia from families throughout Europe, where you can explore history and contribute that of your own family
www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en

Ensuring We Remember
National campaign for a permanent memorial to the Chinese Labour Corps of the First World War
http://ensuringweremember.org.uk/

Every Generation
Online resource for young people and families researching genealogy and Black British identity including information about the workshops the organisation runs
www.everygeneration.co.uk

Families in British India Society
Database and social network for those researching their family heritage in British India
www.new.fibis.org

First World War Centenary
First World War Centenary, led by IWM, has a hub of partner organisations where you can search by locality for organisations in your area
www.1914.org/partners-list
Forgotten Heroes: North Africans and the Great War, 1914–1919
International exhibition paying tribute to the citizens of North Africa who served on the Western Front

www.forgottenheroes.eu

Great War in Africa Association
Creating awareness of the military campaigns in Africa during the First World War, bringing researchers together and signposting relevant information

gweaa.com

Gurkha Brigade Association
Updates on the current Gurkha brigade as well their history, including related news and events

www.gurkhabde.com

Indian Faces of the Great War, USI-CAFHR
Photostream of images of those who contributed in various ways to India’s war effort

https://www.flickr.com/photos/98780532@N08/sets/72157634585245135/

Indian Military History Society
For those interested in the military history of the Indian subcontinent, encouraging research

imhs.org.uk/

Jeffrey Green
Website of the independent historian Jeffrey Green, which focuses on the activities of people of African descent in Britain before the Great War

www.jeffreygreen.co.uk

King-Emperor: The Indian Army on Campaign 1900–1939
Site dedicated to the British and Indian Officers and Indian Other Ranks who served in the Indian Army during these years including an anthology of articles and source materials

www.king-emperor.com/index.htm

Lascars
For the publication and exchange of information about the history of Lascars

www.lascars.co.uk/

Lives of the First World War
Part of IWM’s Centenary Programme is to build a permanent digital memorial to over 8 million men and women of Britain and the Commonwealth who served in the First World War

www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org

Making Britain: Discover how South Asians shaped the Nation, 1870–1950
Online database that provides information about South Asians in Britain from 1870 to 1950, the organizations they were involved in, their British connections, and the major events in which they participated

www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain

Memorial Gates Trust
Information about the Memorial Gates on Constitution Hill, erected in 2002 in recognition of those who served in the First and Second World Wars from the British Empire. Includes information on the individuals who served.

www.mgtrust.org
Moving Here: 200 Years of Migration in England
Archived website with records and illustrations of migration into England over the last 200 years
www.movinghere.org.uk

Mundus: Gateway to Missionary Collections in the United Kingdom
Online guide to hundreds of collections of overseas missionary materials held in the UK, a useful source material
www.mundus.ac.uk

National Army Museum Black Asian British Army
Stories and experiences of Black and Asian members of the British Army
www.nam.ac.uk/microsites/baba/

Official Guide to Black History Month
Guide to activities, events, news, history and music during Black History Month
www.blackhistorymonthuk.co.uk

Open University: Ferguson Study Centre for African and Asian Studies
The Ferguson Centre promotes the interdisciplinary study of empire and postcolonial situations with a particular focus on Africa and Asia
www.open.ac.uk/Arts/ferguson-centre/index.shtml

Portcities UK
Maritime histories of various UK port cities
www.portcities.org.uk

Project 400
Indo-British Heritage initiative celebrating 400 years of shared heritage
http://project400.org

Royal African Society
A membership society that promotes Africa in business, politics, culture and academia
www.royalafricansociety.org

Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League
A charity that provides support for service men and women from the Commonwealth, including the provision of monies and food through a network of ex-service organisations
www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk

Sikh Museum: Preserving a People’s Heritage
An online repository of Sikh experience and heritage
www.sikhmuseum.com

Society for Caribbean Studies (UK)
Advancing public education about Caribbean history and disseminating research including information about conferences and seminars
www.caribbeanstudies.org.uk

Swadhinata Trust
The Swadhinata Trust is a London-based secular Bengali heritage group that works to promote Bengali history and heritage among young people
www.swadhinata.org.uk
The National Archives: A World Through a Lens
Photograph sets from The National Archives collections organised by country or continent including Africa, the Caribbean and Asia
www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/collections/721576329216888592/

UK Information Resources on Asia (UKIRA)
A gateway to UK library holdings in the humanities and social sciences relating to Asia, the Middle East and North Africa
www.asiamap.ac.uk/index.php

UK Punjab Heritage Association (UKPHA)
A heritage organisation dedicated to securing Punjab’s cultural heritage for today’s audiences
www.ukpha.org

United Service Institution of India, Delhi
Founded in 1870, for the study of art, literature, history and geography within the Defence service
www.usiofindia.org

Untold London: People’s History in a World City
Looks through London’s museums, galleries and archives for hidden multicultural histories
untoldlondon.org.uk

Visualising China: China 1850–1950: An Interactive Resource
An interactive resource that allows users to explore and enhance more than 8,000 digitised images of photographs of China taken between 1850 and 1950
visualisingchina.net

West Indian Association of Service Personnel
Social media page for this charity based in Clapham, London
www.facebook.com/wasphq

Member of the Chinese Labour Corps with a model Chinese junk, probably made as an activity during free time to remind him of home. The photograph was taken at Caestre on 14 July 1917 © IWM (Q 5900)
8. Select Bibliography

You should be able to order copies of these books through your local library using the inter-library loan scheme. Additionally, many of these books are held at IWM London and can be consulted by appointment in our Research Room.

**General titles**

- Black Poppies: Britain’s Black Community and the Great War  

- Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism  

- Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships  
  Ray Costello (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012)

- The Oxford Companion to Black British History  

- Race, Empire and First World War Writing  
  Edited by Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

- Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain  

- The Unknown Force: Black, Indian and Coloured Soldiers through two World Wars  
  Ian Gleesoon (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1994)

- Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901–1914  
  Jeffrey Green (Abingdon, Oxon: Frank Cass, 1998)

- Cross of Sacrifice: Volume V: The Officers, Men and Women of the Merchant Navy and Mercantile Fleet Auxiliary, 1914–1919  

- Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain  
  Jacqueline Jenkinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009)

- The Black Man’s Part in the War  

- The Empire at War: [5 vols]  
  Edited for the Royal Colonial Institute by Sir Charles Lucas (London: Oxford University Press, 1921–1926)

- Regiments: Regiments and Corps of the British Army and Commonwealth 1798–1993  
  Compiled and published by Roger Perkins (Newton Abbot, Devon: R Perkins, 1994)

- The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars  
  F W Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988)
Order of Battle of Divisions: Part 5A: The Divisions of Australia, Canada and New Zealand and those in East Africa
Compiled by F W Perry (Newport, Gwent: Ray Westlake – Military Books, 1992)

Bibliography of Imperial, Colonial and Commonwealth History since 1600
Edited by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Forgotten Regiments: Regular and Volunteer Units of the British Far East with a History of South Pacific Formations
Barry Rentfrew (Amersham, Buckinghamshire: Terrier Press, 2009)

No Labour, No Battle: Military Labour during the First World War
John Starling and Ivor Lee (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2009)

Walter Tull, 1888-1918: Officer, Footballer: All the Guns in France couldn’t Wake Me
Phil Vasili (Mitcham, Surrey: Raw Press, 2010)

From Claret to Khaki: Walter Tull: Pioneering Black Footballer and Soldier
Rod Wickens (Liverpool: Woodford Books, 2003)

Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the Great War
Timothy C Winegard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Africa
The African DCM: Awards of the King’s African Rifles and West African Frontier Force Distinguished Conduct Medal
Compiled by John Arnold (N.p.: Orders and Medals Research Society, 1998)

The King’s African Rifles: A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890–1945
Lieutenant Colonel H Moyse-Bartlett (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1956)

Norman Clothier (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987)

Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War
Albert Grundlingh (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987)

The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force
Colonel A Haywood and Brigadier F A S Clarke (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1964)

The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914-1918

KAR: Being an Unofficial Account of the Origin and Activities of the King’s African Rifles
W Lloyd-Jones (London: Arrowsmith, 1926)

The British Military Presence in West Africa: Research Memorandum
History of the Nigerian Army, 1863-1992
Nigerian Army Education Corps and School (NAECS) (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian Army Headquarters, 1992)
Nigeria in the First World War
Akinjide Osuntokun (London: Longman, 1979)

No Insignificant Part: The Rhodesia Native Regiment and the East African Campaign of the First World War
Timothy J Stapleton (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006)

Caribbean
Jamaica’s Part in the Great War 1914-1918
Frank Cundall; with a foreword by Brevet-Colonel Herbert Bryan (London: West India Committee)

Caribbean Wars Untold: A Salute to the British West Indies
John Graham and Humphrey Metzgen (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2007)

Race, War and Nationalism: A Social History of West Indians in the First World War
Glenford Howe (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2002)

Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness

Letters from the Trenches during the Great War
West Indian Contingent Committee ([Shipston-on-Stour: King’s Stone Press], n.d.)

China
The Chinese Labour Corps (1916-1920)
Gregory James (Hong Kong: Bayview Educational, 2013)

Over There: The Pictorial Chronicle of Chinese Labour Corps in the Great War
Chief Editor: Feng Keli; Deputy Editor: Zhang Jie (Weihai, China: Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, 2009)

Weihaiwei under British Rule
Executive Editor: Feng Keli (Jinan City: Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, 2006)

China on the Western Front: Britain’s Chinese Work Force in the First World War

International Conference on Chinese Labour Corps during the Great War: The Collection of Essays
Weihai Municipal Archives (N.p.: Organizing Committee of Conference, [2008])

China and the Great War: China’s Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization
Guoqi Xu (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War
Guoqi Xu (Harvard University Press, 2011)
India

*Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817-1949*

*Baxter’s Guide: Biographical Sources in the India Office Records*

*A Short History in English, Gurmukhi and Urdu of the Royal Pavilion Brighton and a description of it as a Hospital for Indian Soldiers*
Corporation of Brighton (Brighton: King, Thorne and Stace (printers), 1915)

*Warrior Gentlemen: Gurkhas in the Western Imagination*

*The Indian Distinguished Service Medal*
Rana Chhina (New Delhi: Invicta, India, 2001)

*Sepoys in the Trenches: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914–1915*
Gordon Corrigan (Staplehurst, Kent: Spellmount, 1999)

*The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars*
Gajendra Singh (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014)

*Sikh Soldier: Volume One: Battle Honours*
Narindar Singh Dhesi (Uckfield, East Sussex: Naval and Military Press, 2010)

*Sikh Soldier: Volume Two: Gallantry Awards*
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*Reward of Valour: The Indian Order of Merit, 1914-1918*
Peter Duckers (Oldham, Lancashire: Jade Publishing, 1999)

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Edited by Alan J Guy and Peter B Boyden; assisted by Marion Harding (London: National Army Museum, 1997)

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Published by Authority of the Government of India (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1923)
India's Army
Major Donovan Jackson (Invicta) (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, [1940])

Warrior Saints: Three Centuries of the Sikh Military Tradition
Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh (London: I B Tauris, 1999)

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Burmese labourers reading Burmese papers, near Contalmaison, 2 September 1917
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This guide was produced as a free resource following the Whose Remembrance? research project, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. For further information please contact research@iwm.org.uk.

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