

General Sir Henry Tombs, C.B.

Hampshire Advertiser - 8 August 1874

Demise of General Sir Henry Tombs, C.B. – We recorded on Wednesday the demise of Sir Henry Tombs, one of the heroes in the work of putting down the mutiny of the native army of India, which broke out in March, 1857. He recaptured Dewangiri, on the 2nd of April, 1865. Deceased died of cancer in the throat. He came here from Paris, where he had undergone a surgical operation.

Funeral of Sir Henry Tombs. – The mortal remains of General Sir Henry Tombs were deposited in Carisbrooke Cemetery, the Rev. J.H. Connor, M.A., vicar of Newport and rural dean officiating. The funeral was quite private, in accordance with the wish of the widow of the gallant gentleman. The 101st and 106th Regiments stationed at Parkhurst were represented by some officers and some non-commissioned officers of these regiments. The deceased was born in 1825, and was thus only 49 years of age when he died, not in battle, but from the effects of a cancer in the head, which had compelled him some months ago to return to England. He was made a C.B. in 1858, and a K.C.B. in 1868. He received the bronze star for the Gwalior campaign, medal and two clasps for the Sutlej campaign, medal and two clasps for the Punjaub campaign of 1848-49, medal and two clasps for the Mutiny, and the medal and clasp for Dewangiri. Her Majesty was also pleased to confer on him the Victoria Cross for his “nobel behaviour” before Delhi, on the 9th of July, 1857. Sir Henry attained the rank of Major-General March 11, 1867. He married in 1869, Georgina Janet, youngest daughter of the late Admiral Sir James Stirling.

The York Herald - 7 August 1874

Death Sir Henry Tombs, V.C.

The Bengal Artillery has, by the death of Major General Sir Henry Tombs, K.C.B., V.C., lost one of its brightest ornaments. Born in 1825, he was only 49 years of age when he died, not in battle, but from the effects of a cancer in the head, which had compelled him some months ago to return to England, and, as he hoped, only temporarily to give up the command of the Onde division. Educated at Addiscombe, he obtained his first commission in the Bengal Artillery at the early age of 16, and ere he had been two years in India took part in the Gwalior campaign, for his conduct in which he was mentioned in dispatches. Scarcely had Scindiah's Mahrattas been subdued than the first Sikh war took place, and Lieutenant Tombs was again in the field. He served with his battery at the actions of Moodkee, Ferozeshah, and Buddinah, and as aide camp to Sir Harry Smith at Aliwal, being a second time mentioned in despatches. In the second Sikh war he was present as D.A.Q.M. General of artillery, and his name being a third time recorded in dispatches, he was, on becoming a captain in 1854, promoted to the rank of brevet major. When the Indian mutiny broke out Major Tombs found himself in command of a troop of horse artillery, and at once made his mark as an able and gallant officer. He was present at the siege of Delhi, and it was there that his name came prominently before the public. On the occasion of a sortie his subaltern, Lieutenant Hill, was attacked and almost overpowered by several of the enemy. Major Tombs saw his danger, hastened to join the unequal combat, saved Hill's life, was wounded in doing so, and had his own life saved by Hill, the gallant pair eventually effecting their retreat to the British position. He subsequently took part in the siege and capture of Lucknow, and many other operations, distinguishing himself on every occasion, and being repeatedly mentioned in dispatches in the highest terms. He was

also spoken of in the most flattering terms by Lord Panmure in the House of Lords. For his gallantry in rescuing Lieutenant Hill, Major Tombs received the Victoria Cross, and for his services generally was promoted in rapid succession to the rank of Lieutenant-colonel and colonel. He was a few years later made a Knight commander of the Bath. In 1865, when only 40 years old, he became brigadier general of the Gwalior district, which he held for two years; and in 1871, having become in 1867 a major-general, he received the command of the Onde division. Sir Henry married some four years ago, and leaves a widow to deplore the loss of a husband who was one of the best and bravest soldiers in the British army.

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Major General Sir Henry Tombs – Carisbrooke Cemetery

Article from Isle of Wight County Press 4 July 2014 by Martin Neville

A memorial service was held at the graveside of the Island's most highly decorated British Army officer, Victoria Cross recipient Maj Gen Sir Henry Tombs.

Members of Tidworth-based 28/143 Battery of 19 Regiment Royal Artillery (The Scottish Gunners), under the command of Maj. Daniel Herberts, and the IW branch of the Royal Artillery Association (RAA), gathered at Carisbrooke Cemetery last Wednesday.

Born in Calcutta, Maj Gen Tombs died in Newport on August 2, 1874, aged 48.

He was awarded the VC, the highest award for bravery, during the Siege of Delhi, on July 9, 1857.

As reported in The London Gazette at the time, Maj Gen Tombs, a 31-year-old major in the Bengal Horse Artillery at that time, twice came to the rescue of his subaltern, Lt. James Hills) who also won the VC for defending his position), killing enemy on each occasion.

As result, he was immediately promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. The short memorial service was conducted by the Rev Roger Whatley, gunner chaplain for the Island's RAA branch, with a piper's lament, followed by the laying of a wreath by Maj. Herberts.

After the service, a luncheon was held at the Lifeboat Inn, East Cowes, at which Maj Herberts presented a 28/143 Battery plaque to the RAA branch.

When 28/143 Battery was formed, it was known as 'Tombs's Troop', named after Maj Gen Tombs, a name which lives on to this day.

During his illustrious career, he went on to command the Royal Home Artillery and receive decorations including the Order of the Bath, Indian Mutiny Medal, Sutlej Medal, Bronze Star and the India General Service Medal.

His VC is displayed in the Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich, London.

From the Dictionary of National Biography:

In 1869 Sir Henry married Georgina Janet, youngest daughter of Admiral Sir James Stirling; their child, Henry Edwin died in infancy and is remembered on the reverse of Sir Henry's grave marker.

Sir Henry resigned his command due to ill health and returned to England.