



# AFRICAN & CARIBBEAN M E M O R I A L

**Herbert Morris** was delivered by author Nairobi Thompson, on 10 November 2014, at Seaford Station, when the first plaques to the British West Indian Regiment were unveiled.

I cannot find my son  
Someone say him run gone England  
But he's too young  
Dey will see dat an sen im home

He tall an strong big for his age  
It give me a fright  
I nearly tumble down  
When me hear im gone to fight  
He would make a good soldier  
He is stout of heart  
But I want im home  
16 is too young  
Dey goin sen im home

I waitin to hear from the Consort Queen  
I know she goin look after my son  
She got sons of her own  
I know she understands  
Why I want him home

Where is my foolish brave son  
Gone to save the king an queen  
Anybody seen im?  
His name is Herbert Morris

He will be 17 tomorrow  
An de Queen ain't sen im home yet

I heard word but I cyant believe it  
De man who told me is sick in de head  
Battle exhaustion playing wid his mind  
He don't know my son at all!  
He seh my son is a deserter  
And they shot him  
For running!  
I thought those days were gone

They paraded im so everyone in  
The 6th Battalion of the British West Indian  
Regiment  
Could see the colour of cowardice

Lies! Why come all dis way  
To tell me lies!

Dey say he cried for his head  
The boom of guns shelled his nerves  
Watchin his comrades killed in combat  
Discombobulated his brain  
In a 15 day barrage  
2297 British guns  
Fired over 4 million eardrum-shattering bone-  
rattling shells  
And the Germans likewise responded  
His soul grounded in devotion for the  
motherland  
Was dislodged by the ferocious pounding  
He never seen nothin like dat before  
He seen dead goat and dead chicken  
But never a man blown apart  
Never body parts without their owners still  
twitching  
He not trained to kill anyone  
He's a child!  
Where is my son?!

Dey say he pleaded battle fatigue to the  
medical officer  
Who did nothing for him  
He pleaded shell shock to the court  
Who sought no medical report to verify his  
condition  
But ordered his escort to the wooden post  
In the courtyard  
In front of a bullet riddled wall of shame  
So that his name is never to be called again  
in pride  
He was to be punished for lowering morale  
Court-marshalled for jeopardising the  
mission  
As a warning to the other potential runaway  
braves



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Hands cuffed behind his back  
Thick cloth bag over his head  
And an 'x marks the spot'  
White card target  
Pinned to his tunic  
Over his patriotic heart

He heard condemnation march  
Single file  
And kneel behind loaded rifles  
He heard them breathing  
While aim was taken  
And de nerves of steel rattle of  
Small-bore bolt action  
Of those partaking  
In the murder of their brethren  
He heard the volley of fire  
7 shots hit the heart

That sought to serve  
One flew through his neck  
That held the head once filled with  
Hope and glory

Herbie wrote to us on the day of his death  
Saying he was going to be with God  
By way of firing squad  
I have the letter still  
Because I won't believe the British Army  
would kill  
My son

I cannot find my son  
Someone say him run gone England  
But he's too young  
Dey will see dat an sen im home...

Nairobi Thompson © 2015

*"Private Morris Herbert was buried in Belgium's Poperinge New Military Cemetery. Almost ninety years later, on 8 November 2006, he was pardoned along with 300 other soldiers who were executed for desertion and other offences during the First World War" Stephen Bourne, (2014) Black Poppies p. 74-76*