**Military-related crime in Jamaica during the 1920s and 1930s:**

**questions of race, masculinity and nationhood**

Richard Smith, Goldsmiths, University of London

**Introduction**

Military-civilian interactions comprised an important element of the colonial experience in Jamaica and often served as a focal point for imperial concerns around race and gender, particularly in terms of sexual relationships across racialised boundaries and the questioning of normative white masculine ideals. From the perspective of imperial governance, concern around such issues grew in the wake of the First World War during which black Jamaican volunteers encountered European civilian populations and challenged white authority when they were subject to discriminatory practices, during military service and as veterans. Furthermore, the assumptions upon which white imperial authority rested were called into question by the wider experiences of the First World War which cast doubt on European civilisation, rationality and progress. The centenary of the First World War has seen a rise in both public and scholarly interest in racial attitudes during the war itself. However, the ‘long week-end’ between the wars is relatively neglected and merits closer investigation. This is especially so for the case of the Anglophone Caribbean where historical research has tended to focus on the latter half of the 1930s which were characterised by Pan-African responses to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and growing labour unrest.

As I have discussed elsewhere,[[1]](#endnote-1) the prevalence of psychological responses to the war, to which contemporary terms such as neurasthenia and shell shock were applied, undermined ideals of white, masculine stoicism and rationality which were deployed to uphold imperial authority and justify the inferior position of non-white colonial subjects. Furthermore, the visibility of large numbers of men physically damaged by war in British towns and cities contributed to a reinvestment in the masculine qualities of black colonial subjects. In the quest for alternative models of masculinity apparently untarnished by war, the black male body, whose purported proximity to nature, physical strength and sensuality had routinely been used to justify the reliance on black labour in plantation societies, as well as its careful policing, was often celebrated in the imperial metropolis of the early jazz age.

In Jamaica, one tragic case revealed the long-term impact of the war on many veterans, regardless of colour and its masculine connotations. Rupert Smalling, a private with the West India Regiment was found guilty and sentenced to death for murdering a member of the Royal Garrison Artillery at Port Royal, Jamaica at Christmas, 1923. Smalling, who had served in the African campaigns and Palestine during the First World War and was mentioned in dispatches for gallantry, had subsequently suffered periods of temporary insanity and had developed a severe alcohol addiction. The Jamaica Reform Club, a constitutional nationalist organisation, whose members included labour leaders Bain Alves and Alfred Mends, petitioned the Governor pleading for clemency on the grounds Smalling was suffering from shell shock. Their plea was ignored, the case perhaps serving to resurrect the view of the irrational black man, unable to cope with the demands of modern warfare, in the minds of white Jamaican elite.[[2]](#endnote-2)

This paper focuses on a later case in which a soldier from the white British garrison regiment was killed in a scuffle with Jamaican civilians during the New Year of 1933. Enraged white soldiers went on to riot through Kingston, disrupting the stereotypical image of black insurrection which tended to shape colonial policing and bringing into focus some of the social and political issues which beset interwar Jamaica. Close analysis of the subsequent trial for murder of a black Jamaican seaman provides some rich insight into imperial perceptions of race, class and gender and the increasing challenge presented to the white elite by social democratic nationalism.

**The world, the empire and Jamaica, New Year 1933**

At the beginning of 1933, the Jamaican press reported Hitler’s consolidation of power in Germany prior to his assumption of the Chancellorship on 31 January, Sino-Japanese military tensions in Manchuria and the passing of former Republican President, Calvin Coolidge, in the United States. In the imperial context, there was steady coverage of the Irish General Election campaign in which Fianna Fail leader, Eamon De Valera, was seeking to overthrow W. T. Cosgrove’s Cumann na nGaedheal, which had governed the Free State since 1923, end the oath of allegiance and pursue a new constitution to bring about full independence from Britain. Closer to home, the Jamaican New Year of 1933 had been ushered in with a pirate-themed party at the prestigious Constant Spring Hotel attended by 800 of Jamaica’s ‘crème-de-la-crème’ including the wife of the Governor, Lady Slater, and her two daughters who were entertained by the island’s military band.[[3]](#endnote-3) The lifestyles on display at Constant Spring could not have been more remote from the plight of the black working-class and peasant sufferers in Depression-era Jamaica, whose numbers were swollen by cane-cutters and other labourers expelled from Cuba after the slump in the sugar industry.

Press interest was also excited by the New Year arrival of General and Lady Allenby on board *Ariguani* after a Christmas in Trinidad. They were met by the Jamaica GOC, Brigadier J. A. D. Langhorne and the chief justice, Adrian John Clark, who had served as a major on Allenby’s staff in France and who would later preside over the subsequent murder trial. The press enthusiastically reminded readers of Allenby’s role in the Middle East campaigns of the First World War, including the final battles in the Jordan Valley and Megiddo of September 1918 which had involved two battalions of the British West Indies Regiment, drawn largely from Jamaica.[[4]](#endnote-4) Ironically, Allenby refused to meet with veterans of the BWIR, who were keen to bring to his attention the plight of impoverished ex-servicemen affected by failing land settlement schemes and unemployment. The veterans were also keen to press their claim for the restitution of the franchise which had been granted to them for just one election after their military service.[[5]](#endnote-5) Meanwhile, the Jamaican Union of Teachers, which played a pivotal role in the emergence of the welfare-orientated, co-operative strand of Jamaican nationalism,[[6]](#endnote-6) opened its opens its annual conference with a New Year’s Day service at Coke Church before moving to St George’s Schoolroom for opening discussions.[[7]](#endnote-7)

**The death of Fusilier McDougall**

In the early evening of 1 January 1933, Fusilier 2026900 Daniel McDougall of the 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (‘the Fighting Fifth’) ‘a popular member of their football team’[[8]](#endnote-8) and a native of Jarrow, visited a temperance bar at 34 Hanover Street in the Kingston dockside with four comrades and a young merchant seaman, temporarily stranded in the island. White British Army regiments had provided the garrison battalion at Up Park Camp in Jamaica since the disbanding of the West India Regiment at the beginning of 1927, the Northumberland Fusiliers having arrived in October 1931. The Jamaican temperance bars of this era were of a rather different character to those of the temperance movement in the metropole. The bars were permitted to sell beer but not spirits and thus being subject to less police scrutiny were often a cover for the casual prostitution which accompanied many port and military cities.[[9]](#endnote-9) After a short time in the bar, dancing with local women, the soldiers left. However, McDougall was alleged to have taken and put on a jacket belonging to a Jamaican seaman Vivian Clarke, known as ‘Papa Son’, who was also in the bar. The theft was noticed by Frank Hollar, another local merchant seaman employed on the *S. S.* *Cathcart,* which plied the Jamaica-Canada cargo route. McDougall returned the jacket when challenged but there followed an exchange of ‘uncomplimentary remarks’ following which a street fight broke out between the white soldiers and Jamaican seaman. In the ensuing struggle, McDougall fell to the ground unconscious, apparently struck in the temple by a brick and died in the military hospital at Up Park Camp in the early hours of 2 January. The post mortem found that McDougall had died from a brain haemorrhage and shock caused by fracture to the left temple. Hollar, who heard he was considered the prime suspect from a shipmate, handed himself in to Kingston Central Police station on the advice of his family.[[10]](#endnote-10)

**The Northumberland Fusiliers riot**

Fusilier McDougall’s funeral was conducted with full military honours at Up Park Camp cemetery at 5.00 p.m. on the day of his death. Two hours men of the battalion not on duty were allowed into Kingston to attend the cinema. The majority headed for the Gaiety Theatre, East Queen Street, which was showing *Roar of the Dragon*, a thriller set in Manchuria directed by Wesley Ruggles and released by RKO the previous summer.[[11]](#endnote-11) Shortly afterwards, reports reached the RSM at Up Park Camp that soldiers had tried to take control of a tram car on the South Camp Road. Civilian passengers and the tram conductor were beaten and gangs of soldiers “in an ugly mood”[[12]](#endnote-12) were to be seen wandering around the area. No further men were permitted to leave camp and the garrison military police eventually shepherded around 150 fusiliers into the Gaiety to watch the film, the intention being to provide escorted trams back to the camp at the end of the show. Unfortunately, the three requisitioned trams did not arrive on time and between fifty and sixty soldiers ignored instructions to wait and marched to Hanover Street, ‘the centre of the disreputable element of the town’[[13]](#endnote-13) where they proceeded to attack civilians and damage property. At least six civilians treated in hospital as the men attacked local Jamaicans with their heavy buckles and smashed windows and damaged cars, despite the attempts of their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Raymond St. John Booth, DSO and veteran of the South African and First World Wars,[[14]](#endnote-14) to calm them. On the same front page which described Allenby’s visit, the *Daily Gleaner* reported that

Wild excitement reigned in the city last night and quite a lot of damage was done, mainly as a result of broken windows, when a large party of men of the Fifth Fusiliers more or less ran amuck. Inhabitants of the eastern sections of the city were so frightened that they barred their doors and windows where they could and excited groups gathered at street corners to talk about the occurrence, one almost unique in the annals of Kingston … It is said that they were intent on getting their own back because of the alleged murder of one of their number on Sunday night.[[15]](#endnote-15)

The Jamaica Constabulary, black Jamaicans with white officers, was called out to aid the military police and the soldiers were eventually contained and put on trams back to camp where around ten soldiers were treated for injuries.[[16]](#endnote-16)

**The trial of Frank Hollar**

After spending the intervening period on remand, Frank Hollar was eventually brought to trial for the murder of Daniel McDougall in 1 May 1933. Justice Clark presided, and the prosecutor was Henry Milne Radcliffe K. C., Assistant to the Jamaican Attorney General. The prosecution witnesses included Vivian Clarke, whose jacket had been picked up by McDougal and was said to be a friend of Hollar, two Jamaican women – Elsie Henderson, who owned the temperance bar, and Beatrice Bent, one of her employees – and the soldiers who had been present on the night of the killing, Fusiliers Gregan, Hutchinson, Parr and Scott.[[17]](#endnote-17) Hollar was defended by Norman Manley, K. C., an Oxford Rhodes Scholar and veteran of the First World War who would later lead the People’s National Party during the struggle for Jamaican independence and in the first decade of self-government. Manley was instructed by Frank Pixley, who had represented Hollar during the initial police investigation and examination by the resident magistrate. Pixley would late become a leading figure in the PNP’s rival nationalist organisation, the Jamaica Labour Party as minister for welfare in Bustamante’s first government, 1945-1949. He was tried and acquitted of manslaughter in 1946 following the death of a PNP member during an illegal rally.[[18]](#endnote-18)

A significant aspect of the case was the level of press coverage of both the pre-trial and trial hearings. While this provides much of interest to the historian, the dissemination of detailed statements ahead of the trial cannot have but prejudiced a fair hearing and affected the later testimony repeated under duress in the court room by both defence and prosecution witnesses. The close relationship between local media and colonial government was further highlighted by the verbatim reproduction of official telegrams from Governor Slater and the War Office.[[19]](#endnote-19) In turn, Slater’s dispatches to the Colonial Office were heavily illustrated with the court transcripts reproduced in the *Daily Gleaner*. Witness statements from the preliminary examination conducted by Bertram Burrowes, Resident Magistrate for Kingston published in the *Daily Gleaner* during January anticipated aspects of the trial upon which the defence would later focus on heavily in their attempt to secure a ‘not guilty’ verdict. For example, the soldiers were adamant they had not directed bad language towards the Jamaican seamen nor attacked them with belts, which as will be discussed became a pivotal aspect for the defence. no bad language was used and that there had not been a free for all fight involving belts. The soldiers were equally sure that Clarke not thrown stones or bricks. While they made frequent, disparaging references to both Hollar and Clarke as ‘natives’ or ‘native seamen’, marks of inferiority within colonial discourse, Hollar was eventually picked out as the culprit in an identity parade as having the ‘fairest complexion’.[[20]](#endnote-20)

The question of Hollar’s complexion, a significant issue in a post-emancipation colonial society preoccupied with gradations of skin colour, highlighted the constant inconsistencies in the prosecution case [develop more – pigmentocracy subverted]. Hollar, who had spent the night of the killing at 34 Hanover Street, sharing a bed with Clarke,[[21]](#endnote-21) told the court that he ‘was awakened at 1.30 or 2.00 by Clarke who said that two detectives were over me with flashlights and said they were looking for the man who killed the soldier, but I was too fair … I heard they said it was a dark man’.[[22]](#endnote-22) At the subsequent ID parade after Hollar was arrested, only one fusilier – Corporal Hutchinson – was asked to pick out the suspect. At the trial Hutchinson related how ‘The accused was [different] from the others who were all practically black men’.[[23]](#endnote-23) ‘I took a good look at Hollar and would recognize him any day. I wouldn’t swear for Clarke’.[[24]](#endnote-24) For the defence, Manley related how detectives ‘had placed eight black men, all shorter than Hollar, who was yellow or light brown, and then asked the soldier to pick out the man while Hutchinson may already have heard that Hollar was a tall brown man’.[[25]](#endnote-25) Manley argued that by the time Hollar went to make a voluntary statement, evidence taken by the police from the soldiers had already implicated him. Evidence that was later offered to the contrary, later deployed in court by Manley, was not followed up.[[26]](#endnote-26)

Vivian Clarke presented evidence about a confrontation earlier on the 1 January between Hollar and his girlfriend, Hilda MacKenzie, due to Hollar’s infidelity with another woman at his home in George’s Lane. The relevance of this issue to the murder charge was not entirely clear but could be taken by the jury as an indication that Hollar was predisposed to violence. From Clarke’s perspective, this earlier incident kept the focus on Hollar and distracted from suggestions of his own involvement in the death of McDougall. At the preliminary hearing in February, Frank Pixley, Hollar’s solicitor, argued it was inadmissible evidence but was overruled by the Clerk of the Court, A. D. Pixley, Clerk of the Court, who argued the disclosure might explain bruises that were found on Hollar during a medical examination. For her part, MacKenzie, who had rooms at the Hanover Street temperance bar, testified that she had attacked the other woman but not Hollar and that Clarke and another man, Norman Britton, had removed her Hollar’s rooms. In his testimony, Hollar claimed that any injuries found on his body had been received in the fight with the soldiers.[[27]](#endnote-27)

Manley’s defence focused on discrediting the prosecution witnesses, particularly the soldiers who had accompanied McDougall to the temperance bar. Central to the cross-examination was Manley’s persistent attempts to persuade the soldiers to admit they had used their belts to attack both Hollar and Clarke, offering up an image of colonial brutality with an established pattern in Jamaica. In his rather picaresque portrayal of early twentieth-century Jamaica, the travel writer, John Henderson depicted black Jamaicans being ‘mauled with heavy belts in the fashion of the British Infantry’,[[28]](#endnote-28) particularly when fights broke out between the white garrison and members of the West India Regiment. Manley cajoled Fusilier Parr to agree that the heavy white leather buckled belt worn with service dress made a good weapon and continued, ‘Isn’t it the truth that you, Scott, Hutchinson and others attacked Clarke with your buckles? … Isn’t it the truth that between you, Scott and others this man [Hollar] received no less than 7 blows with the buckles of your belts? … Is it not a fact that the only brick thrown by Hollar was thrown at you when you and the other men were attacking him with your belts and when you had already struck him severely several times?’[[29]](#endnote-29) Fusiliers Parr and Hutchinson was also questioned by Manley about the use of belt buckles by the soldiers. Parr was asked by Manley to produce the one worn on the fateful night which was subsequently passed around the court after Hollar’s medical report indicated abrasions about his hands and arms were consistent with being beaten with belts.[[30]](#endnote-30) Two ice-cream vendors, George Thompson and Joseph Roach supported Manley’s insistence that Hollar had been subject to a sustained attack involving all, if not most, of the soldiers present at 34 Hanover Street.[[31]](#endnote-31) The soldiers and other prosecution witnesses offered conflicting accounts of how many soldiers had descended the stairs of the temperance bar to the street at the time McDougall was struck down.

Manley repeated that Hollar had indeed thrown a brick but did so in self-defence as he was pursued by soldiers and that the brick had not struck McDougall. Manley proposed that it was Clarke who had struck the fatal blow at close quarters. Although Clarke denied this suggestion under cross-examination,[[32]](#endnote-32) the two ice-cream sellers and two other men testified that Vivian Clarke had asked them to check if the ‘coast was clear’[[33]](#endnote-33) once the soldiers had transported the injured McDougall back to Up Park Camp. Although Clarke was not subsequently tried, Manley cast sufficient doubt on his role as prosecution witness which, when coupled with the contradictory and incomplete evidence from the soldiers, threw the whole prosecution case into doubt. In his summing up, Justice Clark offered the three possible outcomes – guilty of murder, guilty of manslaughter or not guilty to which the jury quickly responded with a ‘not guilty’ verdict. On hearing this, Justice Clark stated to Hollar, ‘the jury has returned a verdict of “Not Guilty” I am not satisfied your innocence has been proved but I am quite satisfied that the verdict returned is the only fair one that any reasonable jury should have returned on the run of evidence given in this case’.[[34]](#endnote-34) The *Daily Gleaner* reported how the decision was greeted rapturously by the local port community who had followed the case closely,

Frank Hollar, a Jamaican seaman, left the dock … a free man. He and his counsel, Mr. N. W. Manley, K. C. were cheered loudly as they left the Court precincts and the combined efforts of numerous constables were for many minutes unavailing in quelling the demonstrations of the crowd in the streets nearby to the Court’.[[35]](#endnote-35)

**Race, class and the history of military disorder in Jamaica**

The excited scenes outside the Kingston courtroom as Hollar was freed mirrored some of the themes of the trial itself in which white and black combustibility of late colonial Jamaica were juxtaposed. Perhaps more disquieting, from the perspective of Jamaica’s ruling elite, was the close questioning of the integrity and behaviour of the soldiery upon which they relied in the last resort. In its initial coverage of the Northumberland Fusiliers ill-discipline, the *Daily Gleaner* had described ‘the wild excitement’[[36]](#endnote-36) which beset the city. However, once events were reported further afield – on radio in North America and via telegrammed newspaper reports in the metropole – the Jamaican press moved to reassure its readership that the colonial masculine and racial order remained intact. Under the strapline ‘Much Ado About Little’ and editorial light-heartedly and complacently stated,

It is amusing to learn that on Tuesday night the radios in America were broadcasting the fiction that serious riots had broken out in Jamaica among the soldiers of the garrison … We ourselves have no knowledge of these affairs, though we do know, and have published, that a fight between certain of the troops and a number of civilians took place on the night of the 2nd … We do not call this sort of thing serious; we have seen too many ebullitions on the part of young soldiers to be disturbed by another one … The incident was unhappy … but it is not a mutiny we have witnessed, it is not a riot really, it is more or less a demonstration of a character to which middle-aged men here were well-accustomed in the days of yore and which could only have one ending. Order was shortly restored, as it had always been, as it was bound to be … in no way impairing the popularity of the Army in Jamaica.[[37]](#endnote-37)

The Governor, Alexander Ransford Slater, telegrammed the Colonial Office in London in a similar vein, effectively normalising the violence visited on Jamaican civilians by the soldiery, whether from a white or black regiment; ‘the disorderly element of the of Kingston is accustomed to what have been known in past years as “Soldier Riots” … attacks by West India Regiment soldiers on solitary policemen or peaceable individuals, attacks which afforded entertainment to the said disorderly element’.[[38]](#endnote-38) To some extent the soldiery, particularly of the West India Regiment, were more popular with the civilian population as understood by Jamaica’s perhaps most famous policeman, poet Claude McKay, who mourned the loss of old friends ‘Becausen de red seam I wear’.[[39]](#endnote-39)

But equally, the friction between the Jamaica Constabulary and the West India Regiment was a headache for the colonial government; who to turn to ensure stability in the face of civil unrest? Most recently, it seemed, the largely black constabulary had proved better disciplined and more reliable than the white garrison, even if it is highly likely that the former relished the opportunity of unleashing their batons on the latter. The *Daily Gleaner* almost fondly remembered the ‘last of the West India Regiment fights’ when ‘when the Police at Allman Town fired on the soldiers who were storming the station’.[[40]](#endnote-40) The editorial also recalled unrest in the Jamaican War Contingent during and after the First World War.[[41]](#endnote-41) But while, the history of ‘soldier riots’ in Jamaica could generally be associated with the now-disbanded West India Regiment, it is clear that Jamaicans were accustomed to assaults from visiting white garrison troops. John Henderson interviewed an ‘old sweat’ at the Newcastle hill station in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains who boasted ‘sometimes we rags the blacks … Once we chucked three or four of ‘em over the gully because they set on one of ours. There’s one or two in cells now for molestin’ the natives’.[[42]](#endnote-42) While the voracity of Henderson’s portrait may be called into question, it is clear that visiting white soldiers presented a major threat to Jamaican civilians. For a number of months in 1909, the Royal Garrison Artillery stationed at Fort Nugent were reported to be daily indulging in ‘assault, riotous conduct and drunkenness … The people living in the immediate neighbourhood are about terror stricken and afraid to move out of their huts after dark’.[[43]](#endnote-43)

While the *Daily Gleaner* attempted to provide assuage fears of a breakdown in military discipline, it is clear from its own reports that significant acts of violence and criminality had occurred on the night of 2 January. As well as the attempted hijack of a tram, accompanied by assaults on passengers and crew, a taxi driver was assaulted, and his vehicle damaged when he refused to take a group of soldiers into Kingston. In South Camp Road, two other drivers were held up, their cars damaged or driven away by soldiers. Cyclists were also targeted as ‘Panic seized the inhabitants of the entire area’ with reports that children attending theatre performances were attacked and windows smashed including those of motor showrooms, shops and bars.[[44]](#endnote-44)

The colonial and military authorities, while expressing regret for the Fusiliers’ ‘reprehensible behaviour’[[45]](#endnote-45) simultaneously appeared to condone the behaviour of the Fusiliers by inferring ideals of military masculinity. Reference was made to the men being ‘mere lads of two years service’[[46]](#endnote-46) who were presumably still being moulded into a more fully-formed vision of military manhood through the ‘break ’em, make ’em’[[47]](#endnote-47) approach. The main local paper in the North-East of England, from which most of the battalion were recruited attempted to defend the reputation of the regiment by publishing the foreign service record of the ‘Fighting Fifth’ and a ‘Regiment Who’s Who’ alongside the centre-page headline story of the its involvement in the Jamaican disturbances. Singled out for the reader’s attention was the Fusiliers’ conduct in occupied Germany during riots in Coblenz when the First Battalion was praised for its tactfulness. Thus, officers of the Second Battalion based in York stated ‘it is indeed a shock to know that men of the 1st Battalion refused to obey the orders of their officers’.[[48]](#endnote-48) This kind of approach enabled the soldiers to be presented as victims simply seeking redress, whose ‘very reputation for good behaviour … may have led to the riff-raff jeering at them from time to time … the tragedy of January 1st provoked the men to show that though young they were not to be trifled with’[[49]](#endnote-49) thereby attempting to restore masculine reputation. The tone of news reports about the entertainment initiatives organised while the soldiers remained confined to barracks reinforced the sense that the soldiers were victims, rather than perpetrators of violence who needed to be contained.[[50]](#endnote-50)

The soldiers’ desire to prove their worth in the realm of competing, racialised masculinities was ironically highlighted in a letter Fusilier McDougal sent to his family in Jarrow at Christmas 1932. McDougall attempted to report the voice of black male Jamaica before asserting what he regarded as the masculine superiority of the white soldiers.

“White soldier, him two-faced, him mash up all the streets when him start to fight, one man for one man, him mash up all of us black men to the ground, then leave us to get caught by the policeman. Him too clever for Kingston people. Him know too much of fighting” … “When we get into a scrap, we all get together and let them have it. They are not good at fighting and boxing. They want to watch themselves in [the] April [elections], because we are eager to be among them, if necessary”.[[51]](#endnote-51)

An additional dimension to military unrest was the specific north-eastern working-class background of most Fusiliers. In his report to Governor Slater, Brigadier Langhorne, GOC Jamaica reported that ‘the men were in a quietly defiant mood, like men with a grievance and characteristic of miners’.[[52]](#endnote-52) The underlying resentments which underpinned class tensions within the military hierarchy were exacerbated by the economic conditions of the interwar years. Military service provided a degree of security which could not be found in many industrial communities subjected to the depredations of economic depression. Indeed, McDougall was reported to have worked for two years in a slate yard before becoming unemployed[[53]](#endnote-53) and enlisting in November 1930. His father, Alexander, retorted angrily when questioned by reporters ‘Had it not been for the dole … my son would never have had to join the Army … Regularly he sent his mother money which we need badly because I am also unemployed’[[54]](#endnote-54) underlining the economic experiences that many in 1930s Britain shared with colonial subjects. The sense of the white soldiers’ inferiority in the eyes of the white colonial elite was underlined in the comments of Henry Milne Radcliffe in his report following the unsuccessful prosecution of Frank Hollar ‘The soldier witnesses made a very poor showing. None of them were convincing witnesses. They told their stories in a very unsatisfactory manner and were easily assailed on cross-examination’.[[55]](#endnote-55)

**Respectable and disreputable black Jamaica**

Media and official reports provide evidence of the stratification of white Jamaica, the killing of Fusilier McDougall and its aftermath also give insight into how the majority black population was imagined. A preoccupation with gradations of skin shade is clearly linked to social status in Jamaica – lighter skin tending to determine higher social and economic rank.[[56]](#endnote-56) However, colonial officials and the Jamaican press also distinguished between ‘respectable’ Jamaicans, who appeared to follow at least some semblance of dominant imperial values, and the disreputable sections of society who apparently rejected any such notions. The former were seen as the natural allies of imperial governance and authority and thus, even in the immediate aftermath of the soldier disturbances, the Governor could reassure the Colonial Office that the current garrison was ‘a particularly quiet lot and deliberately disinclined to fraternise with the lower section of the town. They have been on the best of terms with the townspeople generally and this fact is borne out by the forbearance of the people during the disturbance’.[[57]](#endnote-57)

From a pragmatic perspective when military discipline broke down, the Jamaican authorities were dependent on the support of the largely black Jamaican constabulary, despite the routine official use of the term “native police” which implied their apparent inferiority and the general policy that the police were “ordered to avoid interference with British troops for obvious reasons”.[[58]](#endnote-58) Any deployment of the police against the military implicitly raised the possibility of racialised masculine confrontation, a scenario that the British military leadership had gone to great lengths to avoid during the First World War, particularly as far as African and West Indian troops were concerned. Brigadier Langhorne, the senior military officer in Jamaica reported that the white garrison had tended to feel that the “native police” were ‘against them’.[[59]](#endnote-59) While the behaviour of the white soldiery appeared to call the reputation of their regiment into question, Governor Ransford Slater acknowledged that ‘It is no small tribute both to the Police and the Officers of the Regiment that the disturbance was confined to such a comparatively short period … the position of the police is obviously very difficult. On this occasion at least, they appear to me to have acted with discretion and forbearance’.[[60]](#endnote-60) Most tellingly, the disturbances had disrupted racialised notions of rationality and self-control for ‘Police Officers tried to reason with them [the soldiers] but without success’.[[61]](#endnote-61) This subversion of colonial norms was not entirely without precedent. During a court case following racial attacks in Stratford, East London shortly after the First World War, a white man who led an attack on a black seamen’s lodging house was described as ‘behaving like a raving lunatic’ and the judge criticised ‘loafers in the docks’ who attacked black imperial subjects with a record of military service.[[62]](#endnote-62)

The image of respectable Jamaica, which appeared to conform to idealised norms of imperial subjecthood was framed in opposition to a disorderly underclass, who flouted and frustrated such conventions. At the funeral of Daniel McDougall, held in the evening of 2 January 1933, Brigadier Langhorne complained of ‘ignorant natives laughing as the cortege went by, and not taking their hats off’,[[63]](#endnote-63) behaviour which was said to have further inflamed the feelings among the Fusiliers. The purported presence of a black “residuum”[[64]](#endnote-64), also served to cast the white soldiery in a better light. As previously noted, Governor Slater attempted to pass off military violence as a measured response to jeering “riff-raff”.[[65]](#endnote-65) Langhorne justified the soldiers’ violence as a legitimate reaction to the ‘repeated use of objectionable language by a section of population of low class … They were jeered at as boy scouts’[[66]](#endnote-66), often with the collusion of the Jamaica Constabulary. Thus the, ‘Attack was definitely against certain section and not against population of Kingston as a whole’.[[67]](#endnote-67) The Governor reported to the Colonial Office that ‘gangs of hooligans from other disreputable suburbs of Kingston arrived after the disturbance had ceased, with the evident intention of joining it’ but ‘the hooligans did not realise … that on this occasion the soldiers were out to attack themselves’.[[68]](#endnote-68) The irony, of course, was that the soldiery had lost the very self-control that military masculinity was purported to instil, reducing them to the level of the “combustible”[[69]](#endnote-69) native population.

Despite, their ideological and practical barring from full public life, it was clear that the dispossessed of Kingston still aspired to civic participation. Indeed, in his Christmas letter home, Daniel McDougall reported that “The natives are getting very excited at the prospect of the elections in April”[[70]](#endnote-70) although this “excitability” may have been taken by the establishment as evidence that the electorate should remain at only around seven per cent of the adult population.[[71]](#endnote-71) When reporting this interest in public affairs, the Jamaican press resorted to euphemism, noting that during the trial of Frank Hollar that ‘Proceedings were again followed with interest, particularly by members of *a certain section* of the community’.[[72]](#endnote-72) At the same time the *Daily Gleaner* could also reassure its readers that although

It has also been said (by strangers) that there might have developed a serious situation if the civilian population of the working classes had risen in anger against the troops, if more of the criminal element had broken loose … we know that the Jamaica population as a whole – the decent people – have a real love for these soldier boys, we know that these soldier ebullitions cannot last, we know that the Police always keep an eye on the criminal element – the real source of fear – when street trouble is afoot.[[73]](#endnote-73)

Despite official attempts to create boundaries between categorised elements of Jamaican society and between black Jamaica and visiting white soldiers, it is clear that some interaction did occur. In previous studies of wartime Jamaica addressing questions of sexuality, Glenford Howe and Dalea Bean,[[74]](#endnote-74) have observed that ‘uncivilised’ predatory black Jamaican women were generally blamed for sexual indiscipline among the troops and particularly the spread of sexually transmittable diseases, regarded as a primary threat to military efficiency. Governor Slater reiterated that the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers had been particularly ‘disinclined to fraternise with the lower section of the town’.[[75]](#endnote-75) How the trial of Frank Hollar provided evident of at least some interaction. As Fusilier Thomas Henry Parr gave evidence of attending the temperance bar at 38 Hanover Street, Justice Clark rather pointedly asked, ‘What sort of place is this?’[[76]](#endnote-76) As has been discussed above, temperance bars were associated with the casual prostitution which in the official mind threatened the military efficiency of the white garrison. This was alluded to in the evidence of a barmaid, Beatrice Bent who reported that she ‘was living on the premises. Three other girls lived there. I slept in the room near to the Bar. There are five bedrooms downstairs. The proprietress was living upstairs’.[[77]](#endnote-77) Whatever, the true nature of the bar in Hanover Street, all the soldiers reported that they had danced for a short time with the women there and had listened to songs around a piano. Another witness, Elsie Henderson, reported that she had not seen the soldiers attacking Hollar with belts during the fracas at the bar. Henderson owned another temperance bar at 38 Harbour Street and was married to a former soldier of the West Yorkshire Regiment, the previous garrison battalion.[[78]](#endnote-78) Determined to pursue his defence of Hollar by underlining the predisposition of the white garrison to violence, Norman Manley argued, ‘She had married an ex-soldier … and her trade was and her life was wholly with soldiers … it was only natural to expect that she would shield the soldiers so far as their using their belts was concerned’.[[79]](#endnote-79)

**Disavowing race**

Despite the intricate layers of meaning evident in the portrayal of the white soldiers, respectable and disreputable Jamaicans, outright discussion of race is largely absent and often entirely denied; the exception being where race is deployed as a descriptive term, rather than to ascribe character or predisposition. Reporting the unrest among the white garrison, Governor Slater declared, ‘this brawl … does not appear to have been attended by any racial or colour prejudice’ and that ‘There does not appear to be any evidence whatever of previous bad blood or suppressed racial feeling’.[[80]](#endnote-80) This flew in the face of concrete evidence which accompanied his dispatches as, for example, in an entry from the Brigadier Langhorne’s log of the unrest: 7.15 p.m. The RSM … ‘passed a number of Troops marching in fours and singing “We’ve got the win[d] up the Wogs”[[81]](#endnote-81) Court evidence in defence of Frank Hollar implied that he had been racially abused by McDougall, including shouting to him “go away you … [sic]”.[[82]](#endnote-82) According to the Military Police, the “low class” civilian population in the docks was accused of regularly calling the soldiers ‘white bastards’.[[83]](#endnote-83)

**Post-war change and social democratic nationalism**

To some extent the killing of Daniel McDougall, the subsequent riot of the Northumberland Fusiliers and murder trial highlights some wider developments in interwar Jamaica which would subsequently move towards universal suffrage in 1944 and independence in 1962. The ill-discipline in the occupying garrison and the ridicule it was subject to by many Jamaicans pointed to economic decline in both metropole and colony and increasing self-confidence of the colonised. The trial provided a platform for two figures, Norman Manley and Frank Pixley who would become prime movers for independence, albeit in opposing parties, to promote their own vision of social democracy with a populist approach. Manley used the courtroom to openly and symbolically criticise the key colonial institutions of police, military and legal system. Opening for the defence Manley declared, ‘I have never in my life defended a case in which there are so many hopeless, irreconcilable versions of what took place … there are no less than four separate and entirely distinct accounts of what took that night … No witness has told you the whole truth’.[[84]](#endnote-84) Furthermore, the soldiers’ court testimony did not tally with statements given to the police who had also failed to follow up important leads which may have produced different charges. Manley was thus able to set up an alternative dichotomy between lowly, but honest, black and brown Jamaica and an oppressive, disorderly white soldiery and their allies in the Kingston docks. His vision stood in contrast to the white colonial class who tended to see the white soldiery as the longsuffering, hapless victims of a purported Jamaican underclass: ‘The defence were supported by honest evidence: the evidence of men who although humble in life had told the truth. Their evidence had been subjected to a test which might have wrecked their evidence and the whole case for the defence. Yet it remained unshaken’.[[85]](#endnote-85) Governor Slater was satisfied ‘no other verdict’ could be reached following a ‘careful trial’[[86]](#endnote-86) and the prosecutor, Henry Radcliffe believed the verdict was correct due to reasonable doubts,[[87]](#endnote-87) perhaps marking a shift towards a more liberal position by the colonial elite itself. Further afield, the behaviour of the Fusiliers brought condemnation from the anti-colonial movements emerging in Britain itself.[[88]](#endnote-88)

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