5 Displaying Valour

Samuel Hodge VC

In January 1856, during the closing stages of the Crimean War (1853–56), the creation of a new military award was announced: the Victoria Cross. It was originally open to army and navy, junior officers and the ranks, and later to civilians involved in the Indian Uprising (1857–58). Further changes to the scope of the award came later. Existing prominent awards, such as the Order of the Bath, were traditionally awarded to high-ranking officers for particular military achievements or long service. In contrast, the Victoria Cross was designed to reward acts of individual courage performed in the presence of the enemy. Joany Hichberger argues that this acknowledgement of the 'display of courage not necessarily linked to military practicality' was associated with nineteenth-century concepts of chivalry that were based on nobility of character and suitable education rather than membership of the aristocratic class.[1] Moreover, most Victoria Crosses were awarded for acts that did not contribute to military success, such as saving the colours or the lives of others. As a result, the introduction of the Victoria Cross has been seen by some as indicative of the 'increasing democratisation of the nation and the Army' because it recognised the courage of ordinary soldiers, whose military contribution had become the focus of public attention during the Crimean War.[2]

[1] J. W. M. Hichberger, 'Democratising glory? The Victoria Cross paintings of Louis Desanges', *Oxford Art Journal*, 7:2 (1984), 42–51, p. 43. See also *The Victoria Cross, an Official Chronicle of the Deeds of Personal Valour Achieved in Presence of the Enemy during the Crimean and Baltic Campaigns, the Indian Mutinies, and the Persia, China, and New Zealand Wars* (London: O'Byrne Brothers, 1865), p. viii; Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Stephanie Barczewski, *Heroic Failure and the British* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

[2] Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', pp. 42, 43. See also Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 13; Matthew Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 112.

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Less than two years after the first investiture ceremony for the new award at Hyde Park, the Victoria Cross Gallery opened at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly in time for the London Season of 1859. Consisting originally of thirty-two paintings, including eight large works of the 'most celebrated and best-known incidents' and twenty-four smaller 'but equally effective' works, the gallery was intended to illustrate heroic feats performed during the Crimean War.[3] The admission was one shilling, with no charge for visitors in military uniform. Eight more paintings were added for the reopening of the gallery in 1860, including some relating to the Indian Uprising, and there were further additions over the next few years, mainly of actions in Crimea and India.[4] The paintings were later displayed elsewhere in London and other cities across Britain and the empire, as well as being reproduced in books and as photographs, reflecting and promoting the popular militarism that emerged in the 1850s and would become an increasingly prominent part of mass culture in late Victorian Britain.

In 1875, almost twenty years after the Victoria Cross Gallery had been inaugurated, the *London Evening Standard* announced that a new picture had been added, which depicted the 'Capture of a Gambia Fort and the bravery of Samuel Hodge and Colonel D'Arcy' (Figure 5.1).[5] Samuel Hodge (c.1840–1868) was a private in the 4th WIR who had been born in Tortola, in what is now the British Virgin Islands. George Abbas Kooli D'Arcy (1818–85) came from a military family. After serving in the 94th Regiment in Ireland and India, he purchased a Majority in the 3rd WIR in 1852 and was appointed to command troops in the Bahamas.[6] He eventually became Lieutenant-Colonel in overall command of the regiment, then headquartered in Jamaica, until retiring in 1857.[7] In 1859, D'Arcy was appointed Governor of the Dependency of the Gambia River. For his actions in an assault on the stockaded settlement of Tuba Kolong in mid-1866, Hodge was awarded the Victoria Cross a

[3] *The Times*, 18 April 1859, 3 May 1860.
[4] *The Times*, 2 April 1860, 30 March 1861. See *Catalogue of a Series of Historical Pictures, by L. W. Desanges, Illustrating Actions Which Have Won the Victoria Cross* (London: Victoria Cross Gallery, 1861).
[5] *London Evening Standard*, 29 May 1875, 15 February 1876.
[6] *In Memoriam: A Short Sketch of the Life of George Abbas Kooli D'Arcy, Colonel of the 3rd W. India Regt.* (undated pamphlet). My thanks to Tim Anderson for making this short memoir available to me. See also R. N. Spafford, 'Colonel George Abbas Kooli D'Arcy: Governor of the Falkland Islands, 1870–1876', *Falkland Islands Newsletter* (November 1992), pp. 8–9.
[7] H. G. Hart, *The New Annual Army List … for 1869* (London: John Murray, 1869), pp. 103, 109.

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Figure 5.1 *The Capture of Tubabakalong*, oil on canvas by Louis William Desanges (c.1875). Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance.

year later. He died in Belize in January 1868 from cholera.[8] For technical reasons, D'Arcy was ineligible for the same honour.

This chapter is concerned with the depiction of Hodge in *The Capture of Tubabakolong*, a significant moment given his status as the first African-Caribbean man – and the first soldier of African descent – to receive Britain's highest military honour.[9] It begins by contextualising the painting within both the artist's other work and the wider field of mid-Victorian military art, as well as the form of popular militarism that had emerged during the Crimean War. The chapter then turns to *The Capture of Tubabakolong* itself to consider the relationship between battlefield and painting, Hodge and D'Arcy. Going on to discuss other representations of this military incident and of both men, the chapter argues that Hodge was rendered as a marginalised figure. Even after a moment when the martial agency of West India Regiment personnel was plain – and

[8] *Army and Navy Gazette*, 21 March 1868.

[9] The first man of African descent to receive the Victoria Cross had been William Hall (1827–1904), who had been born in Nova Scotia. Serving in the Royal Navy as an Able Seaman, he had displayed conspicuous bravery at the relief of Lucknow in November 1857 during the Indian Uprising. See James W. Bancroft, 'Hall, William (1827–1904)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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formally acknowledged – they remained trapped by the discursive fetters of the steady Black soldier.

The Victoria Cross Gallery

Public awareness of the new military award was greatly increased by the Victoria Cross Gallery. This was not created or sponsored by the authorities, however, but was instead the work of an individual artist, Louis William Desanges (1822–c.1887). Born in Kent, Desanges was the descendant of an aristocratic French émigré family. He received some fine art training in England before completing his education in Italy and France, including under landscape and history painter Jean-Michel Grobon (1770–1853). Desanges would also have been familiar with French military history painting. This genre was much less developed in Britain, where it tended to be associated with topographical painting, which had its origins in map-making and sketches of troop formations, and was seen as of lower status and lacking aesthetic conventions.[10]

After settling in London in 1845, Desanges began to produce historical works and was exhibited at the Royal Academy and the British Institution. He also used his social background to establish himself as a painter of aristocratic portraits, particularly of women, and it was through this that Desanges began to embark on his Victoria Cross work.[11] One of his earliest paintings in the series was of Robert James Loyd-Lindsay (1832–1901) who had served in the Scots Fusilier Guards during the Crimean War. As an ensign at the Battle of Alma (20 September 1854), Loyd-Lindsay had carried the colours and helped to rally the regiment after it was thrown into disorder; he would later distinguish himself at the Battle of Inkerman. Loyd-Lindsay was awarded the very first Victoria Cross on 24 February 1857.[12] He later served as Equerry to the Prince of Wales and it could have been at the latter's residence, the White Lodge at

[10] Robin Simon, *The Portrait in Britain and America: With a Biographical Dictionary of Portrait Painters, 1680–1914* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1987); J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: The Military in British Art, 1815–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

[11] James Dafforne, 'British artists: Their style and character. No. LXIX – Louis William Desanges', *The Art Journal* (February 1864), 41–43; Colin Robins, 'Louis William Desanges and the missing Victoria Cross paintings', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 90 (2012), 141–50, p. 142.

[12] S. O. Beeton, *Our Soldiers and the Victoria Cross. A General Account of the Regiments and Men of the British Army: And Stories of the Brave Deeds Which Won the Prize 'For Valour'* (London: Ward, Lock, and Tyler, 1867; reissued 1896), p. 9; Roger Stearn, 'Lindsay, Robert James Loyd, Baron Wantage (1832–1901)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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Richmond, that Desanges commenced the painting of Loyd-Lindsay. The prince apparently showed the 'most lively interest' in the creation of a series of paintings related to the Victoria Cross and Desanges may have hoped for royal patronage. The artist would later explain that promoting public knowledge of the new military award was his primary objective.[13]

In its early years, the Victoria Cross Gallery was well received. *The Times*, for example, stated that it formed a 'fine collection of paintings, and one which, as representing the greatest and noblest acts of English valour, will always be attractive to the general public'.[14] Likewise, *The Art Journal* recognised the gallery's popular appeal to a particular 'national feeling' that was coming to the fore in the 1850s:

> We all understand what the Victoria Cross means; we all know the quickening of the pulse which involuntarily is attendant upon any narrative of such actions as win that Cross: and, therefore, it follows as a matter of course that we like, and are proud of, pictures which, faithfully and with becoming effectiveness as works of Art, place before our eyes these scenes and incidents of 'distinguished' and 'conspicuous gallantry,' of 'great coolness and bravery,' of 'dashing intrepidity,' and 'heroic self-devotion.'[15]

The Times also made much of the fact that the Victoria Cross Gallery had been assembled by a private artist rather than commissioned by the state, something that appealed to the contemporary national myth that Britain was not a militaristic society – unlike France, where there was official support for the creation of propagandistic battle paintings.[16] Nevertheless, another narrative also emerged around Desanges' work regarding the need for Britain to assert its military status in the realm of art. In 1862, when Desanges exhibited a non-Victoria Cross work, *The Battle of Inkerman* at the Royal Academy, *The Times* noted that while it was not of the same vast scale as those by contemporary French painters such as Joseph-Louis-Hippolyte Bellangé, Adolphe Yvon and Isidore Pils, it demonstrated that the artist could nonetheless 'meet the French battle-painters … on their own ground'.[17] Given that French military works were exhibited at Versailles, the newspaper speculated whether the Royal Hospital Chelsea or the Palace of Westminster might serve a similar purpose for Desanges' work. Likewise, given how a collective

[13] 'The Victoria Cross Gallery', *Art Journal* (January 1863), p. 12. See also Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', pp. 43–44.
[14] *The Times*, 18 April 1859. [15] 'The Victoria Cross Gallery', p. 12.
[16] *The Times*, 2 April 1860.
[17] *The Times*, 26 May 1862, p. 10. See Julia Thoma, 'Panorama of war: The Salle de Crimée in Versailles', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 15:1 (2016).

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record of 'true patriotism' might encourage others to 'similar acts of valour and self-devotion', *The Art Journal* called for the collection to be purchased by the British state, not least because of the 'large immediate sacrifice of time and money' that Desanges had borne personally. Such a course of action was proposed on several occasions but was never realised.[18]

Although contemporary critics were positive about Desanges' Victoria Cross paintings and they were popular among the public at the time, art historians have afforded them little attention. Hichberger attributes this lack of scholarly interest to their 'doubtful status' in that they were neither Academic Art nor examples of popular culture. Instead, she argues that the paintings 'occupy an interesting and unexplored region as "works of art" which entertained and informed a middle-class audience eager for affirmation of its self-confident militarism and patriotism'.[19] Indeed, whereas much of the scholarship on military art has focused on the period of 'high imperialism', particularly paintings by Lady Elizabeth Butler (1846–1933), Desanges' works exemplified an important earlier moment in the representation of military themes. In the period from Waterloo to the start of the First World War, the way in which battles were depicted shifted from the distant panorama to the close-up view of a particular incident. Likewise, the figure of the hero changed from 'idealised and generalised' to a 'familiar, almost domesticated figure'. The immediate post-Crimean War period in which Desanges produced his works was an important moment in these changes, with the conflict being a 'watershed in civil-military relations' due to the role of the press in reporting it and mobilising public opinion (see Chapter 4). The Crimean War was also seen by the rising bourgeoisie as demonstrating the 'unfitness' of the aristocracy to rule the army and the importance of replacing it with (upper) middle-class leadership. At the same time, the 'common soldier' was reimagined as a brave, loyal, patriotic and virtuous figure, whose pay and conditions were in need of reform.[20]

The Victoria Cross Gallery illustrates precisely these new ideas about warfare and soldiery. Desanges, with his reputation and experience as a portraitist, did not paint entire battles but rather 'episodes of war which the eye of a single observer is capable of apprehending'.[21] His practice was to emphasise accuracy and the incidental. He gathered detailed

[18] Dafforne, 'British artists', pp. 42, 43. [19] Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', p. 50.
[20] Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, pp. 7, 49, 59.
[21] *The Times*, 2 April 1860, 30 March 1861.

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information about a particular engagement from the official citation accompanying the announcement of each Victoria Cross, from the award's recipient if possible and from fellow military personnel who had also been present.[22] On this basis, he produced small works initially, some of which were developed into larger oil paintings. In 1862, the gallery, which then comprised fifty-five paintings, reopened at the Crystal Palace, which had been relocated to Sydenham. Two years later, the paintings were bought by Harry Wood, a Yorkshire businessman, and would spend much of the 1860s on tour, including being exhibited in Leeds and at Dublin's 1865 International Exhibition, before returning to London in the early 1870s.[23] They later went to the Melbourne International Exhibition.[24] Images of the paintings also circulated more widely as photographs for sale, as well as illustrations in Samuel Beeton's *Our Heroes of the Victoria Cross* (1867) and A. G. Temple's *England's History as Pictured by Famous Artists* (1897).[25] They were also displayed in magic lanterns shows, featured in periodicals and were loaned out for special dinners.[26] The gallery itself was eventually broken up, with forty-five remaining paintings, plus another Desanges had added of Lord Roberts' march to Kandahar, bought for about £1,000 by Lord Wantage, who, as Robert James Loyd-Lindsay, had featured in the first painting. He presented them to Wantage Town Council, where they went on display in November 1900.[27] Wantage did not acquire *The Capture of Tubabakolong*, which had been sold separately in 1880.

[22] *Catalogue of a Series of Historical Pictures*, unnumbered page.

[23] *London Evening Standard*, 8 February 1864; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 20 August 1864; *The Evening Freeman* (Dublin), 11 April 1865; *Saunders's News-Letter*, 25 May 1866, 25 September 1867. See also Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The capture of Tubabakolong, 1866', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 92:372 (2014), 257–67, p. 257; Fintan Cullen, *Ireland on Show: Art, Union, and Nationhood* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 70.

[24] 'Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880 Opened 1st October; The Official Catalogue of the Exhibits' in the Pamphlet Collection of Sir Robert Stout: Volume 41, Victoria University of Wellington Library, http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Stout41-t10-body-d167.html, last accessed 12 May 2022.

[25] The location of the series at Crystal Palace and Desanges' decision to make photographic reproductions available for sale – unlike the engravings preferred by connoisseurs – implied a lower-/middle-middle class audience. See Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', p. 42; Cullen, *Ireland on Show*, p. 71. See Beeton, *Our Soldiers and the Victoria Cross*; A. G. Temple, *England's History as Pictured by Famous Artists* (London: G. Newnes, 1897).

[26] See, for example, *Aldershot Military Gazette*, 9 February 1867, 2 October 1875; *Wrexham Advertiser*, 26 April 1873.

[27] Irene Hancock, 'The Victoria Cross Gallery and the "Deeds of Valour"', unpublished pamphlet, Vale and Downland Museum, pp. 3–4.

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War in West Africa

Desanges' *The Capture of Tubabakolong* ostensibly commemorated the bravery of Private Samuel Hodge following a military action in West Africa in the summer of 1866. At this time, there were four West India Regiments in existence, the 5th WIR having been only briefly re-established from 1863 to 1865. Along with the 3rd WIR, the 4th WIR was deployed to protect Britain's coastal possessions scattered across West Africa. Hodge was based at Fort Bullen on Barra Point as part of the force that protected the town of Bathurst (now known as Banjul, capital of the Republic of the Gambia) near the mouth of the River Gambia. Bathurst had been founded on Banjul Island following a territorial purchase in 1816 as part of British efforts to establish a local presence to aid in the suppression of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans. It also served as a base for British merchants on the river. This territorial presence in the area was expanded further by the purchase of the 'Ceded Mile', a coastal strip obtained from the Kingdom of Niumi (often referred to as 'Barra') in 1826. The Gambia became a Crown Colony in 1843. Despite such steps, British territorial expansion in West Africa was slow and limited, in comparison with that by the French, and offset by concerns to reduce regional commitments because of the associated costs.

By the mid century, there was conflict in many kingdoms across the Senegambia – the region from the Senegal River in the north to the Gambia River in the south – between the 'Soninke' ruling classes and 'Marabout' Muslim reformers. Islam had spread among the peoples of the Senegambia since the seventeenth century and the effects of a religious revival further east reached the region by the 1850s. Seeking religious, social and political reform, the Marabouts and their growing number of followers attacked the traditional Soninke systems of rule, leading to half a century of internecine conflicts.[28] During these Soninke-Marabout Wars, Maba Diakhou (1809–67), also known as 'Ma Ba' or 'Ma Bah', a Koranic teacher who had built a considerable local following in the 1850s, sought to establish a theocracy in the Senegambia along similar lines to those further east. Maba's followers in the Kingdom of

[28] David Perfect and Martin Evans, 'Trouble with the neighbours? Contemporary constructions and colonial legacies in relations between Senegal and the Gambia' in Claire Griffiths (ed.), *Contesting Historical Divides in Francophone Africa* (Chester: University of Chester, 2013), pp. 59–92; Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, *A Political History of the Gambia, 1816–1994* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), p. xxxviii. See also Charlotte Alison Quinn, 'Maba Diakhou and the Gambian Jihād, 1850–1890' in John Ralph Willis (ed.), *Studies in West African Islamic History: Volume 6 – The Cultivators of Islam* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 233–58.

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Baddibu overthrew their Mandinka overlords and he seized power. Following this revolt, other Marabouts on the north bank of the Gambia River sought Maba's support and his forces intervened elsewhere in the region in the early 1860s against the Soninke establishment. In general, British policy was to avoid costly entanglements in the Soninke-Marabout Wars, except when colonial, and especially commercial, interests were directly threatened.[29] It was in such circumstances that Britain carried out the military expedition that resulted in Hodge being awarded the Victoria Cross.

In late June 1866, D'Arcy, who had been the governor of the Gambia since 1859, attacked a stockaded settlement close to the River Gambia at the site of what is now Tuba Kolong (variously referred to as 'Tubabecolong' and 'Tubab Kolon' by the British). This was the stronghold of one of Maba's lieutenants, Amer Faal, whose forces had previously raided settlements in the Ceded Mile and encouraged Marabout supporters to rebel.[30] Britain's punitive expedition against Tuba Kolong was intended to end the threat posed to Bathurst and the disruption to local British commerce, as well as being a pro-Soninke intervention in the wider regional conflict. The specific trigger for D'Arcy's actions was an attack on the village of Bantang Killing on 24 June. In response, a British force of almost 150 soldiers of the 4th WIR, including Hodge, along with a hundred volunteer members of the Gambia Militia, travelled upriver from Bathurst, accompanied by the gunboat, HMS *Mullet*.[31] Major William Mackay led the regulars and had overall command, while D'Arcy, as honorary Colonel of the Gambia Militia, led the volunteers.

The force disembarked at Albreda (now Albaddar) on the north bank of the River Gambia on 28 June 1866. Over the next two days, they were joined by around 750 Soninke allies. Together they marched back downriver to the west, supported by HMS *Mullet*, while the Marabouts evacuated the settlements they held on the Ceded Mile. Around midday on 30 June, the Anglo-Soninke force reached Tuba Kolong, which was located on the banks of the river, backed by elevated land to the north. Following a skirmish, Marabout forces withdrew to the stronghold, which was now defended by about 800 men, in addition to women and children. In the heat of the day, and with British forces fatigued by the

[29] Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 196–99; Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of the Gambia*, p. 42.

[30] Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, *Historical Dictionary of the Gambia* (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2008, 4th ed.), p. 221.

[31] Rif Winfield and David Lyon, *The Sail and Steam Navy List: All the Ships of the Royal Navy 1815–1889* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2004), p. 222.

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long march, Mackay began to attack with rockets and a howitzer. HMS *Mullet* was also to take part in the bombardment but, owing to a failure of communications and the fact that the gunboat was obliged to remain distant from the shore, this was greatly delayed. After several hours and with the settlement's inhabitants able to suppress the fires that had been started, it became apparent that the barrage was having 'no marked impression'.[32] Instead, it was decided to storm Tuba Kolong.

There are differing accounts of the actual assault.[33] A storming party of a hundred soldiers from the 4th WIR and four officers was assembled, while D'Arcy was tasked with gathering a supporting force from among the Soninke allies. The trigger for the attack was HMS *Mullet* commencing its much-delayed bombardment, which helped to start a fire in Tuba Kolong. D'Arcy ordered some Soninke allies and the volunteers, including Lieutenant Hurst, his private secretary and aide-de-camp, to follow him as he rode after the 4th WIR. He caught up with the main assault force only metres from the stockade, where they were exchanging fire with the defenders. At this point, D'Arcy took the initiative. Based on his experience of similar operations in the region and 'knowing exactly how stockades are constructed', he called on the West India Regiment officers to follow him as he took the personal lead of the assault. According to D'Arcy,

> first I cut with my sword the thorny double stockade, and then rushing to the main one followed by Lieutenants Kelly and Jenkins, I shouted for the pioneers to make a breach, two brave men answered the call – Boswell and Hodge; it took many blows of the axe to make a very small opening through which I entered, and then jumped across the ditch, full of the enemy, here the struggle took place, and the Officers and men fell, but they held the disputed point with a proud courage, passing their firelocks to me through the small opening I kept the determined enemy at bay till with a shout the 1st Section of the Stormers sprung across the

[32] D'Arcy to Blackall, 3 July 1866, CO 87/85, TNA.

[33] Ian Beckett points out that D'Arcy's account of 30 October 1866 was intended to highlight Hodge's role, whereas that of 23 March 1868 was intended to bolster D'Arcy's own claim to the Victoria Cross. See Beckett, 'The capture of Tubabakolong, 1866'. Beckett makes no mention of D'Arcy's initial accounts, written only days after, which can be found in James Blackall, Governor-in-Chief at Sierra Leone, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 July 1866, CO 87/85, TNA, especially the enclosures D'Arcy to Blackall, 3 July 1866; D'Arcy to Mackay, 5 July 1866. See also Mackay to D'Arcy, 12 July 1866, CO 87/86, TNA. For other accounts of the expedition and the attack on Tuba Kolong, see Robert Charles Jenkins, 'The settlements of the Gambia', *Colburn's United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal* (September 1867), pp. 1–18; *In Memoriam*, pp. 22–25. Jenkins' account was written by the father of Lieutenant Jenkins, who was killed during the assault.

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ditch, and brought their bayonets to the charge sending the Mandingoes flying before them; many died bravely cutting at us with their swords to the last.[34]

This was the particular episode depicted by Desanges, although the painting conflates the outer thorny barricade with the inner stockade (see Figure 5.1). In the background of the painting, the fires ignited by the bombardment can be seen, while the bodies of Kelly, Jenkins and men of the West India Regiment, including Private Boswell, lie in the foreground, having been shot and killed. Hodge, despite also being hit, continued to pass rifles to D'Arcy, who is shown standing in the breach. Subsequently, Hodge entered the stockade, followed by two other privates and D'Arcy's aide-de-camp, Hurst. After Captain Barnard brought up the remainder of the assault force, Tuba Kolong was burned and many Marabouts were killed by the Soninke allies as they attempted to flee. In total, Marabout losses were put at 350 – sixty who were killed defending the breach – while British casualties amounted to two officers and four soldiers of the 4th WIR.[35]

In his account of the capture of Tuba Kolong, written three days later for his superior, James Blackall, Governor-in-Chief at Sierra Leone, D'Arcy singled out Hodge, who 'I trust, the Major commanding will recommend to the Sovereign for the cross of valour'.[36] In a subsequent letter to Major Mackay, he also spoke highly of the West India Regiments more broadly: 'Having for so long commanded the 3rd W. I. regiment, I may be allowed thus to record the spirit and gallantry of our men, whose prowess is now established beyond a doubt.' With Jenkins and Kelly killed in the assault, and Hodge's nominal commander Captain Barnard having not witnessed the private's actions, it was D'Arcy who successfully recommended him for the Victoria Cross.[37] Hodge received the award in Belize on 24 May 1867 after his regiment had been redeployed to the Caribbean. The official citation from January 1867 read as follows:

4th West India Regiment, Private Samuel Hodge

Date of Act of Bravery, June 30th, 1866

For his bravery at the storming and capture of the stockaded town of Tubabecolong, in the kingdom of Bami, River Gambia, on the evening of the

[34] D'Arcy to Mackay, 5 July 1866, CO 87/85, ff. 9–10, TNA.
[35] James Blackall to Lord Carnarvon, 18 July 1866, CO 87/85, TNA; D'Arcy to Blackall, 5 July 1866, enclosed in ibid.
[36] D'Arcy to Blackall, 3 July 1866, CO 87/85, f. 16, TNA.
[37] D'Arcy to Mackay, 5 July 1866, CO 87/85, f. 11; D'Arcy to Forster, 30 October 1866; Peel to Lugard, 20 December 1866, WO 32/7371, TNA.

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30th of June last. Colonel D'Arcy, of the Gambia Volunteers, states that this man and another, who was afterwards killed, – pioneers in the 4th West India Regiment, – answered his call for volunteers, with axes in hand, to hew down the stockade. Colonel D'Arcy having effected an entrance, Private Hodge followed him through the town, opening with his axe two gates from the inside, which were barricaded, so allowing the supports to enter, who carried the place from east to west at the point of the bayonet. On issuing to the glacis through the west gate, Private Hodge was presented by Colonel D'Arcy to his comrades, as the bravest soldier in their regiment, a fact which they acknowledged with loud acclamations.[38]

Although D'Arcy regretted the loss of life entailed by his expedition against the Marabout stronghold, he believed that it had been necessary to check their growing power and prevent further attacks on British settlements. In London, however, there was great concern that he had acted without consulting his superior, the Governor-in-Chief, Blackall, who was urged to maintain Britain's neutrality in the Soninke-Marabout Wars and 'avoid any further entanglement in these native disputes'.[39] D'Arcy himself was removed from his role following the reorganisation of the British West African Settlements and eventually replaced by Admiral Charles George Edward Patey.[40] Nor was he awarded the Victoria Cross, despite petitioning for it in March 1868 after Hodge's death a couple of months before. D'Arcy was ineligible because he had retired from the British Army through the sale of his commission in July 1857 and, under the terms of the award at the time, volunteers were disqualified.[41] D'Arcy did at least receive the thanks of the European merchants in the Gambia, as well as a 120-guinea ceremonial sword to replace the one that had been shot from his hand during the assault.[42] He returned from West Africa to England, later leaving to take up the governorship of the Falkland Islands from 1870. D'Arcy remained in the role until 1876, before retiring to Penzance, where he died nine years later.[43]

Hodge and D'Arcy

Just over two weeks after the official announcement of Hodge's award, the weekly magazine *Fun*, first appearing in 1861 as a rival to *Punch*,

[38] Victoria Cross Register, WO 98/4/15, TNA. Reproduced in *London Gazette*, 4 January 1867.
[39] Lord Carnarvon to James Blackall, 23 August 1866, CO 87/85, TNA.
[40] Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of the Gambia*, p. 66.
[41] Ebenezer Rogers, '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part II', *Once a Week*, 234 (22 June 1872), 564–70, p. 570; Beckett, 'The capture of Tubabakolong', p. 266.
[42] D'Arcy to Blackall, 18 December 1867, CO 87/87, TNA.
[43] *London Gazette*, 4 January 1867; Hughes and Perfect, *Historical Dictionary of the Gambia*, pp. 114–15.

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published a comic verse about the 'THE LATEST VICTORIA CROSS'. The final two stanzas read,

> Just a word of explanation – it may save us from a quarrel;
> I have really no intention –'twould be shameful if I had!
> Of preaching you a blatant, democratic kind of moral,
> For the 'swell,' you know, the D'ARCY, fought as bravely as the 'cad!'
>
> Yet I own that sometimes thinking how a courtier's decoration
> May be won by shabby service of disreputable dodge,
> I regard with more than pleasure – with a sense of consolation –
> The Victoria Cross 'For Valour' on the breast of SAMUEL HODGE![44]

While at first sight, this may appear to be a colour-blind celebration of Hodge's heroism, it is apparent that the writer had no knowledge of the particular circumstances beyond that gleaned directly from the official citation, which had been printed in the *London Gazette*. For example, it is implied that the action was taken against the 'King of Barra', a Soninke ally, a misunderstanding undoubtedly stemming from the fact that the official citation referred to Hodge's bravery in the 'storming and capture of the stockaded town of Tubabecolong, the kingdom of Barra'.[45] There is no mention of the West India Regiments and it seems unlikely that the author of the verse knew anything of their ethnic composition. Hodge is portrayed as an 'unromantic hero', with a 'vulgar and prosaic appellation', as well as a 'cad', all of which suggest his low social status – in contrast with D'Arcy the 'swell' – but *not* that he was of African descent. Elsewhere, there are references to the 'coloured caitiffs' who occasionally threatened British commercial interests in West Africa:

> Then of course we have to *smoke* them; and we do it with such vigour
> That the sooty rascals tremble, and a new allegiance swear;
> And – it's horrible to think of! – but we often shoot a n–,
> Like that execrable tyrant, the atrocious MR. EYRE![46]

Here, racial terminology is used in an explicit and contemptuous manner, something compounded by the mock horror with which the actions of the 'atrocious MR. EYRE' are decried. *Fun*'s coverage of Edward John Eyre had been supportive of his actions in relation to the Morant Bay Rebellion (see Chapter 3), which had broken out eight months before the attack on Tuba Kolong, and highly critical of the Jamaica Committee's efforts to prosecute the former governor.[47] In this

[44] *Fun*, 19 January 1867, p. 190. [45] *London Gazette*, 4 January 1867.
[46] *Fun*, 19 January 1867, p. 190. Emphasis in original.
[47] *Fun*, 2 March, 23 June 1866; 13 February 1867.

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light, the magazine's account of the assault on Tuba Kolong became entangled with a wider field of imperial conflict that was cast in racial terms. Thus, while the actual role of West India Regiment forces in the suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion *and* at Tuba Kolong served to refute the idea that colonial violence was conducted solely along racial lines, the coverage in *Fun* supplanted Hodge's heroism with the actions of an imagined White 'cad': this was 'A story about Africa, and Englishmen, and fighting'.[48]

This initial depiction of Hodge's actions, after the publication of the official citation, combined profound ignorance with racial arrogance, but nonetheless centred the achievements of the (presumably White, lower class) 'cad'. In contrast, while *The Capture of Tubabakalong* was seemingly more 'accurate' in its portrayal of Hodge, it was part of a wider representational apparatus that worked to downplay and marginalise his actions in the service of elevating those of the 'swell'. Desanges seems to have been working on the painting by the summer of 1872, although the idea that it *might* be added to the Victoria Cross Gallery was mooted as early as 1867.[49] There are many significant features to the painting (Figure 5.2).

Although it was Hodge (kneeling) who was awarded the Victoria Cross, the painting is focused on D'Arcy who is more central, stands upright and is bathed in light. Moreover, while Hodge's role in breaching the stockade and interior defences of Tuba Kolong was specifically mentioned in the official citation, this is not shown, although he does hold an axe in his left hand. Instead, the focus is D'Arcy's role in maintaining the breach while other troops come up from the rear, a task with which Hodge only assists by passing on a rifle. The hierarchy in roles of the two men in Desanges' depiction is reinforced by the arms and equipment they hold: D'Arcy fights the enemy with a rifle, whereas Hodge's axe – a more primitive weapon (compare Figure 2.1) – had merely created the opportunity for such actions. Indeed, the axe itself not only evokes the private's status as a pioneer but also serves as a visual metaphor for Hodge's supporting role: just as the axe is beside Hodge, so Hodge is beside D'Arcy.

Hodge's visual marginalisation was reinforced by the inscription that appeared on the frame of the painting. Above, the painting this reads …

[48] *Fun*, 19 January 1867, p. 190. The verse was reproduced elsewhere, including by Ebenezer Rogers, who used the final stanza as a coda to his eyewitness account of Hodge's medal ceremony and repeated it in its entirety in *Campaigning in Western Africa*. See p. 137 below.

[49] Ebenezer Rogers, '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part I', *Once a Week*, 233 (15 June 1872), 549–51, p. 550; *Army and Navy Gazette*, 6 July 1867.

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Figure 5.2 Detail from *The Capture of Tubabakalong*, oil on canvas by Louis William Desanges (c.1875). Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance.

The following picture has just been painted by Chevalier Louis W. Desanges to illustrate a heroic action by which the distinguished honour of the Victoria Cross was gained.

The Capture of Tubabakolong (Gambia) June 30th 1866.

The inscription continues below:

Samuel Hodge, serving with the 4th West India Regiment obtained the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in effecting a breach in the stockade. He was badly wounded, but continued to assist the Governor, Colonel D'Arcy, by handing to him the rifles of his poor companions, with which the colonel kept the enemy at bay while the supports were coming up. In the breach are seen the prostrate body of Lieutenant Jenkins and Ensign Kelly, mortally wounded. The marabout chief who is seen with arms extended is mortally wounded by the rifle which Colonel D'Arcy is about to drop. The chief has just descended from the vantage tower represented a short distance behind him and had discharged his musket within a few feet of the Governor, fortunately missing his aim. Poor Hodge who has since died received his cross at the recommendation of Colonel D'Arcy. It is regrettable that, by the rules of service, a similar honour could not be bestowed on the latter brave soldier through whose courage and skill on that eventful day the main success of the enterprise depended.

The text rapidly passes over Hodge, returning only to mention his death towards the end. Instead, he is subordinated to D'Arcy, something

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reinforced by the regret expressed that he had been ineligible for the Victoria Cross. The inscription draws attention to the most dramatic action actually depicted in the painting: the death of the 'Marabout chief', Amer Faal, who appears in the centre-left of the painting, his arms outstretched, having just been shot by D'Arcy. Faal and D'Arcy, who frame the breach, mirror one another. Each is the leader of their forces and, more figuratively, Desanges contrasts them as figures of dark and light, one caught in a paroxysm of pain, the other the calm and self-assured ideal of Victorian heroism. Meanwhile, the two elements central to the awarding of the Victoria Cross – Hodge and the breach he effected – are relatively marginalised despite being depicted in the foreground and centre, respectively.

It was not just the content of the inscription that was significant but the inclusion of one at all. This was not typical practice for Desanges, whose earlier Victoria Cross paintings bore no such descriptive text on their frames. Rather, it was the accompanying catalogue that provided such information about the incidents and persons depicted.[50] For example, the 1861 catalogue for the Victoria Cross Gallery lists fifty-eight paintings, with a short description provided in almost all cases. For the painting of Loyd-Lindsay it read:

NO. XXIV.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL LOYD LINDSAY, V.C., Scots Fusilier Guards.

When the formation of the line of the regiment was disordered at Alma, Captain Lindsay stood firm with the colours, and by his example and energy greatly tended to restore order. At Inkerman, at a most trying moment, he, with a few men, charged a party of Russians, driving them back, and running one through the body himself.[51]

The same catalogue also reveals something else that is distinctive about the painting featuring Hodge, which is the inscribed title, *The Capture of Tubabakolong (Gambia) June 30th 1866*, in which the private himself goes unmentioned. In contrast, the 1861 catalogue gives the rank, name and unit of every individual recipient of the Victoria Cross for each painting. Even where the military incident was also mentioned, the catalogue also identifies the recipients of the Victoria Cross. For example,

NO. XVII.

THE BATTLE OF KOOSHAB, 8th of February, 1857.

LIEUTENANT AND ADJUTANT ARTHUR MOORE, V.C., and LIEUTENANT JOHN GRANT MALCOLMSON, V.C., 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry.[52]

[50] 'The Victoria Cross Gallery', *Art Journal* (January 1863), p. 12.
[51] *Catalogue of a Series of Historical Pictures*, p. 10. [52] Ibid., p. 8.

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Indeed, given that, as *The Times* noted, '[e]very picture bears for its title the name of a hero on whom the Cross has been bestowed, and, therefore, may be supposed to embody in some manner the story of his deserts', it was hugely significant that Desanges chose not to mention Hodge in the title inscription.[53]

The Capture of Tubabakolong also bears a comparison with Desanges' earlier works in terms of his visual depiction of non-officers. Six private soldiers were featured in the Victoria Cross Gallery, including Samuel Parkes of the 4th Light Dragoons, who was the subject of one of Desanges' first two works.[54] The others were John M'Dermond (47th Regiment), Henry Ward (78th Highlanders), Anthony Palmer (3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards), John Sims (34th Regiment) and T. R. Roberts (9th Lancers). None of these six were worked into large-scale paintings – in contrast with that featuring Hodge, as will be discussed later. This predisposition against lower-status personnel partly stemmed from Desanges' reputation and practice as a society portrait painter. He would approach the family and close acquaintances of individual Victoria Cross winners in an attempt to secure a commission, something that inevitably favoured the wealthier officer classes.[55] This 'aristocratic bias' also reflected the broader pattern of post-Crimean War art, which tended to depict and eulogise the upper echelons of the military – despite the public criticism that the war leaders had faced – itself a reflection of the fact that patrons still came from the upper classes.[56] Moreover, Desanges' practice as an artist also amplified the systemic 'class bias' in how the Victoria Cross was actually awarded because, for Britain's military hierarchy, ordinary soldiers were supposed to serve a supportive role. Most of Desanges' paintings of rank-and-file Victoria Cross winners depicted heroes who had distinguished themselves by saving superior officers (see Figure 5.3) – or, in the cases of Parkes and Ward, fellow rankers. According to Hichberger, such representations reinforced 'contemporary mythologies of common soldiers as brave and enduring but functioning only through the guidance of their military commanders and existing only to serve them'.[57] In this way, *The Capture of Tubabakolong* was akin to Desanges' earlier works, with Hodge being cast in a supporting role with respect to D'Arcy.

[53] *The Times*, 2 April 1860. [54] See *Catalogue of a Series of Historical Pictures*.
[55] Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', p. 46.
[56] Peter Harrington, *British Artists and War: The Face of Battle in Paintings and Prints, 1700–1914* (London: Greenhill Books, 1993), p. 153.
[57] Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', p. 45.

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Figure 5.3 *Private John McDermond, 47th (The Lancashire) Regiment of Foot, Winning the VC by Saving Colonel Haly at Inkerman, on 5 November 1854*, oil on canvas by Louis William Desanges (c.1860). Image courtesy of the National Army Museum, London.

Another useful comparison of the depiction of Hodge and D'Arcy is with that of William A. Kerr (1832–1919), which Desanges had completed in 1860. It was worked into a large-scale painting and was also one of eleven that were engraved to serve as illustrations for Beeton's *Our Soldiers and the Victoria Cross*. Kerr was a lieutenant in the 24th Bombay Native Infantry during the Indian Uprising. In July 1857, he volunteered to lead a party of fifty men from the South Mahratta Irregular Horse, to which he was attached, in an effort to rescue some officers trapped in the British Residency near the town of Kolhapur in the Bombay Presidency. After a couple of artillery pieces they obtained had proved useless, Kerr decided to storm the stronghold, which was defended by soldiers from the 27th Regiment of Bombay Native Infantry who had joined the uprising. Gumpunt Row Deo Ker, one of seventeen who volunteered, assisted Kerr as they effected a series of breaches using crowbars. He was wounded during the subsequent action but continued to aid Kerr and when his commander was about to be killed, Gumpunt shot down the would-be attacker. In the end, the defending soldiers were driven from the stronghold. Kerr was severely wounded and of the assault party, eight

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were killed and four more died later of their wounds.[58] As a result of his actions, Kerr was awarded the Victoria Cross in April 1858.

Desanges' painting of Kerr (Figure 5.4) is a more graphically violent and kinetic scene than *The Capture of Tubabakolong*. Nonetheless, there are a number of similarities between the two works of art and the military incidents they depict. Both feature an assault on a fortified position, after artillery had proved to be of limited effect, led by a White officer. The latter is shown as a luminous figure who has just calmly slain an enemy and is assisted by soldiers who are not White. As with the painting of Hodge, Gumpunt's key actions are not shown. As Hichberger explains,

> Gumpunt saved Kerr's life by shooting one of his attackers. Desanges' painting underplays the Indian hero's contribution by literally relegating him to the background. Gumpunt is reduced to a featureless figure in a smokey corner, a strategy which implies that Kerr's escape was miraculous, since no visible method of escape is shown.[59]

As such comments underline, Gumpunt was even more marginalised than Hodge, who *did* appear in the painting's foreground and whose specific role in assisting D'Arcy was at least depicted, though not in effecting the breach itself. By virtue of the fact that the West India Regiment soldier was the winner of a Victoria Cross, Desanges could not downplay Hodge in the same way. Yet, *The Capture of Tubabakolong* was clearly not focused on the private. Rather, the official recognition of Hodge's actions was seen to justify an artistic endeavour that was really about D'Arcy. To put it another way, the former's Victoria Cross served as a pretext for the depiction of the latter's heroism. If D'Arcy had been eligible for and had received the Victoria Cross, then it is certainly conceivable that Hodge would have been just as marginalised as Gumpunt.

This line of argument can be developed through consideration of the circumstances in which *The Capture of Tubabakolong* was created. One of the painting's striking features is the contrast in facial detail between the figures of D'Arcy and Hodge (see Figure 5.2). It is possible that D'Arcy sat for Desanges in person. If he had, it must have been during the period after he returned from the Gambia and the conferment of the Victoria Cross to Hodge in January 1867, but before D'Arcy left to take up the

[58] See https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1958-12-51-1; Beeton, *Our Soldiers and the Victoria Cross*, pp. 168–75. The incident was also the subject of a later poem by William Topaz McGonagall, 'The Hero of Kalapore' (1899). See Crispin Bates and Marina Carter (eds.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857: Volume 7 – Documents of the Indian Uprising* (Sage: New Delhi, 2017), pp. 330–32.

[59] Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?', p. 48.

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Figure 5.4 *Lieutenant William Alexander Kerr, 24th Bombay Native Infantry, Attached to the South Mahratta Irregular Horse, Winning the VC, July 1857*, oil on canvas by Louis William Desanges (1860). Image courtesy of the National Army Museum, London.

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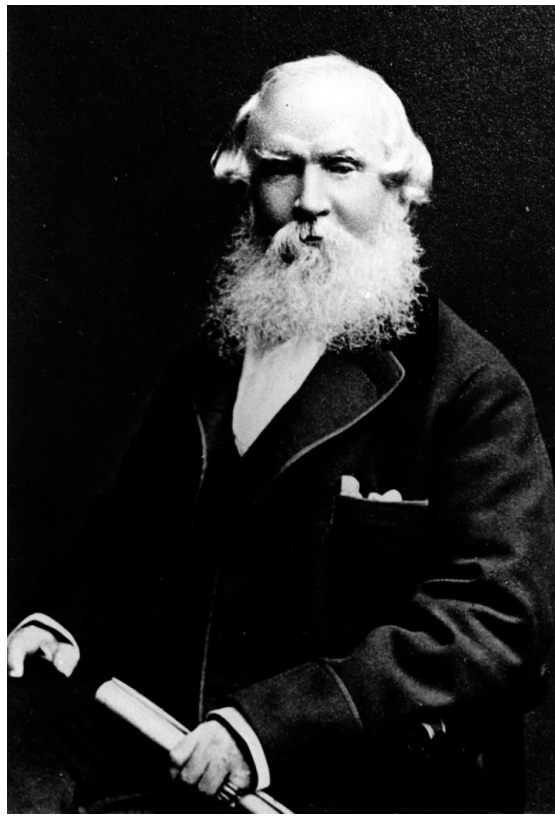

Figure 5.5 *George Abbas Kooli D'Arcy*, photograph taken prior to his departure for the Falkland Islands (c.1870). Courtesy of Tim Anderson.

governorship of the Falkland Islands from 1870. It was during this period that the possibility that a painting might be added to the Victoria Cross Gallery was suggested and perhaps the artist undertook initial sketches.[60] Yet, it seems more likely that Desanges worked from a photographic likeness of D'Arcy (see, for example, Figure 5.5).[61] What *is* certain is that Desanges never met Hodge, who is depicted in profile as a vague and featureless figure.

[60] *London Gazette*, 4 January 1867; *Army and Navy Gazette*, 6 July 1867.

[61] [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part I', p. 550. In the fictionalised version of the painting, the (unnamed) artist certainly did work from a photograph of D'Arcy's fictional alter ego. See pp. 139–141 below and Ebenezer Rogers, *A Modern Sphinx: A Novel* (London: John and Robert Maxwell, 1881), vol. 3, p. 307.

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As noted before, *The Capture of Tubabakolong* was the only one of a private who had been awarded the Victoria Cross that Desanges worked into a large-scale oil painting on a canvas measuring 132 cm by 193 cm. This would imply that the artist had secured a commission for the full-sized work. In contrast, that of Private John McDermond (Figure 5.3) never progressed beyond a much smaller oil painting on board of 36 cm by 51 cm.[62] Perhaps the fact that D'Arcy was not shown being saved by Hodge in *The Capture of Tubabakolong* made such a commission more likely, unlike the less flattering portrayals of wounded officers in the paintings of McDermond and others featuring ordinary soldiers coming to the rescue. Yet, this commission does not seem to have come from D'Arcy or his family, which never owned the painting.[63] So who *did* commission *The Capture of Tubabakolong*?

Commissioning and Correcting

While there is no evidence that D'Arcy provided any direct information about the scene depicted in *The Capture of Tubabakolong*, another West India Regiment officer certainly did: Ebenezer Rogers (1836–1915). Born in Dublin, Rogers served with the 3rd WIR on both sides of the Atlantic, joining in 1856 when D'Arcy was his senior officer and eventual commander. As a lieutenant, he was in West Africa from 1863 to 1866, during D'Arcy's time as governor of the Gambia, and was promoted to captain in January 1866. In this period, Rogers acted as an emissary, seeking to maintain peace in the locality of Bathurst and prevent incursions by Marabout and Soninke forces. Rogers was also involved in the 1863–64 Anglo-Asante War and served in British Honduras in 1867 when the 3rd WIR was redeployed to the Caribbean. After the regiment was disbanded in 1870, Rogers went on to become a Staff Officer of Pensions in 1872.[64]

After leaving active service, Rogers authored a number of works based on his military and diplomatic experience, including *Campaigning in Western Africa* (1874), which was published in the context of the

[62] See information available from Art UK, www.artuk.org, last accessed 2 June 2020.
[63] Personal communication from Tim Anderson, 24 January 2018.
[64] Ebenezer Rogers, *Campaigning in Western Africa: The Ashantee Invasion* (London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1874), pp. 17–18, 20; *Liverpool Mercury*, 2 April 1866; H. G. Hart, *The New Annual Army List … for 1875* (London: John Murray, 1875), pp. 364, 365; H. G. Hart, *The New Annual Army List … for 1890* (London: John Murray, 1890), p. 112, footnote.

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1873–74 Anglo-Asante War (see Chapter 6).[65] In two earlier articles in the illustrated literary magazine *Once a Week*, which were reproduced in *Campaigning in Western Africa*, Rogers set out the context for the British attack on Tuba Kolong, including his own earlier diplomatic work during D'Arcy's governorship and the role of the 'audacious and ambitious priest, Maba', who had 'plunged the country in a continuous civil war'. Entitled 'For Valour' – a reference to Hodge's Victoria Cross – the publication of the articles in the summer of 1872 reflected contemporary public interest in West Africa associated with the recent transfer of the Dutch Gold Coast settlements to Britain.[66]

Although Rogers and the 3rd WIR were in West Africa at the time of D'Arcy's expedition, Rogers was not present at Tuba Kolong. His account of the assault itself was similar to one from 1867 by the Reverend Robert Charles Jenkins, father of a lieutenant who had been killed during the assault, which drew on official despatches and correspondence from other West India Regiment officers.[67] Rogers' account presumably relied on similar sources, supplemented with details that may have come from D'Arcy himself:

> Above the spot chosen to effect the breach rose a banting or temporary tower, erected as a vantage ground whence skilled marksmen were enabled to pick off the leaders in the attack; and here was posted a notorious elephant hunter, who, surrounded with double-barrelled guns, kept up a fatal fire against the devoted storming party, many of whom fell on the very threshold of success. Lieutenant Jenkins and Ensign Kelly, and four men of their regiment, had already met their cruel fate by the side of their gallant commander, and for some moments Colonel D'Arcy stood *alone* within the stockade. Seeing this, and having missed him frequently before, the Marabout chief descended from the tower, and hastened to make surety doubly sure by placing the muzzle of his piece as close as possible to the Governor's head; but, providentially, the gun did not explode, and Colonel D'Arcy, furnished with a rifle by private Hodge, immediately slew his aggressor at a yard's distance![68]

From these details, it seems highly likely that this '*vivâ voce* description' provided the direct basis for Desanges' painting, not least because in the same article Rogers mentioned that the 'celebrated artist of the Victoria Cross Gallery' was currently working on a new painting that depicted the 'last and most important fight, in reassertion of British rights and the supremacy of the English flag'.[69]

[65] [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part I', pp. 549–51; [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part I', pp. 564–70; Rogers, *Campaigning in Western Africa*.
[66] [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part I', p. 550.
[67] Jenkins, 'The settlements of the Gambia'.
[68] [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part II', pp. 569–70. Emphasis in original.
[69] [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part I', p. 550.

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Rogers probably did more than any other individual to shape how the assault on Tuba Kolong was commemorated. No doubt, this partly stemmed from a desire to mark the actions of the West India Regiments, which were held in low esteem by members of the British military in general and were little known among the wider British public.[70] As Rogers put it, 'has it never occurred to the authorities that the many who serve in these colonial regiments, during harassing campaigns, amid swamps and fastnesses, here and elsewhere, do so almost despairingly, because a war medal has never been suggested as a proper recognition of their daily peril?'[71] Rogers also had direct connections to both D'Arcy and Hodge. That he held such a sensitive and important diplomatic role in West Africa indicated that he was trusted by D'Arcy. Rogers also named his first child Beaver D'Arcy Cooke, who was born (and died) in 1868, which suggests a closeness between the two men.[72] He also knew Hodge from when he had enlisted in the 3rd WIR in 1858, when Rogers was a junior officer in Tortola. Subsequently, Hodge joined the 4th WIR when that unit was reformed in 1862 and two companies were transferred from each of the other three regiments.[73] When Hodge was presented the Victoria Cross in Belize at a ceremony that included detachments from the 3rd and 4th WIRs, it was Rogers who read the official citation aloud. He also provided an eyewitness account of this event that was published in the *Army and Navy Gazette*. Describing Hodge as a 'fine specimen of the Creole Zouave', Rogers went on to state that 'his coal-black features and stalwart form will be a conspicuous object among the group of heroes in the Victoria Cross Gallery'.[74] At this stage, there is nothing to suggest that Desanges was contemplating such a work and it may have been that the idea for *The Capture of Tubabakolong* originated from Rogers himself. Indeed, after initially being displayed at the Crystal Palace from 1876, the painting was in Rogers' personal possession by 1880.[75] Given that Desanges' practice

[70] Tim Lockley argues that the 1860s and 1870s saw a significant shift of opinion against the West India Regiments, which was partly tied to their performance and losses in the 1863–64 Anglo-Asante War. See Tim Lockley, *Military Medicine and the Making of Race: Life and Death in the West India Regiments, 1795–1874* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), chapter 6.

[71] E. R. [Ebenezer Rogers], 'British Honduras', *Army and Navy Gazette*, 6 July 1867. The event was also described in Alfred B. Ellis, *History of the First West India Regiment* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1885), pp. 19–20.

[72] This information comes from Isle of Man Parish registers (1598–1936). My thanks to Tim Anderson for sharing this information with me.

[73] Rogers, *Campaigning in Western Africa*, p. 35.

[74] *Army and Navy Gazette*, 6 July 1867.

[75] *London Evening Standard*, 15 February 1876; *Wrexham Advertiser*, 17 July 1880.

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with the earlier Victoria Cross paintings had been to seek a commission from relatives or close acquaintances, this strongly suggests that it was Rogers, perhaps in conjunction with other (former) West India Regiment officers, who paid for the painting.

Rogers was likely an influence on *The Capture of Tubabakolong* in another way, which relates to the marginalisation of Hodge in the painting. His published accounts of the action emphasised the central role played by D'Arcy. For example, Rogers wrote that following the failure of the bombardment the 'situation became critical, and some even counselled retreat; but, happily for the credit of old England, the scion of a noble house held the issue in his hands, and he promptly and scornfully rejected the proposal', while in his version of the specific incident depicted in the painting, Rogers emphasised that D'Arcy had stood *alone* for some time. In contrast, Hodge went largely unmentioned. For example, when Rogers referred to the Victoria Cross in the first of his *Once a Week* articles, its recipient was unnamed. Instead, Rogers emphasised that the award had been 'well and gallantly earned … under the personal leadership of Colonel D'Arcy', thus reducing Hodge's valour to an extension of his commander's efforts. Likewise, in his account of the assault itself, Hodge was mentioned half as much as D'Arcy and relegated to a supporting role: D'Arcy was 'furnished with a rifle by private Hodge', who also went on to serve as his 'able assistant' by cutting down the barricades after the supporting force arrived to capture the settlement.[76] The article closed with Roger explaining why D'Arcy had not received the Victoria Cross:

> Recognition of the service by the home authorities followed in due course; but, unfortunately, the gallant officer was himself ineligible for military distinction, having sold out of the army. Had, however, the action been fought only six months later, when a Royal warrant was issued declaring colonial militiamen and volunteers to be eligible for the much-coveted Victoria Cross, Colonel D'Arcy would, no doubt, have figured as *decoré* beside the humble and sturdy pioneer, Samuel Hodge, who so well and bravely seconded his chief's noble exertions; and who, upon his recommendation, received the reward so justly merited 'For valour' in Western Africa.[77]

There are some differences in detail between Rogers' account and the far shorter inscription that accompanies *The Capture of Tubabakolong*. For example, the former stated that the weapon fired point-blank at D'Arcy did not discharge, while the latter stated that the shot missed. Nonetheless, the overall tone is very similar in insisting on D'Arcy's

[76] [Rogers], '"For Valour" in Western Africa – Part II', pp. 567, 569, 570.
[77] Ibid., p. 570.

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worthiness for the Victoria Cross, technicalities aside, and marginalising the 'humble and sturdy' Hodge, who 'bravely seconded' his commander and, it was to be remembered, was recommended for the award by D'Arcy himself. The overall function of Rogers' account, the painting and its inscription is to centre D'Arcy.

In 1881, Rogers published a novel, *A Modern Sphinx*, which drew heavily on his experiences of military life on both sides of the Atlantic. Much of it is concerned with the lives, relationships and disputes of a series of West India Regiment officers during their service in the British West Indies, including the fictional characters Geoffrey Elrington and Delamere Seagrave. First serialised in 1879 under the title 'Creoline: A Military Novel' – a reference to the name of the White West Indian heroine – the novel is best known today for Rogers' account of Dr Fitzjames, a fictionalised version of James Barry (c.1799–1865), a female army medical officer who passed as a man. As a young officer, Rogers had shared a cabin with Barry during a transatlantic voyage.[78] The novel also features the preparations for and aftermath of a war in the vicinity of Britain's West African 'Combo Colony' in which West India Regiment forces commanded by Colonel Elrington participate. The fictionalised conflict combines several real historical elements: during the 1863–64 Anglo-Asante War, Rogers had served under Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Harley in the defence of Lower Combo and the subsequent expedition up the Gambia, but the novel's 'Combo Expeditionary Force', of which West India Regiment forces are part, is placed under the overall command of a 'rising young general', an allusion to the British expeditionary force that participated in 1873–74 Anglo-Asante War that was led by Garnet Wolseley (see Chapter 6). The conflict also features the storming of a stockaded settlement 'manned by thousands of fanatical Mahomedans'.[79] In the novel's final chapter, entitled 'For Valour', a number of characters gather round a painting depicting this assault that had been created by the 'magic brush of the artist of the famous "Victoria Cross Gallery"':

> It is a battle piece of an awe-inspiring character – fire and smoke, death and glory, pervade the picture. Each individual hero of the incident portrayed bears the

[78] Rogers, *A Modern Sphinx*, 3 vols. The serialisation began in *Colburn's United Service Magazine* (1879, part 1), vol. 149, p. 1. The novel was later republished in one volume in 1895 after a previous unsuccessful renaming as *Madeleine's Mystery*. See Carmen Birkle, '"So go home young ladies": Women and medicine in nineteenth-century Canada', *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, 34 (2014), 126–59, p. 136. On Barry, see Sydney Brandon, 'Barry, James (c. 1799–1865)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[79] Rogers, *A Modern Sphinx*, vol. 3, pp. 232, 243–62, 305.

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rapture of the fight on his clouded brow or in his kindling eye. As is evident at a glance, the principal figure is the gallant Elrington, although more prominence is given to a Zouave pioneer, who, having with his axe hewed down the gate of a stockade held by the enemy, is now calmly engaged in handing the rifles of his dead comrades to his intrepid commander. Amid a perfect storm of bullets from the numerous defenders of the work, the General confidently awaits within the breach the arrival of the supports who, under Seagrave, are seen pressing forward with the bayonet to rescue.[80]

Those inspecting the painting include Elrington and Seagrave, both of whom feature prominently. Just as this is a fictionalised version of *The Capture of Tubabakolong*, so the former character stands in for D'Arcy, while Seagrave serves as an amalgamated proxy for Captain Barnard and Lieutenant Hurst, who in the real attack on Tuba Kolong brought reserve forces into the breach.[81] Although not made explicit, it is strongly implied by the chapter title, the use of 'hero' to refer to Elrington and Seagrave, and by other internal textual evidence – for instance, unlike the real D'Arcy, Elrington had not retired from the army in the novel – that both officers were awarded the Victoria Cross for their role in this action.[82]

Rogers' fictional characterisation of *The Capture of Tubabakolong* in *A Modern Sphinx* encapsulates the ambivalence that lies at the heart of the real Desanges' painting, which was in Rogers' possession by the time the novel was published: 'the principal figure is the gallant Elrington', we are told, something that is 'evident at a glance', even though 'more prominence is given to a Zouave pioneer'.[83] Whether the latter soldier also received the Victoria Cross is unclear in the novel. There was no plot requirement for this because the fictional painting depicted two *other* Victoria Cross recipients, thus already making the engagement a suitable scene for the 'artist of the famous "Victoria Cross Gallery"'. Certainly, the pioneer is unnamed and Rogers reveals nothing about him in the novel. While no doubt partly reflecting the author's expectation of which characters his readers would be interested in, the fictionalised version of the painting and the event it depicts can also be read as a wish-fulfilling *corrective* to the actual history. In the novel, D'Arcy becomes 'Elrington', no technicality preventing the award of the Victoria Cross, while Hodge

[80] Ibid., vol. 3, p 304.
[81] 'Private Samuel Hodge, 4th West India Regiment and the Victoria Cross. By an Army Chaplain', *Beeton's Boy's Own Magazine: An Illustrated Journal of Fact, Fiction, History, and Adventure* 65 (1 May 1868), p. 269; Jenkins, 'The settlements of the Gambia', p. 16.
[82] For example, elsewhere in the chapter it is noted that a fellow West India Regiment officer, Jack Burke, would have received the Victoria Cross 'too' if he had survived the attack. See Rogers, *A Modern Sphinx*, vol. 3, p. 308.
[83] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 304.

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is reduced to an anonymous 'Zouave pioneer', even though Rogers knew him and his background personally. In Rogers' account of the real attack on Tuba Kolong from the early 1870s, Hodge's achievement was downplayed and used as a kind pretext for the celebration of D'Arcy's tragically unrewarded role. This perspective also informed Desanges' painting, probably via Rogers' '*vivâ voce* description', with its marginalised Black hero. The painting's fictional proxy, however, quite rightly – in Rogers' view – commemorates the right (White) man, D'Arcy's fictional *alter ego*, Elrington, thus making the Hodge pretext unnecessary. In short, the version of the painting in *A Modern Sphinx* represents the endpoint of a trajectory in which Hodge's valour was systematically marginalised and downplayed in the immediate years after his actions during the assault on Tuba Kolong. [84]

Conclusions

Hichberger associates the Victoria Cross with the celebration of middle-class qualities relating to character and education, qualities that Hodge was not held to possess.[85] Indeed, this chapter has shown that Hodge was marginalised in visual and textual representations that supposedly celebrated his martial valour, most notably in *The Capture of Tubabakolong* but also in Rogers' account, which likely informed Desanges' work. Concomitant with his marginalisation was a consistent effort to centre D'Arcy, whose technical disqualification from receiving the Victoria Cross was a matter of great regret for Rogers and perhaps fellow West India Regiment officers. To be clear, D'Arcy *himself* urged that Hodge should be awarded the Victoria Cross very early on and was at pains to emphasise the courage demonstrated by ordinary West India Regiment soldiers more broadly. As such, he was part of that long-standing pro-regiment tradition. D'Arcy only sought the award for himself after Hodge had died in Belize in 1868 in order to 'prevent the occasion of so gallant a feat of arms being forgotten'.[86] Rather, the argument here is that Hodge's marginalisation was the product of a wider military-imperial culture that found primary articulation through the representations and actions of

[84] Rogers' account influenced others that followed. See, for example, A. Bisset-Thom, 'Gallant Exploits: V. The Hero of Tubabecolong – Private Hodge', *The Union Jack: Every Boy's Paper*, 36 (5 June 1883), 571–72.

[85] Hichberger, 'Democratising glory?'

[86] D'Arcy to Cambridge, 23 March 1868; D'Arcy to Foster, 25 March 1868, in *Testimonials Presented to Colonel D'Arcy, Late Commanding 3rd West India Regiment, and Late Governor of the Gambia, West Coast of Africa* (undated pamphlet), pp. 19–22, quoted in Beckett, 'The capture of Tubabakolong', p. 266.

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Desanges and Rogers. A further instance of how Hodge's heroism was devalued was evident from a description of *The Capture of Tubabakolong* only a few years after its completion, which accompanied a report concerning the publication of the final part of Rogers' story 'Creoline' in *Colburn's United Service Magazine*. Here the painting was described as depicting 'Colonel D'Arcy in the act of winning the "Cross for Valour" in a skirmish in the West Indies'. This double act of confusion and erasure displayed ignorance about the Victoria Cross recipient, the specific military incident that had occurred less than a quarter of a century before and the West India Regiments themselves, in that it was assumed that they only served in the Caribbean. Significantly, this account of the painting had apparently come from someone who had 'seen this excellent work of art' and is further evidence of Hodge's marginalisation, as well as of wider class and racial bias.[87]

In the painting, Hodge's symbolic demotion is compounded by his posture, face in profile and in a kneeling stance – having been shot – as he looks up to D'Arcy. Hodge's pose is remarkably redolent of the abolitionist icon, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?' While the peak of the British campaign had passed, anti-slavery had become a 'hegemonic ideology' in Victorian society, entrenching the notion that people of African descent lacked full agency.[88] The supplicating figure of the anti-slavery movement remained a staple of the Victorian imagination of emancipation – and Blackness – in Britain and beyond. For example, the Freedmen's Memorial to Abraham Lincoln, installed in Washington, DC in 1876, employed the same image of a kneeling Black figure, there at the feet of the Great Emancipator.[89] Even after formal emancipation, this racial-martial figure remained trapped in a posture of eternal gratitude. Chapter 3 argued that this found its military equivalent in the steady Black soldier. In Desanges' painting, the two are combined and Hodge – a clear hero and the first African-Caribbean soldier to win the Victoria Cross – is reduced to a trope that confines him and denies his agency.

More than 130 years after the creation of *The Capture of Tubabakolong*, the government of the British Virgin Islands, which includes Tortola, the island on which Hodge had been born, issued a commemorative $2

[87] *Wrexham Advertiser*, 17 July 1880.

[88] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 208, 206–10.

[89] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018). See also Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Smithsonian, 1990), pp. 153–219.

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stamp to mark the new millennium. The miniature sheet depicts Hodge breaking a stockade at Tuba Kolong. Whether its designer, Julian Vasarhelyi, was aware of the Victoria Cross painting is unknown, but the image certainly serves as a counterpoint to it. Hodge not only holds an axe but is wielding it, his standing posture, mid-act, contrasting with Desanges' kneeling figure. Moreover, while two other Black West India Regiment soldiers are close by to Hodge, D'Arcy is nowhere to be seen.[90] As such, and although the British Virgin Islands remain a UK Overseas Territory, the image echoes those other African-Caribbean figures in public monuments and on stamps whose representation is associated with the decolonisation of the region. Figures such as Karl Broodhagen's 'Emancipation Statue' in Barbados – popularly known as the 'Bussa statue', after the African man who has been credited for leading the 1816 uprising – are also a direct riposte to the kneeling enslaved figure.[91] The miniature sheet portrays an active soldier, not an anti-slavery icon transferred to the battlefield.

At the same time, however, it is significant that the identity of Tuba Kolong's defenders is not revealed in the miniature sheet. The effect, intentional or otherwise, is to draw a veil over what it meant to serve in the West India Regiments and fight for the British Empire. As such, the British Virgin Islands' philatelic commemoration is yet another partial representation of Hodge's valour, albeit one that articulates the present-day concerns of a territory with a large African-Caribbean majority population, rather than those of a Victorian artist commissioned to use the official recognition of an African-Caribbean soldier's actions as a pretext for the depiction of White aristocratic heroism. In both the painting and miniature sheet, the reality of Hodge's actions is occluded and he is cast as a prop to a White hero or placed on an oddly empty battlefield. Ultimately, both capture the difficulty of depicting Hodge's heroism and the ambiguous place of the West India Regiments in the mid-Victorian period – as well as in the post-colonial present. The next chapter will explore this ambiguity further by focusing on their place within the field of racialised violence at greater length.

[90] 'Private Samuel Hodge V.C., storming the stockade, Tubabecelong, Gambia, 30th June 1866', New Millennium miniature sheet, British Virgin Islands (2000), www.stampsoftheworld.co.uk/wiki/British_Virgin_Islands_2000_New_Millennium#tab=Miniature_Sheets, last accessed 18 August 2023.

[91] Laurence Brown, 'Monuments to freedom, monuments to nation: The politics of emancipation and remembrance in the Eastern Caribbean', *Slavery & Abolition*, 23:3 (2002), 93–116.

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