

HLF Project Evaluation Report: *They Also Served*

Funding Recipient: Churches Together in England

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Executive Summary

The aim of the project was to explore the contributions of African and Caribbean servicemen to the First World War. WW1 is often thought of as a European war fought exclusively by Europeans. However, Britain drew on the manpower and resources of its colonies throughout its empire, including in the Caribbean and the African continent.

The history of African and Caribbean service has until recently been under researched and under reported. Trevor and Mike Phillips' 1999 documentary *Mutiny* was one of the earliest explorations of the experiences of the British West Indies Regiment in Europe; since then, studies on these contributions have existed within the academy, not entering the public consciousness. The centenary of the war (2014-2018) has been marked by a 4-year period of commemorative activities, has provided the opportunity for a new inclusive history that looks at how the war was fought by the empire's citizens throughout the world.

The project aimed to redress the lack of attention to these men, many of whom gave their lives for King and empire, and to make resources more representative of what happened 100 years ago. Further, it aimed to reposition these servicemen back into the historical narrative. Working with the African Caribbean church membership and the wider Midlands community to inform and educate them about this history would result in having a greater shared understanding of their ancestors' sacrifices. In addition, people of European heritage would acquire a greater understanding that British history is a global history, and cannot be told without the inclusion of people throughout the world whose countries were formerly under British colonial rule.

The aim was to make this heritage accessible through several key outcomes that would be appropriate for the needs and interests of the community.

Those outcomes were:

- 10 community engagement sessions
- A portable exhibition
- 1000 DVDs for mass distribution featuring a short film
- A commemorative booklet featuring oral histories of the descendants of servicemen
- A community website providing news and features
- A commemorative service with 2000 attendees

In this way, we will make this history more visible, empowering and uplifting all generations within the Midlands African Caribbean communities.

How the main outputs of the project were delivered

The appointment of a project manager and researcher and establishment of a steering group for the project

After a competitive selection process, I, Dr Angelina Osborne, was appointed project manager and researcher on an 18-month contract with Churches Together in England.

A steering group was established to provide advice and guidance to the project manager on the direction of the project and lend its expertise where required. Since I wasn't based in Birmingham, the need for a steering group, with some of the members Midlands based, was essential to the success of the project.

With the assistance of Dr Joe Aldred, my line manager, five people were identified as being suitable candidates, and once I was in place, I contacted each person inviting them to participate.

The five people who served were:

- Annette King – Ms King had been engaged to work with Churches Together in England to assist in the completion of the HLF application. Consequently, she was familiar with the project aims and objectives, and is also a member of the Midlands church community. Ms King is the co-ordinator of the Kingsway Project, a Birmingham based social enterprise organisation working to enhance community cohesion, working with young people, women's groups and seniors, conducting community activities and consultations. Ms King's knowledge of the Midlands African Caribbean community and connections with the church community meant that she could offer the required advice and guidance for the project.
- Paulette Douglas – Mrs Douglas had recently moved from London to Birmingham, as her husband, Bishop Deverton Douglas had taken up a new ministry at the New Testament Church of God n Handsworth. Mrs Douglas had expressed an interest in the project in its early stages of application for funding, and it was suggested that she should be approached to be a steering group member, as she had links in the church community, including with young people and could offer advice on how to engage with young people over the course of the project.
- Linda Ali – Ms Ali, a member of the Church of England General Synod, had a significant interest in the project from the perspective of a Trinidadian British woman who had been researching her ancestors' contribution to the war. It was felt that she could offer advice on the historical aspects of the project, and was subsequently approached and accepted the role.
- Dr Colin Marsh is the Ecumenical Development Officer at Birmingham Churches Together, which works with the churches in Birmingham to create unity and cooperation with all the Christian denominations. Dr Marsh therefore had access to a vast network of churches, and the project manager used the networks to make contact and to raise awareness about the project.
- Dr Joe Aldred is responsible for Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations at Churches Together in England. Dr Aldred acted as the main interface between the project and CTE, and was also the principal champion. Dr Aldred used his connections with the Pentecostal churches in the Midlands to help arrange talks and presentations that were facilitated by the project manager,

and used his contacts to assist in the fulfilment of the other project aims, to be discussed below.

The steering group followed the following terms of reference:

- The function of the Steering Group is to be kept informed of the project's progress and to provide advice and guidance where necessary on the planning and evaluation of the project
- The Steering Group will meet on a bi monthly basis
- The Steering Group will meet in person or via Skype and keep in contact by email

It met on 5 occasions at different venues in Birmingham¹ to discuss the progress of the project, and to offer solutions to various challenges and issues that the project manager encountered. The steering group attended and assisted at the official launch of the project, held at the Library of Birmingham on 14th July 2016, and at the Evening of Remembrance, which closed the project, on 2nd July 2017. In addition to the physical convenings, the steering group was kept informed of the project's progress via email correspondence and through the dissemination of interim reports prepared by the project manager, including HLF progress reports.

The steering group provided invaluable guidance and support to the project manager in the following ways:

- Support during launch and final event – greeting guests, filling the promotional carrier bags, floor management
- Promotion of talks and presentations by disseminating information via networks – for example Dr Colin Marsh placed advertisements on project events via the Birmingham Churches Together newsletter
- Offered suggestions on which schools/organisations to approach to facilitate workshops
- Offering editorial suggestions on the exhibition/DVD/website/booklet

Selecting an appropriate mentor

The role of the mentor was to provide regular support to the project manager, a person who had experience of managing HLF funded projects and understood the challenges and potential pitfalls faced by a project manager. The task was to identify a mentor who had experience in leading HLF funded projects and in the history and heritage of African and Caribbean people in Britain. Consequently, Arthur Torrington CBE was approached to act as mentor, a role which he accepted.

Arthur Torrington is a community activist who set up the Windrush Foundation with the late Mr Sam King MBE (himself a Windrush pioneer) over 20 years ago. Its main remit is to preserve the history of the arrival of the first post war wave of Caribbeans to Britain. It also delivers workshops and develops and publishes educational materials on African and Caribbean settlers to Britain. The Windrush Foundation's most recent exhibitions have been *Making Freedom*, exploring African Caribbean agency that precipitated emancipation from enslavement in 1834; and the life and times of Cy Grant, the Guyanese British actor, musician, broadcaster, writer and WW2 prisoner of war. I have worked with Mr Torrington on several projects in the

¹ Church of God of Prophecy, Aberdeen Street, Birmingham; St George's Community Hub, Birmingham

past, including co-writing a publication on African and Caribbean soldiers who served in the Second World War. I kept Mr Torrington informed on the progress of the project and any challenges I encountered, on which he offered advice. We were in contact at least twice a month.

Mr Torrington provided key advice on how to design the exhibition in terms of content i.e. word count and themes, and gave editorial feedback on all the tangible outputs. He also suggested the use of roller panels for ease of portability and suggested Cindy Soso as the most suitable candidate to undertake the design and layout of the exhibition. Mr Torrington also gave advice on the website, providing the details of a designer experienced with creating portals related to African Caribbean history and heritage. Mr Torrington also supported the project by attending the final event of the project in Birmingham.

The delivery of 10 community events

The aim of the delivery of community events was to raise awareness of the historical narrative around the service of African and Caribbean soldiers in the First World War. As outlined in the project remit, the key audiences were to be the African and Caribbean church membership of the various denominations in the Midlands region. The task was to identify and approach organisations, offering to facilitate presentations and workshops on the history of African and Caribbean service in WW1.

The launch of They Also Served

The launch of the project was the first community event aimed to:

- Introduce the project to the communities in Birmingham and the Midlands and inform them of its aims and objectives
- Give a short presentation on the research that I had undertaken to date
- Invite church leaders and members, community activists, historians, local government and other stakeholders and interested parties to gather socially

The official launch of the They Also Served project took place at the Library of Birmingham on 14th July 2016 which proved to be a very encouraging first event for the project.

The launch was very well attended – members of the clergy, community activists and leaders, members of the armed services and many other interested people took in the stunning views offered by the library, while they viewed the online exhibition, networked and spoke with the project team.

The launch provided Churches Together in England with the opportunity to inform people of the project, which is to explore the ways that African and Caribbean soldiers contributed to the Great War. I developed an electronic exhibition to showcase the research that I had undertaken over the past few months, which included researching images of African and Caribbean military personnel in the field; exploring the War Office records at the National Archives to find details of campaigns that black soldiers were involved in. I also presented research on commendations received by African soldiers in the East African campaigns.

Bishop Joe Aldred introduced proceedings by presenting the background to the project, and emphasising its grounding in the church and broadening out into the wider communities in the West Midlands. I spoke at greater length on the project aims and outcomes, emphasising that one of the main outcomes was a

reassessment of the current historical narratives on WW1, and to demonstrate that it is a shared history.

I provided details on the individuals featured in the exhibition, which was well received. There followed a Q&A session, giving the audience the opportunity to ask further questions and to make comments and suggestions, which were noted. The audience were fully engaged and made some very good suggestions on how to move forward. There were also calls for collaboration and partnership which were welcomed by the team.

Other presentations

I undertook primary and secondary research to develop several presentations, and decided to offer presentations on the following topics:

The British West India Regiment

The Taranto Mutiny

Black British men who served

Why are there no memorials to the West Indian and African troops in Britain?

With the assistance of Dr Joe Aldred, we approached pastors of churches who had expressed an interest during the early stages of the application for funding to host a presentation at their church. We arranged a meeting with six pastors at the Church of God of Prophecy, Aberdeen Street, where we discussed the types of presentations I could offer. I then wrote individually to each pastor who attended that meeting, and a further 15 pastors, attaching a list of presentations and inviting them to choose a presentation and a suitable date when I could come.

One of the key challenges that I faced was that pastors are extremely busy people, with considerable demands on their time. Consequently, attempting to get them to commit to hosting an event proved to be time consuming, and unfortunately, I was unable to deliver the 10 community events as outlined in the outcomes. Over the course of the project I employed a series of initiatives to attract church leaders into hosting events at their church.

These included:

- Placing adverts in the Birmingham Churches together newsletter, courtesy of Dr Colin Marsh
- Sending email flyers to the network of contacts I established at the launch of the project, detailing the kinds of presentations I had developed
- Giving a short presentation at the Voices of War and Peace conference held by Dr Nicola Gauld at the Library of Birmingham in September 2016
- Dr Joe Aldred also sent the information via his own extensive network in the Pentecostal church
- Advertising on the project website once it was developed and live

In total, 8 presentations were facilitated, including the launch event mentioned above, and at the following churches:

11th November 2016: Church of God of Prophecy, Aberdeen Street, Winson Green, Birmingham B18 7DL – Between August and November 2016, COGOP facilitated a programme of talks exploring African and Caribbean contributions to the First and Second World Wars entitled *We Will Remember Them*. I gave a talk as part of that programme, called Erasing the Memory of African and Caribbean

contributions to WW1, which explored some of the reasons why there is a lack of knowledge of African and Caribbean service, arguing that there had been an intentional and deliberate effort to remove this service by government officials, based on documents I had discovered in the National Archives. My talk was supported by images of official documents and photographs. There were approximately 80 people in attendance, who were all very engaged and there was a lively Q&A session afterwards. The feedback on the presentation was very positive, with people remarking on how they were unaware of the reasons behind the exclusion and calling for there to be an acknowledgement of the service of colonial troops. We also gave time for Mr Donald Campbell, a retired RAF officer to speak about his fundraising project to place a memorial dedicated to African and Caribbean servicemen at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Stafford.

21st November 2016 – Talk at Church of God of Prophecy, Small Heath, Birmingham

I arranged with Bishop Basil Richards to give a talk at Small Heath on the British West Indies Regiment, which was established in 1915 and were deployed in various theatres of war around the world. The talk also focused on the number of men who served in the BWIR, their experiences and what happened to them after the war. This talk was less well attended than the first; however, there were several serving and retired military personnel in the audience who recounted their own experiences. The audience was also very engaged, and the main feedback was that this history was so hidden they were surprised that so many men from the Caribbean (approximately 15,600) had travelled to Europe to fight. There was surprise that Black soldiers were present at the Somme and Ypres, and that some soldiers had seen combat. It was a very enriching and empowering experience for the audience in terms of providing them with little-known facts regarding Black involvement in the Great War.

7th December 2016 - New Testament Church of God, Handsworth

I was invited by Bishop Deverton Douglas to deliver a presentation at his church, which explored the lives of the Black soldiers who had been resident in Britain at the time war broke out, and subsequently joined British regiments. Unfortunately, despite sufficient notice and advertisement in the form of flyers placed around the church, the attendance was poor, around 8 attendees. However, they were fully engaged in the talk, asking questions – as before, the main theme was why this history isn't being taught or widely known.

24th January 2017 – Mount Shiloh Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, Wolverhampton

I had several email and telephone conversations with Bishop Bill Brown to deliver a presentation at his church. Unfortunately, Bishop Brown cancelled the event, owing to a lack of interest among his congregation.

6th and 20th February 2017 – New Testament Church of God, Dudley

I arranged with Rev. Hermilyn James to deliver 2 presentations as part of her programme celebrating Black History Month, as celebrated in the United States. I was unable to deliver the first talk, owing to the tube strike that happened in London on that day. As I live in London, it would have been impossible to travel to

Euston as the buses were overstretched on that day, and there were massive delays. I delivered the talk on the 20th, which looked at the British West Indies Regiment's history.

12th February – Wesleyan Holiness Church, Wolverhampton

Reverend Cassius Francis responded to my emails offering to deliver presentations – he selected the history of the British West Indies Regiment, which I presented to a small but interested audience. There was a lively Q&A session afterwards.

14th May 2017 - St George's CE Church, Edgbaston

Reverend Julian Francis contacted me to deliver a presentation that would give an overview of the project, rather than a specific topic to his congregation, giving me a slot during Sunday service. I was warmly received and spoke with many of the church members afterwards, who all expressed surprise that there were African and Caribbean soldiers in the Great War.

Youth workshops

I worked with Mrs Paulette Douglas, one of the members of the steering group, to deliver a workshop on African and Caribbean involvement in the First World War, which was to be delivered during the half term week with Year 8 and 9 pupils that attended NTCG Handsworth. I devised a two-hour workshop, working with maps, letters, official documents and photographs; however, I was unfortunately unable to deliver this workshop – on that day (24th February 2017) Hurricane Doris caused a considerable amount of chaos on the railway network. I made it as far as Milton Keynes, which took three hours, and then the train service was cancelled and I had to return to London. We were regrettably unable to reschedule.

The community events enabled me to deliver a series of outreach sessions that raised awareness about African and Caribbean service in the Great War. I learned that presentations were an effective way of disseminating the history. Overall, the presentations were successful because they introduced to the audience a history that had hitherto been unknown and not engaged with. It inspired people to consider their family histories to determine whether their ancestors had served. It was evident that this history was under researched, underexplored and unknown among the groups I worked with. Many people I presented to were surprised and deeply interested in this history; however, there was also disappointment and anger that it was a 'hidden' history. My research indicated that this was a deliberate action on the part of the War Office to exclude the service of the colonial troops; an action that has resulted in the assumption that there were no Black troops in WW1.

The production of a portable exhibition on the experiences of African and Caribbean servicemen

The aim of the exhibition was to inform and educate its viewers to the service of colonial and Black British troops in an accessible way and to encourage and direct them to learn more about this overlooked and under explored history. My task was to research, curate, develop and write an exhibition that fulfilled these objectives. There is a growing number of publications on African, Caribbean and Black British involvement in the First World War. Much of it exists within the academe in that it explores identity politics, masculinity, the history of empire, and the impact of empire

on the recruitment of the men. As we were producing materials for the public it was vital to take a more accessible approach. However, after undertaking some internet research I noticed that there was a significant amount of repetition – I discovered that many websites dedicated to this narrative were featuring the same individuals. This is not surprising, given that this is a neglected history, and most of the men who served did not document their experiences, and historians of the period did not research or write about their experiences. This has given the impression that the First World War was a ‘white man’s war’. As time has passed vital documentation has been lost, and many stories were never told. Some stories were discovered by sheer luck – for example, the diary of Arthur Roberts, described as Scotland’s Black Tommy – was found in an attic, where it had been sitting for nearly 100 years. I decided not to undertake biographical research for that reason; rather, I felt that taking a thematic approach would be more useful, given that we were dealing with a history most people had little knowledge of. While official documents do not offer personalised accounts, they are valuable for what they tell about where people served, the duties they performed, how many men came from a colony, whether they were engaged in combat etc. Consequently, most of my primary source research took place at the National Archives in Kew, in the War and Colonial Office records. For more personalised stories, I researched secondary sources that explored individual accounts.

I sourced most of the photographs that feature in the exhibition from the Imperial War Museum. I spent several weeks visiting their picture library in Kennington, London, where I found many photographs that had not been seen for over 100 years. I visited the National War Museum to view recruitment posters designed for the West Indies population by the imperial government; and I spent several months reading a range of secondary sources to help inform my text that would be included in the panels,

I concluded I would explore the narrative using 7 themes:

- Fighting for King and Empire
- Black British Recruitment
- African Recruitment
- British West Indies Regiment Service
- Army Chaplains
- Facing Discrimination
- After the War

In this way, I could establish a general overview of the history, taking into consideration the type of questions a person unfamiliar with this history would ask, such as what colonies did the men come from, where did they serve, were they combatants, did they experience discrimination, what happened after the war.² The panel on the chaplains was included to reflect the engagement with the church membership and that the project was led by Churches Together in England. Having established the themes and written the text, I sourced relevant photographs and documents to support the text. It was suggested by Arthur Torrington to keep the word limit to 300 per panel, and that the text and images be placed on roller panels for ease of portability, as this was to be a mobile exhibition.

² A PDF of the exhibition is in the Appendix

I worked with Cindy Soso, the designer, on the design in terms of colour, text font, image descriptions etc. From there we worked on several drafts until I was happy with the layout and then we went to print.

The exhibition was displayed at the commemorative event on 2nd July 2017, where it was very well received by those who attended. Prior to the event, I was in contact with Dr Nicola Gauld to arrange a hosting of the exhibition at the Library of Birmingham. I wrote a short advertorial in the Voices of War and Peace newsletter announcing its creation and contact details encouraging organisations to host it.

From August 2017 it is scheduled to be on display at the African Caribbean Millennium Centre, New Style Radio, Winson Green, Birmingham; Church of God of Prophecy, Winson Green; St Georges Church in Edgbaston, Birmingham; The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire; Paganel Primary School, Weoley Castle, Birmingham; Highgate Baptist Church, Highgate, Birmingham; Walsall Council House; Holy Trinity Church, Aston, Birmingham; York minster, York; Church of God of Prophecy, Small Heath, Birmingham; with bookings pending before being deposited at the Library of Birmingham at the mid to the end of 2018. We've also been in contact with the education department at Birmingham Council to host the exhibition at the local schools.

The production of a DVD and booklet

In the discussions with the steering group on the content of the commemorative booklet, it was decided that it should contain the exhibition in miniature. This meant that the exhibition would reach a greater number of people, and give access to those people who could not visit and view the exhibition when it tours different venues. In addition, the booklet contained the oral histories of two women whose father and grandfather served in the British West Indies Regiment. These women contacted me after attending the project launch.

I collected the oral histories of Mrs Olga Robinson and Mrs Euvine Green between November 2016 and February 2017. Mrs Green's recollections were sufficiently detailed that I could locate her grandfather's service card at the National Archives. Conversely, Mrs Robinson's recollections were far sketchier. For example, she could not provide the regiment that her father served in, but she remembered that he mentioned that he was in Mesopotamia. According to the war records the 1st and 2nd Battalions served in Mesopotamia, but there were 6 James Robinsons listed in those battalions and I was unable to determine which one was her father. She provided images of his Victory Medal, a medal each man who served in the war received. Mrs Green provided me with images of her grandfather, Alfred Sylvester Black. I found that Private Black served in the 9th Battalion of the BWIR. Research in the war diaries showed that the 9th were stationed in France and Belgium and members of that battalion led the mutiny in Taranto, Italy in 1918. In this way, I supported the information I was given with historical research at the National Archives and Ancestry.com

I gave both women the opportunity to comment on the text for any inaccuracies before I sent it out to print.

The vision I had for the DVD was to give the soldiers the opportunity to speak about their experiences, to hear their voices. Consequently, I researched secondary sources to locate any interviews with African and Caribbean survivors or contemporaries that expressed any opinions about the war, any diaries, oral

histories, quotation that had been amassed. Once I had these I drafted a script that followed a narrative of hope and expectations, interactions with Europeans, the horrors of war, anger and frustrations over discrimination, expressions of bitterness and of hope. I included 2 poems written by soldiers, one expressing the hope of the West Indian colonies, and ended with one that expressed disappointment at the realities of their experiences.

I engaged RVS Realtime, a media production company to help with filming and recording, providing them with images and reel footage from the Imperial War Museum and Pathe News. We found volunteers to read the script, spending the morning of 9th June recording their voices.

Mr Richard Muhmmad of RVS Realtime sent me drafts of the film for approval, which I shared with the steering group for feedback; once we were all happy with the final draft the 12-minute film was recorded onto 1000 DVDs. The DVD sleeve was also designed by RVS Realtime, and the DVD was distributed during the commemorative event to the attendees. The film is also available to view on the They Also Served website.

The Recruitment of 15 volunteers to aid with research, filming and facilitating events

The aim of the engagement of 15 volunteers was for them to assist the project as the work progressed to do a range of activities such as organising and managing the community sessions, the commemorative service, the collating of material for the DVD and exhibition, marketing and distributing the booklets and DVDs. In this way, the volunteers would gain experience in managing and facilitating events and learn more about African and Caribbean service in the Great War.

The task was to attract volunteers and this was facilitated by:

- The design and distribution of 500 flyer inviting potential volunteers to contact the project manager
- Placing advertisements periodically in the Churches Together in Birmingham newsletter
- Advertising in the quarterly newsletter written by the project manager
- Making announcements at each presentation

At the project launch we were approached by a young woman, Nicole Robinson Edwards, who suggested we establish a young persons' steering group that could suggest ways to get young people involved in the project. However, despite advertising through Miss Edwards' networks, we were unable to attract young people to the project in this way.

We engaged volunteers to help in the development of the DVD. We put out a call for men to represent the voices of the soldiers and three men, Bishop Jonathan Jackson, Mr Duran Burke and Dr Joe Aldred took turns in representing different voices in the narrative and reading the poems.

We engaged volunteers to assist in the delivery of the commemorative event in July at New Testament Church of God, in Handsworth. The young people were:

Loren McPherson
Andre Bartley
Siobhan Bartley
Lesroy Wetherbearn

Victoria Hepburn
Maya Givens
Olivia Rowe
Jayson Muli
Kyesha Booth
Kiara Booth

These young people, aged between 13 and 15, acted as ushers, helped fill the goodie bags for the attendees and held the names of 10 soldiers during the Act of Remembrance and Prayers for Peace. They also presented flowers to Rev. Rose Hudson Wilkin, the keynote speaker and the Lord Mayor of Birmingham. For their assistance we awarded them with a £30.00 book token each from Waterstones. The staff at New Testament Church of God, and members of the steering group also assisted with the packing of the goodie bags, and providing refreshments for the VIP guests. Other young and older volunteers helped at the various events described in this report.

The development of a project website – www.theyalsoserved.co.uk

The project website was developed to accomplish the following aims:

- To present information on African and Caribbean involvement in the First World War
- To provide links to other WW1 programming, providing information on their activities
- To provide links to publications on the topic of WW1
- To report on the presentations given at various churches
- To provide news on the progress of the project
- To provide a gallery of images sourced from the Imperial War Museum, the National Archives and other repositories showcasing African and Caribbean soldiers hitherto not seen
- To advertise forthcoming events related to the project
- To make links to newsreel portals

At Arthur Torrington's suggestion, I engaged Roderick Rose, of Atomic Concepts to design the website. Roderick and I met on four occasions where we discussed the web design and the type of content I intended to populate the site with. We agreed on a work timetable and the website was designed within three weeks. I sourced the content and once the website went live I informed people via the project's email database.

During the life of the project all events were advertised in the news and events section. A quarterly newsletter was also uploaded onto the website and to the database. Consequently, people could learn about the project and its progress, events held and the history.

Since the website went live in November 2016, there have been nearly 12,000 visitors to the site.

Major commemorative event aimed at attracting 2000 people

The discussions over the delivery of a commemorative event evolved over the course of the project into an evening of remembrance, where the sacrifices of the

colonial forces and Black British soldiers in British regiments could be remembered in a church service, which could attract members of the churches of all denominations, political and community leaders, senior church leaders, members of the armed services, descendants of the soldiers and the public. A subcommittee was formed to manage and oversee the delivery of this event:

- Dr Joe Aldred, steering group member
- Mrs Paulette Douglas, steering group member
- Rev. Canon Eve Pitts, vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Birchfield
- Mr David King, Legacy Regional Coordinator (Black Country), Christian Aid

The subcommittee was experienced in the delivery of large events – David King, for example, had managed a highly successful commemorative event held in Birmingham during the bicentenary commemorations of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in 2007. Canon Pitts is a highly respected vicar and community leader who regularly hosts events that explore challenges experienced by the African and Caribbean communities in the Midlands. Between them, these individuals had the necessary experience and contacts to ensure the delivery of a successful event. Although I did not serve on this subcommittee, as I was focused on the development of the DVD and exhibition, I was included in all correspondence and consulted on various organisational issues. The subcommittee designed the event that would include a keynote speech by a leading member of the clergy. The subcommittee approached Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York to give that speech. Owing to prior commitments, the Archbishop was unable to be the keynote speaker; Rev. Rose Hudson Wilkin, chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons accepted the role. The date for the event was Sunday 2nd July. Booking was handled through Eventbrite, which allowed for successful monitoring of attendance.

Publicising the event

To attract the 2000 attendees, 10,000 leaflets were printed and distributed throughout the Midlands region. In addition, there were radio announcements on local radio, and the event was featured on the project website on a weekly basis in the six weeks leading up to the event. Information regarding the event was also sent through the project database, and an advertorial feature was written by myself about the project and the closing event in the Voice Newspaper, which is available nationwide as a hard copy and online. The subcommittee secured the New Testament Church of God in Handsworth as the venue, as it has a capacity of 1,100.

Event structure

The evening was structured as a service of remembrance, including performances from church choirs, dancers, opera and reflections on the sacrifice of the soldiers. A promotional carrier bag, containing a Black Poppy badge, the commemorative DVD and booklet, a letter from Dr John Sentamu and the evening programme.³ In addition, the portable exhibition was positioned in the foyer of the church allowing people to view it before and after the event

³ See the Appendix for a copy of the programme

The service was very well attended and went very smoothly, owing to the management of the event by Mr David King and his assistants. The feedback was highly positive. The event also attracted significant media coverage, with BBC Midlands filming a news segment. The whole eventing was recorded by Churches Together in England, and features on their website, and is linked on the They Also Served website. *The Voice* newspaper wrote an article covering the event. The service was streamed live to Jamaica on one of their leading radio stations, Power 106 FM. This means that we reached well beyond the target of 2000, including the approximately 650 people who attended the evening. A video of the service was edited and is available for viewing on the They Also Served website.

Review and recommendations

The delivery of this project was overall very successful, with the proposed outputs all accomplished. Our target audience, the membership of the African Caribbean churches in the Midlands, was successfully reached, and the feedback suggests that they were deeply interested in the subject matter and responded to it in positive ways. What was striking about the project was the thirst for this history, which suggests that the lack of inclusivity of African and Caribbean stories into the mainstream historical narratives remains a significant issue, and emphasises the value of including these narratives.


After the service in July I was approached by several people who showed me photographs of their ancestors who served in the war in their military uniforms. They all asked me how they could find out more about their ancestors' service, what archives to consult, and which websites to search on. I referred them to the project website for the appropriate links. However, I would recommend that Churches Together in England engage someone to populate the website with relevant content as often as possible, encouraging people to share their stories, as the website has the potential to become a significant resource on colonial troops in WW1.

The presentations were another successful strand of the project. In this way, we reached a wider audience of all ages, particularly the church elderly members, who may not have attended these presentations had they been held at a venue other than the church. This suggests that church spaces could further serve to raise awareness, and to educate. Churches Together in England could sponsor one or two presentations in churches during the November war remembrance activities to keep the project alive beyond its initial remit.

The portable exhibition has proved an excellent indicator towards further study and investigation, as well as providing an overview of the history of colonial troops in WW1. The feedback on the exhibition has been positive and it is currently touring. It is hoped that it can continue to serve as a resource, and utilised each year during Black History Month and in November. Moreover, it could be engaged in schools as part of the schemes of work that explore WW1 in the curriculum.


Appendix

THEY ALSO SERVED
UNCOVERING THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN SERVICEMEN DURING THE GREAT WAR



They Also Served is a HLF funded project by Churches Together In England that will bring alive the contributions of African and Caribbean servicemen and women. Working with the Midlands African and Caribbean churches and wider communities, the project will deliver a series of talks, screenings and workshops, and produce an exhibition that will explore the experiences of the men and women that served in the British imperial forces. It will also explore how Caribbean and African men living in Britain, in particular the Midlands region, enlisted into the British Army and unearth the stories of those experiences. The project provides the opportunity for people to engage with the history, in particular to research whether their ancestors took part or to share their own stories.

We are also looking for volunteers to get involved with the project. For more information contact Dr. Angelina Osborne, Project Manager/Researcher at angelina.osborne@cte.org.uk


Churches Together in England is an Incorporated Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee (Company Registered No. 0254251, Charity Registered No. 1110752)

Flyer produced in April 2016 which was distributed at various venues, informing people about the project and inviting volunteers to assist the project







Photographs taken at the project launch in July 2016

**WE WILL!
REMEMBER THEM!**

**AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN
CONTRIBUTIONS TO WORLD WARS 1 & 2**

**Four Talks At: Cogop Aberdeen Street,
Winson Green, Birmingham B18 7DL**



7.30 - 9pm Friday 19 August 2016
Talk by **Selena Carty**, Genealogist & Founder of the BlackPoppyRose



7.30 - 9pm Friday 9 September 2016
Talk by **Garry Stewart**, Ex-Soldier, Recognize Black Heritage and Culture



7.30 - 9pm Friday 14 October 2016
Talk by **Horace Barnes**, Chairperson: Why are West Indians in Britain (WAWI Project)



7.30 - 9pm Friday 11 November 2016
Talk by **Dr Angelina Osborne**, Historian and Heritage Consultant; Project and Research Manager 'They Also Served'

Approximately 17 million people died in World War I. Across the United Kingdom the 100th Anniversary (2014 - 2018) of World War 1 is being commemorated. Some 70 million died in WW2. Millions more were wounded in both wars amounting to over 100 million casualties. Sadly, the contribution and sacrifices of African and Caribbean Servicemen, Servicewomen and civilians is often missing from the narrative. These four talks by experts in their fields will shed light on the black contribution to WW1 & 2. This series is not intended to glorify war, but to recognise the significant contributions, including the ultimate sacrifice, of African and Caribbean people.

Attendance is free and open to all ages. Don't miss these historic learning sessions.
For further information call **Dr Joe Aldred** on 0777 563 2288 or **The Church Office** on 0121 551 3919



Flyer for talks held at Church of God of Prophecy, Winson Green Birmingham, where I was one of the speakers



With Dr Joe Aldred and Donald Campbell



Photos from the talk in Winson Green, November 2016



After my talk at Wesleyan holiness Church in Wolverhampton, with Rev. Cassius Francis and some of the congregation in February 2017.



At St Georges, Edgbaston, May 2017



Photos of the service held in July 2017

<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/celebration-honours-first-world-war-soldiers> link to article of the service by the Voice newspaper

<https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Birmingham-churches-to-honour-WW1-s-African-and-Caribbean-servicemen> link to article by Premier Christian Radio, including interview with Dr Joe Aldred



THEY ALSO SERVED

CHURCHES TOGETHER in ENGLAND

heritage lottery fund

LOTTERY FUNDED

A service and exhibition to solemnly remember and reflect upon the Contributions of African and Caribbean servicemen to WW1

SUNDAY 2 JULY 2017

The New Testament Church of God, Lozells Road, Birmingham B19 1NP **5PM – 7PM**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, priest vicar at Westminster Abbey and Chaplain to the Queen

With prayers, music, dance and poetry from Aberdeen Street Gospel Choir, operatic soprano Abigail Kelly, Brothers United in Christ, King Solomon Business School Choir, Roy McFarlane and Sandra Golding

For many years the contributions of African and Caribbean servicemen to the First World War has been largely forgotten and underexplored. The war's centenary (2014-2018) presents an opportunity to revisit this history, and to re-examine and rediscover African and Caribbean involvement. It is now recognised that the assistance and service of over 2 million Africans and 16,000 Caribbeans, not to mention the countless Black Britons that joined British regiments, made a considerable impact in terms of manpower and resources. It means that the Great War was a multi-racial and multi-national war.

'They Also Served' is an 18-month research project led by Dr Angelina Osborne that has been uncovering African and Caribbean contributions to WW1. Join us for this project concluding event that pays tribute to these heroes.

PLANNING GROUP: Dr Joe Aldred, Rev Canon Eve Pitts, David King, Paulette Douglas

FOR FREE REGISTRATION: www.bit.do/theyalsoserved www.theyalsoserved.co.uk

Flyer for service