JOURNAL OF WAR & CULTURE STUDIES, Vol. 10 No. 3, August, 2017, 238–252

Check for updates

Dehumanization and the War in East Africa

Michèle Barrett
Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

This paper considers the dehumanization of the African during and after the First World War, focussing on East Africa. During the campaign dehumanization was evident in attitudes towards African soldiers but was most starkly seen in the treatment of the carriers. These attitudes informed the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission, which largely excluded Africans from individual commemoration in British cemeteries and memorials. The German authorities were more inclusive in their commemoration of African casualties, at both Moshi and Tanga (Tanzania). The paper puts these attitudes in historical context, looking at dehumanizing approaches to Africans in a range of sources from the pre-war and wartime period.

KEYWORDS East African campaign, African soldiers, porters, carriers, Imperial War Graves Commission, British/German differences, dehumanization

Introduction

Monuments to the African dead of the campaign in East Africa exist in Nairobi and Mombasa in Kenya, and in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. They take the form of impressive bronze statues, placed in prominent positions in the town centres. The composition of the groups varies, ranging from one soldier of the King's African Rifles in a militaristic pose in Dar es Salaam, to the reflective group of four men in Mombasa, which includes a porter. These statues were commissioned from distinguished sculptors, were based on the meticulous representation of correct uniforms and equipment, and in at least one case were exhibited as artworks at the Royal Academy before leaving London (Barrett, 2011: 303–4). These statues were sufficiently powerful that one mother in Mombasa was seen beating her breast, complaining tearfully that her dead son had returned in an inanimate form: 'an iron man who could neither talk to her nor see her'. According to the correspondent from Mombasa, this was a sad commentary on the 'deep superstition and suspicion' in which the African was still steeped, 'despite his [presumably her's in this case]

© 2017 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group DOI 10.1080/17526272.2017.1315702

many years of contact with Western civilisation' (*Tanganyika Times* Commonwealth War Graves Commission Archives, WG 219/12) (Figure 1).

These statues were raised up on high plinths, the better to display the same carefully-composed inscription, in a number of alphabets and languages, by Rudyard Kipling:

> This is to the memory of the Arab and Native African troops who fought: to the carriers who were the feet and hands of the army: and to all other men who served and died for their King and country in Eastern Africa in the Great War, 1914—1918. If you fight for your country, even if you die, your sons will remember your name.

Kipling knew that neither the colonial authorities nor the Imperial War Graves Commission would be remembering the names of these men: it was left to their sons to do that. His description of the carriers as 'the feet and hands' of the army is evocative. They were 'the feet' of the army, deployed in the absence of good road and rail transport, and because of the slaughtering effect of the tsetse fly on pack animals such as horses and mules (see Note). The supplies were carried as head loads, often 60 or 70 pounds per man, making Kipling's reference to 'the hands' of the army more eloquent than accurate. The human bodies of the carriers, in this inscription, have been fragmented into subservient limbs.

Paradoxically, these statues present the African soldiers and carriers of the war in superhuman terms, transcending the dehumanization of their practical history as well as Kipling's literary fragmentation of their wartime bodies. The Imperial War Graves Commission, in the person of its Permanent Assistant Secretary in

FIGURE 1 Mombasa memorial, with detail.

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

London, Lord Arthur Browne, had originally set out a different position: 'I think that one memorial in each of the countries, with 2 in Kenya, is very reasonable and that it should take the form either of a Lutyens Cenotaph or of a special form of Great War Stone'. Later Browne rather reluctantly took on board the less abstract perspective found outside London:

> The local Governments in at least 2 cases are strongly in favour of a statue of an Askari [African soldier] &/or follower being erected either supplementary to, or in place of, a cenotaph. I suppose their wishes should be considered; their strong argument is that the statue would be understood by the natives but a Cenotaph would not. (WG 219/12 Pt 1)

The commemorative statues of the East Africa campaign, handsomely done and moving as they are, were an economical choice compared with individual commemoration of the estimated 50 000 Africans who had died. From an early stage the WGC had decided an important point of policy, that memorials *outside Europe* were not required to name individuals. In Europe, where many visitors were to be expected, every individual, of whatever rank, class, nation, race or religion, would be commemorated individually by name. Outside Europe, that wasn't thought necessary (Barrett, 2007: 464).

This is easily seen on the ground by comparing the memorial at Neuve Chapelle, to the five thousand 'missing' of the Indian Army on the Western Front, with its equivalent in Mesopotamia: the Basra memorial covers thirty three thousand Indian troops and followers but mentions by name only the British and Indian officers. The rank and file Indian sepoys appear there as numbers, with their names listed only in a printed register. (Barrett, 2007: 463–5) In many cases outside Europe non-white men (including Indians) were defined as 'missing', despite the fact that named graves were in existence. In East Africa there was a hierarchy and records from meetings of the Commission show stark differences of treatment. In June 1923 we hear that 'Director of Records was prepared to agree that Native Graves should not be individually marked, but the course should not apply to Indians'. The original report on commemoration in East Africa, endorsed by Lord Arthur Browne, suggested that individual commemoration of Africans, particularly those who were not combatants, would be 'a waste of public money' (Barrett, 2014: 82).

'…very small children of the human race'

Underlying the enigmatic political legacies of these statues (and the one in Lagos has now been dismantled) lies a long history of the dehumanization of the African. He, for this is also a gendered history, has been seen as not quite human in two ways: the African is closer to nature, and the animal kingdom, than are Europeans, and the African is a child not an adult human. The two discourses complement each other to deny full any humanity.

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

In the colonial context, the British had frequently seen Africans as analogous to non-human animals. Sir Hector Duff was the Governor of Nyasaland (now Malawi) and in his privately printed memoirs of the war he spoke in an Africa-friendly voice when he summed up the effect of the war. 'I knew wild Africa very well; I like its people sincerely; I hate to see them suffer almost as I hate to see dumb animals suffer'. But for Duff that suffering was short-lived, since 'Wild Africa has wonderful recuperative energy. Its life is simple and therefore easily reconstructed. The black man soon forgets his dead nor is he long in licking his own wounds' (Duff, n.d.). In the war, the African carriers were treated the worst, and were frequently likened to animals. Many — though not all — British servicemen, and colonial officials, had a higher opinion of Indian soldiers than they did of the African troops.

Personal papers from British men who served during the campaign in East Africa reveal that established colonial differentiations between Europeans and African natives came naturally to them. 'At Mingoya the natives were being buried in common pits. The notes of a bugle sounding the Last Post punctuated beating hearts, as some of our own fellows were put to their final rest'. So wrote driver W Campbell, author of *East Africa by Motor Lorry* (1928: 125). The comparison he then made is not between 'our own fellows' and the natives, but between the natives and the pack animals: 'The burial of natives in due course was not an inconvenience, but the more bulky carcasses of cattle and horses were a different proposition'. Campbell was sympathetic to the 'poor natives', when he saw them 'lying by the roadside as if asleep, but, as a fact, dead …'. He was more eloquent, though, about the pack animals: 'A lonely horse would sometimes be seen standing alone in the shade of the forest, bitten by the dreaded tsetse fly … head drooping to the ground, tongue out, rocking at the knees, wasted of body, hollow-eyed, and fatally sick – waiting for the inevitable end' (1928: 64).

Many soldiers were sentimental about animals, anthropomorphizing them at the same time as denying human status to Africans. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is the mascot of the 3rd South African Infantry, a baboon by the name of Jackie who travelled with his owner, Alfred Marr of Pretoria, to the Western Front and lost a leg in action. Jackie was fully humanized, dressed in uniform, pictured eating with cutlery, saluting officers, and was given a wound stripe and an identification disc with H for Heathen as his religion; his demobilization papers are signed 'Jackie' (Figure 2).

The simple dehumanization that was central to the colonial culture of East Africa, in both its civilian and military forms, was articulated in the literary memoir, Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*, set in Kenya just before the war. In Blixen's Africa, the animals and the landscape are humanized while the natives are likened to animals: when she leaves Kamante at the mission hospital she says 'I saw him standing stock still, with his head up in the air and staring after me, in the exact manner of a foal when you ride away from it' (Blixen, 2011: 35). She learns how to relate to the natives, from animals: 'what I learned from the game of the country was useful to me

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

FIGURE 2 Jackie, photograph using cutlery and identification disc (courtesy Peter Digby).

in my dealings with the native people' (24). The natives can render themselves inhuman: 'It is a Native faculty … to transform yourself, in a single movement, into lifeless matter' (137). The natives are more part of nature than Blixen, as a white person, is: 'the umbilical cord of nature has, with them, not been quite cut through' (145).

The distinguished Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, has singled out Blixen's text as one articulating a pre-war colonial settler culture of brutality, silence and fear. For Blixen 'the African is an animal' and Ngugi adds, 'in reality they loved the wild game, but Africans were worse, more threatening, instinctless, unlovable, unredeemable sub-animals merely useful for brute labour' (Ngugi, 1981: 36–37). Another of Ngugi's targets is Richard Meinertzhagen, whose *Army Diary* contains much that purports to describe the East African campaign in outspoken personal detail: he refers to Indian soldiers as 'chicken-hearted Hindus … gibbering with fear', for instance (Meinertzhagen, 1960: 89). Ngugi focuses on the moment in 1905 when Meinertzhagen arranged an unarmed parley with the Nandi leader Koitalel, apparently having him shot dead as they shook hands. 'Put innocence against brutality and innocence will lose' (Ngugi, 1981: 34).

Ngugi's analysis of the violence of settler culture and the dehumanization of Africans find another inflection in Meera Sabaratnam's interpretation of the history of Portugese East Africa (now Mozambique) in the war. Sabaratnam starts from the British Cemetery in Lumbo, Mozambique, where — as we can expect — there are 69 fully commemorated graves, some names of some non-white soldiers on plaques and, as she notes, 'The dead African porters and civilians are not remembered' (Sabaratnam, 2014: 1). Here she quotes a Portugese sergeant's words:

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

'They are not men, because they have no name. They are not soldiers, because they have no number'. (2014: 3). In this analysis, the treatment of the carriers in the military is predicated upon 'deep continuities between military and other forms of colonised conscription in colonised Mozambique, which themselves have their own continuities with practices of enslavement and extortion' (2014: 7).

Alongside the long colonial tradition of regarding Africans as sub-human, there ranged an equally engrained assumption about a different kind of evolution — that Africans were simply children. Mahmoud Mamdani classically set out the argument, adverting to Hegel's view of Africa as 'the land of childhood', to Schweitzer's opinion that 'the negro is a child', to Smuts's inisistence that the African is 'a child type'. Mamdani points out that settlers in British colonies called every African male a 'boy' and that French colonists used the 'child familiar *tu* when addressing Africans of any age' (Mamdani, 1996: 4). When war broke out these attitudes surface in the personal papers of men sent to East Africa. A E Kemp, a sapper in the Royal Engineers, noted in his diary, when he arrived in June 1917 at the camp at Dar es Salaam, that the men he met from the King's African Rifles were 'like great overgrown children, their large brown eyes following everything eagerly' (IWM A E Kemp 91/3/1).

One instance serves to tie the African-as-child model to the powers exercised in the name of Christianity during the war. Frank Weston, the Bishop of Zanzibar, transferred his pastoral responsibilities towards his peace-time flock into a military situation, accepting the rank of Major and the command of a line of carriers that numbered over 2000 men. The biography of this saintly bishop emphasizes his care of the men under his command, and includes a translated letter from one of the men which includes the lines: '"Bwana, we go not without you, for are you not our father?" And he said unto us, "Good, I will go with you"' (Maynard Smith, 1926: 192–3). The 'African informant' of this text concluded that the 'Lord Bishop' was obeyed without question by the men because he 'treated them as a father does his children' (Maynard Smith, 1926: 198). After the war, Bishop Weston published his account of the war service of the Africans, the terrible losses they had sustained, and his opinions about independence. His remarks may have been clothed in Christian compassion, but they showed little human respect: Africans, he said, were 'very small children of the human race' and a very long way off self-government (Maynard Smith, 1926: 205).

When the Mombasa memorial was unveiled, a feature in the *Mombasa Times* summarized the address given by the Acting Governor; after running through the military merits of the King's African Rifles and the Arab Rifles, figured on the monument, there was a change of affect when he said: 'Now we come to the Carriers. We have all a very kindly feeling for the "*Wapagazi*" [carrier] – he has well earned his place on the pedestal. Many in Mombasa will remember the opening days of the War ...' (*Mombasa Times* 26/5/1927). He went on to talk about the cheerful volunteering of porters, their death rate of 14.6%, and to tell the oft-repeated story of the

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

brave Kavirondo porter who, having had one hand shot off, steadied his head load with the other until he reached the firing line for the ammunition he was carrying.

Both versions of dehumanization — the humans who are really nothing still but animals in nature, and the children who are taking a long time to grow up — played a part in the work of the War Graves Commission in East Africa. In 1922 the expression 'revert to nature' became current when discussing what to do with the remains of native Africans killed during the war. The Governor of Tanganyika Territory saw this as the most appropriate way to deal with cemeteries of the carrier corps; the expression 'revert to nature' became a popular one, to be found many times in the paperwork of the War Graves Commission (Barrett, 2011: 303–8). Lord Arthur Browne of the War Graves Commission, in conversation with the Governor of the Gold Coast in 1923, explained that it had been decided in East Africa that the natives had not reached the 'stage of civilization' where they would appreciate individual commemoration. He wondered whether 'in two or three hundred years time, when the native population had reached a higher stage of civilization, they might then be glad to see that headstones had been erected on the native graves and that the native soldiers had received precisely the same treatment as their white comrades' (Barrett, 2014: 84). But Browne's evolutionist speculation was unpersuasive to the Governor.

Den Kamaraden

No such qualms affected British treatment of their valiant German enemies, as can be seen still in the cemetery at Iringa, Tanzania. At Iringa, then in German East Africa, the words *Den Kamaraden* (comrades) are written large in black letters across an impressive white structure heading a group of well cared for German graves, placed in a prominent position at one end of the cemetery (Figure 3).

As the website of the present-day Commonwealth War Graves Commission explains, these are 16 German war burials of the First World War, now maintained by the Commission. The graves include those of Ernst Steir, Karl Rottenkolber, Adolf Kunst, Friedrich von Schrick, Otto Mörchen, and 'Ein Deutsche Soldat', and are maintained in impeccable condition. This is not in itself unusual, and many people will have seen the headstones in British cemeteries on the Western Front on which German soldiers, with their name and rank, have been commemorated. It is more marked, however, in Tanzania, which was a German colony with a different cultural history from that of a British colony such as Kenya.

At Morogoro Cemetery, to which many burials in the region were 'concentrated', or moved, after the war, there is an imposing monument bearing the proud inscription: '1914 1918. Unseren Helden die für Deutschlands Größe starben' (Our heroes who died for Greater Germany). It was put up by 'Die Deutschen von Morogoro'. The German community in Morogoro was allowed to commemorate their dead within the British cemetery; as white casualties they were accorded the respect extended to all European casualties of the war in East Africa, a respect not often

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

FIGURE 3 'Den Kamaraden' Iringa, Tanzania.

extended to the African soldiers and the Carriers. The historians Killingray and Mathews have quoted Dr Bailey's report of 1916: 'There must be something wrong with a system which entails greater hardships on the friendly carrier than on the enemy' (1979: 17). The same cemetery has a chequered history when it comes to the African dead who had fought with, and laboured for, the British. One officer at the Imperial War Graves Commission had suggested from London that the people collecting up in East Africa should specifically look out for the bodies of Africans who were definitely Christians, and take them to this permanent cemetery (Barrett, 2011: 308).

From the archives of the War Graves Commission (which changed its name from Imperial to Commonwealth in 1960) we know that that the British, while quite content to share cemetery space with their opponents in the war, deliberately opted for segregated memorial spaces in terms of race and religion. As I have shown in the case of Lagos, the IWGC and Kipling went to some lengths to ensure that there were two separate memorials in Lagos, a public, collective statue for the natives and a tablet in a church with the names of European personnel engraved on it (Barrett, 2014: 86–87). Religion was an important factor, as in East Africa only converted Christian Africans might be deemed worthy of inclusion, as happened in Voi, Kenya (Barrett, 2014: 83–84). Visiting Voi cemetery in 2014, the graves of 34 Christian Africans, mainly South African native labourers, were in place in that permanent cemetery. I was also shown the place where, according to my local source, 79 non-Christians had been buried — just outside the walls of

the IWGC cemetery. This informal burial site — literally an ‘alternate space’ of the war — now contains merely fragments of burial markers, having been extensively damaged in a flood from El Nino in 1997 (Figure 4).

Several ironies arise from a policy that Christianized Africans were more ‘worthy of commemoration’ than their pagan brothers (Barrett, 2014: 83). A history of Australian missionary activities in rural Tanzania throws light on the recruitment or impressment of local Africans: it records that the army needed porters and that ‘they preferred mission people to pagans’; they would ‘come to a village on Sunday in order to catch the Christians easily’ (Knox, 1991: 206) They particularly demanded the men who were wearing Christian dress (205). Knox describes the fate awaiting these men: ‘Portering was more strenuous than soldiering, carrying heavy loads through pathless forests, barefooted and in rags. No wonder so many died’. (205) Apparently the fear of being caught for service in the war ‘made many people revert to native dress, and burn their books’; in doing this they thought they had denied Christ ‘so firmly had their faith … been tied to fashions in dress’ (Knox: 206).

The preference of the War Graves Commission, which was articulated as policy with regard to West Africa, later in the 1920s, was not to maintain African graves. Commemoration of the carriers was seen as a waste of public money, and even African soldiers were frequently defined as ‘missing’, in the Commission as run by Lord Arthur Browne (Barrett, 2011: 303–8). What was the German attitude towards their African *kameraden*? It is surprising, perhaps, to find a German

FIGURE 4 The African burial ground outside the walls of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in Voi, Kenya, 2014.

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

memorial copse within Moshi (British) cemetery which consists of a tranquil group of trees, a posed arrangement of terracotta urns and a stone structure which offers the following inscription in German, in Swahili and in English: 'In Memory of the 57 German soldiers and Askari who gave their lives in action or who died in the Moshi military hospital during World War 1 and who are laid to eternal rest in this cemetery' (Figure 5).

At Tanga, there are German memorial tablets that refer not just to 'brave askari' but to 'brave askari and porters', and some of the Africans in service with the German force are commemorated by name there. On the British side, by contrast, a tablet at the site of the Abercorn surrender refers to 1467 carriers, which suggests there was once a list of their names (Figure 6).

The failed landings at Tanga in late 1914 were a disaster for the British, and one that reflected the unwillingness of the British commanders to pay any heed to the knowledge of their local African soldiers. The shambles features comically in the unsparingly brutal pages of William Boyd's novel *An Ice-Cream War* (1982). The ignorance and incompetence of the British naval officers was widely mocked, and the humiliating episode was banned from public discussion in Britain. The German commander, by contrast, had a higher opinion of his black soldiers than apparently the British did, referring to them casually, in his reminiscences of the war as 'our brave blacks' and 'our brave black soldiers' (Lettow-Vorbeck, 1920: 45, 326). Lettow-Vorbeck had been part of Germany's earlier, genocidal, war in South-West Africa, described by Olusoga and Erichsen (2010). He claimed to

FIGURE 5 German commemoration of askari (soldiers) in Moshi, Tanzania.

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

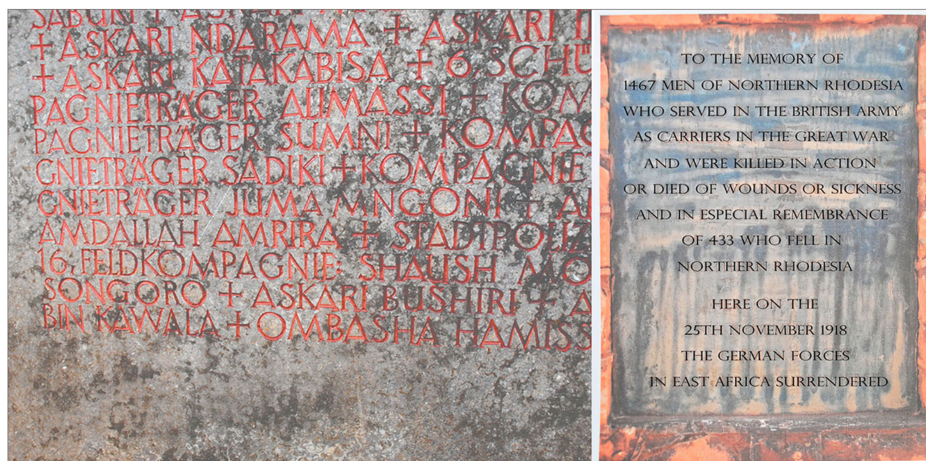

FIGURE 6 German commemoration of askari and porters (Feldkompagnieträgers Alimassi, Sumni, Sadiki, Juma Mangoni) in Tanga, Tanzania; and a rare British memorial to porters, numbered but not named, in Mbala, Zambia, previously Abercorn (courtesy Russell Hay, photoshopped).

have learnt an interesting lesson from it: 'from what I had seen during the revolt in South-West Africa, from 1904 to 1906, I believed that courage and military efficiency could be awakened in the East African native also, who belongs to that same great family the Bantu, as the Herero' (Lettow-Vorbeck, 1920: 22).

Lord Arthur Browne

A more typical attitude, among the British, was that of Lord Arthur Browne of the War Graves Commission. The name usually associated with the Commission is that of Sir Fabian Ware, its founder and for many years Vice-Chairman. He it was who pressed for equality of treatment across the divisions of social class and military rank. However, as I have suggested elsewhere, equality of treatment across the divisions of race and religion was never a founding aim of the Commission and nor was it likely to have been at that period. It has retrospectively been attached to the work of the Commission (Barrett, 2014: 88–89). Sir Fabian Ware laid down the blueprint about equality of treatment on the Western Front, and by the early 1920s the principles of equality that were to determine the pattern of cemeteries and memorials in France and Belgium had been firmly established. But throughout the 1920s, the crucial period for the world-wide work, the Commission was in practice run by a completely different man, who frequently disagreed with Fabian Ware: Lord Arthur Browne. He was in charge of operational decisions, often sanctioning forms of discrimination that were at odds with the official egalitarian rhetoric. Browne clearly had a free hand, as Fabian Ware was a very remote manager. In March 1925 Browne recorded in his personal diary that his colleague, a Mr

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

Ellison, was 'complaining bitterly' about Ware's 'repeated & lengthy absences' from the office.

Fabian Ware himself, although keen in principle to treat everyone equally, backed away from extending the principle of equality to 'Natives'. He declared that 'The political questions (e.g. monuments to Natives) we could not of course decide without reference to the Colonial or Foreign Offices who in their turn would refer to their local representatives' (WG 122). Many of these consultations with ministries in London and Governors in the colonies, were taken forward by the Principal Assistant Secretary, Arthur Browne. Browne was himself under pressure from other officers within the organization: among many memos about the 'Missing' of East Africa, the Director of Records, a Major Chettle, added in pencil at the bottom of one to Browne the following request: 'Will you very kindly take up with the Colonial Office, asking (among other things) what was the character of the personnel of each unit … so far as it was civilized or semi-civilised …?' (WG 219/12). When Browne wrote to Sir Charles Strachey in June 1927, he wanted to know 'the character of the personnel of each unit, i.e. whether it was composed of natives with white officers etc. and what the nationality of the natives was, e.g. East Africans, South Africans, white men, or half-castes, such as Cape boys etc' (WG 219/12).

Lord Arthur Browne was appointed in 1919 and held his post for the decade in which the important decisions about Africa were taken. Subsequently, he inherited an Anglo-Irish title as Marquess of Sligo and lived the last years of his life at Westport House in County Mayo. The personal papers of all these Marquesses are preserved in the Westport Estate Papers in the National Library of Ireland in Dublin. Arthur Browne's papers include a fascinating private diary covering many of his years at the War Graves Commission. His entries are candid, and paint a very different picture from the official accounts we have of the Commission. One entry throws a sharp light on Browne's relationship with Fabian Ware: 'A Management Committee this morning. Ware was very argumentative today and kept resurrecting old bones, such as method of commemorating Indians – Lt Moore the American who died of DT while a pupil in the RFC & was moved to Brookwood – The African Natives etc.' (Westport Estate Papers, MS 41,103/28–29). Lt Moore is indeed buried at Brookwood (American) Cemetery in Surrey, and sandwiching these references to Indians and Africans around him conveys the point that Ware was making: he was pointing to the far better treatment accorded to an alcoholic (white) American than was being given to Indian and African troops. But Browne was confident that Ware was just being 'argumentative', and all the evidence suggests that Ware did not object in any cogent way to the decisions that Browne was effecting. On one occasion Browne actually wrote to Ware himself, saying 'I am not including the names of the Carriers, as I do not know how far they are sufficiently civilized to justify the inclusion of their names' (WG 243/4).

That was the Imperial War Graves Commission in the 1920s. Lord Arthur was particularly concerned with the appearance of things. On many occasions his goal

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

was to ensure that things didn't look too unequal, even if they were. One elaborate 'ruling' that he made concerned Africans who were actually buried in a cemetery but were going to be defined as 'missing', in line with the policy of not commemorating Africans individually by name. Their names, he said, should not go into the printed cemetery register (as often happened to Indian soldiers) but should go into registers for the memorials; since in Africa these memorials generally had no names attached, the device of 'sending them missing' resulted in no commemoration at all. In Lord Arthur's ruling, the reason to do that was because if those names were put in the cemetery register 'we should be unnecessarily drawing attention to the fact that we have neglected to commemorate with a headstone' (WG 290). The emphasis is on impression management, and it is one that has stayed with the Commission. Although, as I have shown here and elsewhere, the Commission made highly discriminatory decisions on the basis of race and religion, or as they call them 'colour' and 'creed', they have made many attempts to draw a veil over this history. Instead of candidly acknowledging what they did in the 1920s, they prefer to silently 'correct the anomalies' to bring them in line with the more egalitarian policies they now have. There are many instances of this with the Indian casualties of the First World War (Barrett, 2011). The centenary of the beginning of the war in 2014 sent the Commission into a spin of refurbishment in Africa. Many of the memorials in Kenya and Tanzania appear to have been redone in preparation for the centenary: visiting the Indian Cemetery at Tanga (Tanzania) in June 2014, the recarving of the names was so recent that the stonemason's pencil marks were still visible on the monument.

As part of these preparations, the Commission refurbished the names on the memorial at Hollybrook, near Southampton, that commemorates those who were lost at sea. These names include Lord Kitchener, and the Africans who were drowned when the SS Mendi sank in early 1917. Around 650 members of the South African Native Labour Corps were drowned when the Mendi was rammed in fog in the English Channel and sank within 25 minutes. In 2006 the Commission produced a DVD, which was distributed to schools in the UK: 'Let Us Die Like Brothers'. It tells the story of the recruits from South Africa, and how badly they were treated by the authorities, but how their names are remembered by the British War Graves Commission on the memorial at Hollybrook. It's a piece of educational propaganda, presenting the War Graves Commission of the past as more enlightened and less racist than the colonial authorities. Of course, what it doesn't mention is that the Mendi, going down off the Isle of Wight, had sunk in patently European waters. Had she sunk earlier in her voyage from Cape Town, it seems unlikely that those names would be on the Hollybrook, or any other, British memorial.

Note

Any discussion of the Carriers in East Africa is indebted to the work of scholars such as Geoffrey Hodges, whose 1986 book *The Carrier Corps* provided us with

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

extensive information. The book's appendices included statistics on recruitment, unpaid wages, rations and causes of death. Recent criticism of this important historical work, as a narrow product of the decolonizing period, is in my view misplaced, being largely based on an abridged version of the Hodges book published later under the title *Kariakor* (1999). An article by Killingray and Mathews, 'Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War', provides a second repository of detailed information about the appalling treatment to which the Carriers were subjected. Bryan Farwell's *The Great War in Africa* (1987) draws attention to a 34 to 1 ratio of sickness deaths to battle casualties in the war in Africa. Huw Strachan's section on 'the dark continent' contains an interesting discussion of the high quality of German medical care in East Africa (Strachan, 2001: 594). Biographies of British men in command of Carriers have appeared, such as *Oscar from Africa*, written by the daughter of Oscar Watkins: its own preface by Elspeth Huxley tells us it is 'firmly but convincingly biased in her father's favour' (Watkins, 1995: xix).

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017

Thanks

I would like to thank Russell Hay, who came with me on a trip to the battlefields and cemeteries of Kenya and Tanzania in the early summer of 2014. His knowledge of Africa, driving skill and good company made it an extremely enjoyable trip. James Willson, author of *Guerillas of Tsavo* (2012), and Eileen Willson provided us with friendship and fascinating information about the war in southern Kenya. I would also like to thank Sean and Barbara Morrow in Pretoria for their hospitality; Peter Digby (for the *Jackie* pictures) and Nicholas Wolpe in Johannesburg; and Bill Nasson and AnnMarie Wolpe in Cape Town. Nadia Atia came with me to visit Lt Moore's grave at Brookwood; for that and many other collegial trips and conversations, my thanks. Others I would like to thank are Duncan Barrett, Gilly Furse, Cora Kaplan, Cathy Lee and Ann Whitehead. Thanks to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for images of the Mombasa memorial; all other photos, unless credited elsewhere, are the author's.

References

Barrett, M. 2007. Subalterns at War: First World War Colonial Forces and the Politics of the Imperial War Graves Commission. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 9(3): 451–4.

Barrett, M. 2011. Death and the Afterlife: Britain's Colonies and Dominions. In: Das, ed. *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 301–320.

Barrett, M. 2014. "White Graves" and Natives: The Imperial War Graves Commission in East and West Africa, 1918 – 1939. In: Cornish and Saunders, eds. *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality and Transformation*. London: Routledge, pp. 80–90.

Blixen, K. 2011. *Out of Africa* (first published 1937). London: Penguin.

Boyd, W. 1982. *An Ice-Cream War*. London: Viking.

Campbell, W.W. 1928. *East Africa by Motor Lorry*. London: John Murray.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Archives, Maidenhead UK. (First World War files are prefixed WG).
Duff, H. (n.d.) *Nyasaland in the World War 1914–1918*. Privately printed. London: Imperial War Museum.
Farwell, B. 1987. *The Great War in Africa 1914–1918*. London: Viking.
Hodges, G. 1986. *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914–1918*. New York: Greenwood Press.
Hodges, E. 1999. *Kariakor.* Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.
Killingray, D. & Matthews, J. 1979. Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War. *Canadian Journal Of African Studies*, 13(1–2): 5–24.
Knox, E. 1991. *Signal on the Mountain: The Gospel in Africa's Uplands Before the First World War.* Brunswick East: Acorn Press.
Lettow-Vorbeck, P. 1920. *My Reminiscences of East Africa*. London: Hurst and Blackett.
Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
Maynard Smith, H. 1926. *Frank, Bishop of Zanzibar: Life of Frank Weston, D.D. 1871–1924*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
Meinertzhagen, R. 1960. *Army Diary 1899–1926*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd.
Ngugi, W.A.T. 1981. *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary.* London: Heinemann.
Olusoga, D. & Erichsen, C.W. 2010. *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide*. London: Faber.
Sabaratnam, M. 2014. Mozambique and the Invisible Bodies: A Contrapuntal Reading of the Great War (1914-1918). Blog posted 5/11/2014, The Disorder of Things, the global-colonial.
Strachan, H. 2001. *The First World War Volume 1: To Arms*. London: Oxford University Press.
Watkins, E. 1995. *Oscar from Africa: The Biography of Oscar Ferris Watkins, 1877–1943*. London: Radcliffe Press.
Westport Estate Papers. National Library of Ireland, Collection List 78, Browne Family.
Willson, J. 2012. *Guerillas of Tsavo: An Illustrated Diary of a forgotten Campaign in British East Africa 1914–1916*. Diani, Kenya: James Willson.

Notes on contributor

Michèle Barrett is a professor of Modern Literary and Cultural Theory in the English Department at Queen Mary University of London, UK. See michelebarrett.com

Correspondence to: Michèle Barrett, Queen Mary University of London, UK. Email: m.barrett@qmul.ac.uk

Downloaded by [JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY] at 01:25 26 August 2017