

# World War I Monuments of Jamaica

One hundred years ago the world witnessed the end of one of the bloodiest military conflicts witnessed by humankind known as The Great War or World War I (1914-1918). Over a thousand Jamaican men participated in this war on the side of the victorious British Empire and her allies including France, the United States, Belgium and Italy among others. Despite being on the side of the victors just over a thousand died while many others sustained physical and other forms of injury. The remains of those who perished were never returned home and where they could be found were buried in places far away from Jamaica such as Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

In 1914 when the war began, Jamaica was a British colony and its people were most loyal to Britain and as such many men happily volunteered to fight for the *Mother Country*. They also believed that the war was a fight for freedom and other noble ideals. This enthusiasm was not encouraged by the authorities in Britain who foresaw the potential danger of colonials receiving military training and fighting (and killing) fellow Europeans. It took the personal intervention of the King George V of Britain to change this state of affairs thus allowing colonials such as Jamaicans to participate in the war.

Jamaicans from all walks of life and from every colour and shade went to war and fought and died for *King and Country*

Many monuments have been erected across Jamaica to pay homage to those who died during the Great War. These monuments exist in the forms of plaques, clock towers, cenotaphs and obelisks in public parks and spaces, schools and churches. These objects were erected in the early years after the war when memories of the dead were still fresh and painful.

The source of funding for the erection of these many monuments was public subscription and was reflective of the sense of public duty and volunteerism which prevailed during that era. While some of the memorials have the names of the fallen others are more general. Despite the variations in the styles and form of the memorials each one is intended to be a solemn reminder of the horrors of war and the sacrifices Jamaicans made in World War I.

World War I brought many changes in almost many sphere of life which continues to positively affect the world. Jamaica did not escape the changes. The war brought lasting changes to Jamaica's social order, political structure and economic fortunes. These changes continue to impact Jamaica today.

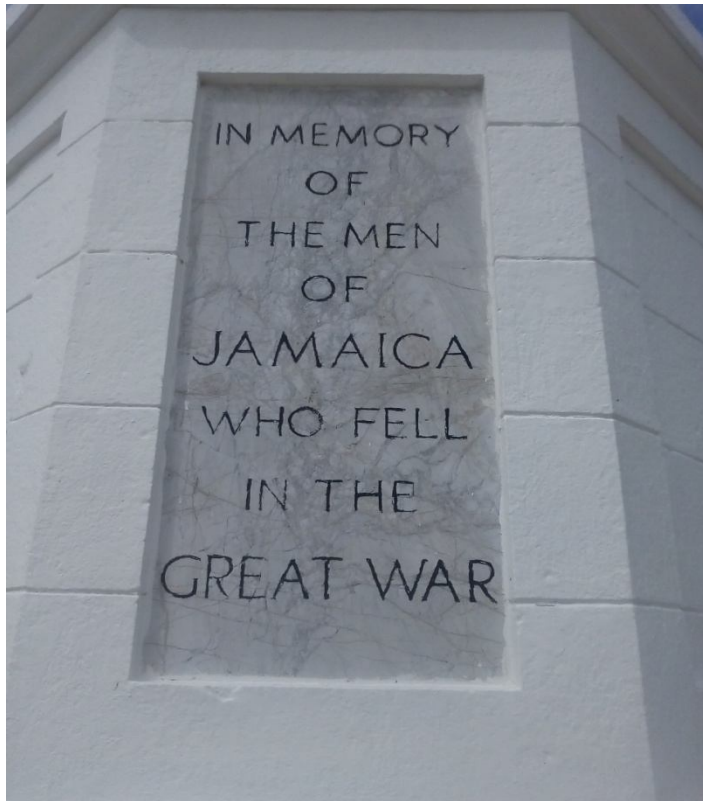
Today Jamaica is much different from what it was one hundred years ago. No longer a colony and with over fifty years of political independence very little remains of the steadfast loyalty to Britain that existed a century ago. The memories of World War I have long gone with earlier generations of Jamaicans who were willing to fight and die for King and County. However, the

monuments together proudly remain all across Jamaica as a permanent testimony to the contributions of Jamaicans to that war and the ultimate sacrifice they made. Let us never forget.

Below are a few of these monuments



*National Monument located in the Shrine of National Heroes Park in Kingston being guarded by Jamaica Defence Force sentries. This monument was originally located Church Street but was relocated to George VI Memorial Park (Now National Heroes Park) in 1953. The sentries guarding the monument are ceremonially changed every hour with clockwork precision.*



**Inscription on the National War Memorial monument**



### **Memorial at St Dunstan Chapel, Jamaica College, St Andrew**

This memorial's inscription is written in block capital letters and states:

*TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF THE SEVENTEEN GALLANT GENTLEMEN SOMETIME SCHOLARS IN THE JAMAICA COLLEGE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT WAR FIGHTING FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD*

The names of the seventeen persons are listed and include a D R Manley. This was Douglas Roy Manley, brother of National Hero Norman Manley, who also fought in World War I. Douglas Manley died and it is said Norman Manley always wore something black for the rest of his life as a sign of mourning for his brother. Interestingly Norman's first child was named after his brother.





**World War I monument in Falmouth Trelawney**



**Inscription on the Monument Falmouth Trelawney indicates the monument serves as a dual monument for the fallen from World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945)**



**Wolmer's Boys High school War memorial- dedicated to twenty one past students of Wolmer's High who died in the war. It states:**

*Erected by the Old Wolmerians to the memory of their school fellows who laid down their lives in the Great War. Great love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends.*





**May Pen Clock Tower, Clarendon.**

This clock tower has a plaque on its West side paying homage to the military efforts of Jamaicans during World War I by the secretary of State for the Colonies

*Message to the Government of Jamaica From the Secretary of State for the Colonies 16th November 1918. Now that the war has been brought to a victorious conclusion, I desire on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to express to the people of Jamaica and her dependencies, the mother country's high appreciation of the military efforts they have made, their cheerful acceptance of compulsory service in the common cause, and their struggle in spite of the difficulties in which visitations of nature have involved them at home. I recall with gratitude the share of men of Jamaica in our final victory in Palestine.*





### **World War I Monument in Port Maria St Mary**

This monument lists the names of over a hundred men from the parish of St Mary who died during the Great War

Other war memorials across the country

- Plaque in library at Mico University College, St Andrew
- Altar and other items at garrison Church at Up Park Camp, St Andrew
- Plaque in St Dunstan Chapel, Jamaica College, St Andrew
- Cenotaph at Morant bay St Thomas
- Cenotaph at Port Antonio < Portland
- Cenotaph at St Ann's Bay, St Ann
- Cenotaph at Montego Bay, St James
- Plaque at Manning's High School Sananna-la Mar, Westmoreland (to be restored)
- Cenotaph at Mandeville, Manchester

- Clock tower at Chapleton, Clarendon
- Cenotaph at Spanish town St Catherine

Other memorials are reported to be at Munro College, St Elizabeth and St Jago High School in St Catherine.

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