ISSN 2754-5547

https://doi.org/10.52230/JVON5553

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To cite this article: Jacob Chalkley, ‘Rugged Masculinity: British Settler Colonial Soldiers in the Boer War’, *Journal of Australian, Canadian, and Aotearoa New Zealand Studies* 4 (August 2024): 71-95, https://doi.org/10.52230/EXZX5309

‘Rugged Masculinity: British Settler Colonial Soldiers in the Boer War’

Jacob Chalkley [1]

The Boer War or the Anglo-Boer War, which took place between 1899 and 1902, was fought between the British empire and the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. More specifically, with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the Boer republics, the restriction of voting rights which excluded many British citizens living in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and the refusal of the United Kingdom (UK) to remove its troops from the borders of the Boer states, war broke out.[2] As a result, Canada (which became the first Dominion of the British empire upon its confederation in 1867), the Australian colonies and later federated Commonwealth of Australia (this took place in 1901, and Australia followed Canada in becoming a Dominion), and the colony of New Zealand (it became a Dominion in 1907), which had large white and English-speaking populations, aided the UK in her war against the Boers, who were farmers of Dutch descent living in southern Africa.[3] This imperial war thus saw British settler colonial troops fight alongside metropolitan British soldiers on the veldt, and their involvement was thoroughly recorded in both metropolitan British and British settler colonial newspapers of the time. Although soldiers had long been depicted as heroic and masculine, as was also the case in

[1] I would like to thank Professors Cecilia Morgan and Carl Bridge, the Editor-in-chief of the journal, Dr. Jatinder Mann, and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful advice and comments on this article.
[2] Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 10-15.
[3] *Ibid*.

the Boer War, the British settler colonial troops were depicted in a more exotic and rugged way compared to their metropolitan British counterparts.

This article makes use of primary sources, especially newspapers from throughout the British empire, to demonstrate how metropolitan British and British settler colonial soldiers were viewed during the war. Newspapers such as *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The New Zealand Mail*, and especially the Toronto-based *Globe* were used as they were leading British settler colonial newspapers of the time and held no extreme political views. Furthermore, regarding secondary sources, the works of Carman Miller and Craig Wilcox, as well as the edited work of John Crawford and Ian McGibbon, were utilised to highlight the role of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in southern Africa. Unlike these national works however, this article seeks to look at the British settler societies together as a unit, in hopes of better highlighting the rugged and masculine image they shared; although a more in-depth study of how these depictions varied between those societies would certainly be worthy of exploration in a larger work. This decision to analyse the British settler societies together also stems in part from Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich's argument that historians have become '[b]linded by national historiographies' rather than focusing on 'the trans-oceanic British world', which 'was always the heart of the imperial enterprise'.[4]

Literature on masculinity, especially in how it applies to soldiers, was also used as a foundation from which to discuss the depictions made of British settler colonial soldiers during the Boer War. More specifically, the works of Graham Dawson and Mark Moss provide a basis from which to study the connection between

[4] Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, 'Mapping the British World,' in *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, ed. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 10.

soldiers and masculinity, meanwhile, the works of Paula Krebs and Heather Streets highlight the connection that existed between masculinity and the British empire. This article therefore situates itself within this existing research by looking at soldier masculinity within the context of the Boer War, and additionally by looking specifically at British settler colonial soldiers.

Although this article aims to study the shared experience of British settler colonial soldiers in the Boer War, especially in terms of how their masculinity was depicted, it is important to first look at why British settler colonial soldiers were given a ruggedly masculine image, as well as whether these depictions were similar enough that the soldiers from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand should even be analysed together. In regard to the Canadian soldiers, Amy Shaw argues that they were depicted by national newspapers as 'hardy, northern, and youthful', which was 'a good indication of how the country saw itself'.[5] Shaw adds that 'there was a clear sense that the soldiers were being presented, representing Canada, to the world, and especially Britain', and that their 'physical appearance was evidence of Canada's national qualities'.[6] Therefore, Canadian troops were depicted in a way that bestowed them with qualities that were seemingly Canadian. Similarly, Effie Karageorgos argues that the Australian troops were 'subjected to the application of gendered cultural ideals to their lives and character' and that the 'bushman model of masculinity was certainly applied to the troops who volunteered for service in South Africa'.[7] Additionally, Karageorgos adds that the 'South African War soldiers were expected to exhibit Australian values', thus showing that like the Canadians,

[5] Amy Shaw, 'The Boer War, Masculinity, and Citizenship in Canada, 1899-1902,' in *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History*, ed. Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 101.
[6] *Ibid*.
[7] Effie Karageorgos, 'The Bushman at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899-1902,' *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 22, 32.

Australian troops were expected to be representatives of their country.[8] In terms of the New Zealand troops, J.O.C. Phillips claims that 'like the horses which they had brought with them, the New Zealanders were seen to be physically superior – immensely strong, tough and courageous' and that they were well-suited for the war in southern Africa due to their 'frontier heritage' which provided them with 'a special ability to rough it'.[9] Hence, like the Canadians and Australians, the New Zealand soldiers were depicted as ruggedly masculine due to their upbringing in the harsh climates and terrains of the British settler colonial societies.

Additionally, John Mitcham argues that the British settler colonial troops 'evoked an image that was both familial and strikingly different' and 'served to reinforce stereotypes of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa as frontier communities promoting a lifestyle of hard work, virtue, and manly endeavor'.[10] This is echoed by Mark Sheftall, who states that the superior fighting ability of the British settler colonial troops was seen as 'an innate quality derived from their "frontier" attributes' and that this belief 'first enjoyed a massive surge in cultural visibility during their involvement in the South African War'.[11] Therefore, from looking individually at Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as from looking at them together, it can be seen that the British settler colonial soldiers shared a common image of being ruggedly masculine and superior fighters. Additionally, the troops were viewed as representatives of the British settler colonial societies and were thus bestowed with characteristics that seemingly represented their settler colonial

[8] *Ibid*., 24.
[9] J. O. C. Phillips, 'Rugby, War and the Mythology of the New Zealand Male,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 18, no. 2 (1984): 85.
[10] John Mitcham, Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 82.
[11] Mark Sheftall, 'Mythologising the Dominion Fighting Man: Australian and Canadian Narratives of the First World War Soldier, 1914-39,' *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 1 (2015): 85-86.

origins. Although there were some differences in their depictions, they shared a common frontier image. Thus, this article will endeavour to shed light on the idea of masculinity as it applies to soldiers during the Boer War, and especially on how the British settler colonial soldiers were collectively seen to have a rugged masculinity that the metropolitan British troops did not.

On the day Canadian soldiers left for the war in southern Africa, the troops marched through the streets of Toronto, and were described 'as splendid a set of men as can be gathered together in any country' and as '[s]trong, manly young fellows with the daring spirit of adventure evident in their very motions'.[12] The Canadian soldiers who volunteered to aid the British empire in southern Africa were thus depicted as both national and imperial heroes. This representation also supports Paula Krebs' argument that in the Boer War the 'soldier is the ultimate figure of masculinity, combining bravery with honor and strength'.[13] Graham Dawson adds that 'the soldier has become a quintessential figure of masculinity' as '[m]ilitary virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood'.[14] Additionally, he states that in the later half of the nineteenth century, the notion of being a man in the British empire was linked with serving the empire, with 'war as its ultimate test and opportunity'.[15] This notion of imperial manhood likely played a role in the decision of numerous Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders to volunteer for service in southern Africa. However, Dawson importantly notes that although '[m]asculinities

[12] *Souvenir: Toronto Contingent of Volunteers for Service in Anglo-Boer War* (Toronto: Toronto Printing Co., 1899), 1.
[13] Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 107.
[14] Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1.
[15] *Ibid*.

are lived out in the flesh', they are 'fashioned in the imagination'.[16] This is vital to the study of masculinity as it highlights both that there is not a singular definition or example of masculinity, as well as the fact that masculinity is created in the mind, thus leaving opportunity for external influences which can lead to reimagining and redefining. As will be shown, it is the fact that masculinity is imagined which contributed to the rugged and wild depiction of British settler colonial troops in the Boer War.

Furthermore, during the late nineteenth century, concern in the UK began to grow over the health of citizens, especially of those living in urban working-class environments. Dawson argues that with the growth of imperial competition, this concern 'became focused on the condition of the manly body, particularly that of the soldier, as its most visible sign'.[17] Additionally, Heather Streets claims that these fears of racial degradation reached a high during the Boer War as concern arose surrounding the military implications of poor soldier health.[18] More specifically, Anna Davin argues that this concern reached a peak when recruitment for the Boer War began, as of those who volunteered, 'a great many of them were found to be physically unfit for service'.[19] To specify, she states that many volunteers were 'too small, for instance, or too slight, or with heart troubles, weak lungs, rheumatic tendencies, flat feet, or bad teeth'.[20] The rate at which volunteers were turned away further increased the fear of racial degradation as in 1899, 330 out of every 1000 volunteers were rejected due to health concerns.[21] The Boer War thus brought

[16] *Ibid*.
[17] Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 148.
[18] Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 106-107.
[19] Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood,' in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 93.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] *Ibid*.

increased attention to the physical health and well-being of British people. The poor health of those who volunteered to serve in southern Africa also challenged the ideal of British soldiers as tall, strong, and masculine heroes of the empire. Hence, all eyes were on the soldiers of the British settler colonial societies when war began, with comparisons being made between the metropolitan British troops and the British settler colonial soldiers.

Moreover, this fear of racial degradation was not restricted to the UK. Mark Moss argues that this concern was also present in Canada, especially surrounding Canadian youth.[22] Similarly to the UK, Moss claims that living in urban areas was perceived to be 'sapping the vigour' of the population and was seen 'to threaten the overall quality of its citizens'.[23] What differed from the UK however, was that Canada and the other British settler colonial societies were seen to have a climate and landscape that promoted strong and healthy children.[24] As a result, in the case of Canada, sports such as ice hockey and lacrosse were 'used to develop not only the physical abilities required of a warrior but the qualities of character that seemed to be in decline among Canada's young people'.[25] These activities were therefore seen to be 'capable of instilling habits of teamwork and loyalty' and serve as an antidote to 'the perceived weakening of the nation's young men'.[26] In addition, hunting was a skill promoted in the British settler colonial societies as it was seen to develop 'courage and skill with a gun' as well as 'offer[ ] the actual experience of killing'.[27] As will be shown, this skill of shooting and hunting was seen to be a natural skill of

[22] Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 16.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] *Ibid*., 16-17.
[25] *Ibid*., 17.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*.

British settler colonial troops during the Boer War, and a skill which the British soldiers had to be taught.

In addition, the masculinity which British settler colonial troops were seen to posses can be accounted for in part by the medical and physical restrictions placed on volunteers. Geoffrey Brooke and Lydia Cheung argue that New Zealand, Australian, and Canadian troops were 'positively selected on physical attributes', and that these restrictions for the Boer War were especially stringent due to the limited number of troops that the British settler colonial societies needed to send.[28] The relatively small number of troops sent by the British settler colonial societies to southern Africa thus allowed for greater selectivity, resulting in only the most capable and able-bodied men being sent. Brooke and Cheung state that this meant that for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the mean height of soldiers sent was sixty-eight inches, which was tall.[29] That said, Brooke and Cheung add that although the British settler colonial societies were highly selective in their recruitment, those in these settler societies were generally tall as they had 'an historically high standard of living'.[30] The height of these soldiers hence likely contributed to the depiction of British settler colonial troops as being the most masculine and able fighters in the war. Furthermore, according to the 10 April 1902 issue of *The Globe*, Canadian recruits could not be 'under twenty years, nor over forty', could not be 'under 5 feet 4 inches in height, nor more than 5 feet 11 inches', were not allowed to 'weigh more than 180 pounds', and had 'to have a chest measurement of not less than thirty-four inches'.[31] In addition, it was required that recruits had to 'be able to ride and shoot'

[28] Geoffrey Brooke and Lydia Cheung, 'Male Height and Wellbeing in Nineteenth Century New Zealand: An Analysis of the Boer War Contingents,' *New Zealand Economic Papers* 54, no. 2 (2020): 191, 205.
[29] *Ibid*., 204.
[30] *Ibid*., 205.
[31] 'Recruiting Regulations', *The Globe*, 10 April 1902.

and that particular attention would 'be paid to the eyesight and condition of the teeth of the recruit'.[32] As this article was from near the end of the war when more men were needed, these restrictions had even been lowered so that '[m]en of shorter stature and lighter weight than in previous contingents [could] be accepted', granted the 'minimum stature' had only been reduced to 'an inch less' and only 'five pounds in the requirement as to the weight'.[33] Therefore, the troops sent by the British settler colonial societies to the veldt were large in stature and had previous knowledge in riding and shooting, which surely contributed to their depiction as wild and rugged.

Furthermore, the Boer War gained attention throughout the British empire, and was written about extensively in both books and newspapers. Additionally, these publications not only discussed the politics and events of the war, but also about the various troops fighting for the empire. Miller argues that the British settler colonial troops caught the attention and imagination of famous authors such as Rudyard Kipling and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.[34] More specifically, in his work, *The Great Boer War*, Doyle describes the British settler colonial troops, stating that 'one might see the hard-faced Canadians, the loose-limbed dashing Australians, fire-blooded and keen' as well as 'the dark New Zealanders, with a Māori touch here and there in their features'.[35] Doyle's description of the British settler colonial soldiers demonstrates that they were depicted in popular media as appearing exotic and ruggedly masculine. Additionally, he goes into greater detail in his book, describing a Canadian unit, Strathcona's Horse, as 'a fine body of Canadian troopers', 'distinguished by their fine physique, and by the lassoes, cowboy stirrups, and large

[32] 'Recruiting Regulations'.
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] Carman Miller, *Canada's Little War: Fighting for the British Empire in Southern Africa, 1899-1902* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2003), 89.
[35] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (Toronto: George N. Morang & Company, 1900), 318.

spurs of the Northwestern plains'.[36] Doyle's detailed depiction of the unit shows that the foreign and wild aspects of their dress and equipment were highlighted. Doyle also emphasises the fact that many of the soldiers in the unit were from the western portion of Canada, thus reproducing and exaggerating the image of them as rugged Canadian cowboys. As the work of Doyle shows, differences between metropolitan British and British settler colonial troops were brought front and centre in the media and were often exaggerated.

Moreover, the depiction of British settler colonial troops as being ruggedly masculine was not restricted to the books of famous British writers, but it also was prevalent in newspaper articles. This depiction was not only found in the British press which wanted to show the British settler colonial troops as exotic but was also embraced in the British settler colonial society media as well. For example, the 16 February 1900 edition of *The Globe* uses the heading 'Splendid Men' to introduce an article on the Strathcona's Horse unit.[37] It continues by stating that the men in the unit were all 'of the characteristic western type', and more specifically, 'strong and hardy-looking men of varying height, from five feet six inches to five feet eleven inches', and 'all excellent horsemen and expert rifle shots'.[38] Shaw adds that this western depiction of Canadian soldiers was likely in part caused by many of the men being 'former members of the North-West Mounted Police' who chose to wear a Stetson hat as they 'preferred it to the standard-issue white pith helmet'.[39] Therefore, similar to the work of Doyle, Canadian newspapers also promulgated the western image of the Strathcona's Horse unit, and emphasised the large physical stature of the men in the unit. In addition, Canadian newspapers did not only promote the

[36] *Ibid.*, 422.
[37] 'Arrived at Ottawa', *The Globe*, 16 February 1900.
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] Shaw, 'The Boer War', 109.

stereotypes of their own troops, but also those of the other British settler colonial societies. For example, in the 2 July 1902 issue of *The Globe*, in describing a review of the British settler colonial troops in London following the war, it states that the 'Canadian contingent was largest and made a fine display, the men marching with true military bearing', and that the 'Australian contingent was next in strength, and, like the New Zealanders, was made up of sun-browned, brawny men'.[40] This image of rugged masculinity in British settler colonial troops was not merely the way British media depicted the soldiers of the British settler colonial societies, but also how those societies viewed themselves and each other.

In addition to the way in which British settler colonial troops were physically described in the media, the abilities and actions of the British settler colonial soldiers were also frequently described in books and newspapers from the time. Miller argues that literature from the period not only described British settler colonial soldiers 'as physically larger, stronger, and fitter than the British Tommy', but also 'cast colonial troops as youthful, courageous, resourceful, unorthodox and energetic'.[41] The behaviour of the British settler colonial soldiers was therefore also a matter of interest to the media in their telling of the war, and as can be seen, was usually depicted as somewhat wild and comparatively undisciplined. This is similarly argued by Krebs, who states that authors such as Kipling wrote of how the 'Australians and New Zealanders and Canadians were recognized as superior in bushfighting'.[42] Such depictions demonstrate that British settler colonial troops were seen to be particularly well-suited for fighting in harsh terrain and in an informal style of warfare, which connects to the notion that British settler colonial troops came from places of

[40] 'Dominion Day Banquet', *The Globe*, 2 July 1902.
[41] Miller, *Canada's Little War*, 89.
[42] Krebs, *Gender*, 171.

severe climates and inhospitable terrains. It is also important to note that the rugged masculinity which British settler colonial troops were seen to possess because of their place of birth was not relegated to popular media, but also reached into official government documents. The report written by the Elgin Royal Commission of 1903 claims that 'the freedom and space in these uncrowded countries, and the easier and more rural life of a large part of the inhabitants, their intelligence, their resourcefulness, their knowledge of country, and the fact that a great number are first-class horsemen, readily enable them to become, if properly trained and disciplined, as fine a body of Mounted Infantry as any General would desire to command'.[43] The report continues by stating that colonial troops are 'half soldiers by their up-bringing', and that '[t]o no body of men could this commendation be more justly applied than to the corps specially enlisted in North-West Canada, which, under the name of Strathcona's Horse, again and again distinguished itself'.[44] Notions of the rugged nature of the British settler colonial societies, and of the soldiers that came from these societies, therefore reached even into the highest levels of the military and government.

Craig Wilcox brings attention to the rough and wild image that the Australian bushmen occupied in the media during the war in southern Africa. He states that the bushmen were believed to naturally posses and excel in the masculine skills of riding and shooting due to their colonial upbringing.[45] As a result of the belief that these skills 'were indeed natural to Australian men', some began to worry 'that drill was a counterproductive affectation' and 'something that hindered rather than harnessed

[43] *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1903), 81.
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8-9.

latent military ability'.[46] This perspective contributed to the idea that the unorthodox and resourceful nature of these troops would allow them to better fight the Boers, and thus needed to be embraced. According to Wilcox, such beliefs were also promoted by Sir Edward Hutton, a British military commander, who wanted to see the 'wit and wildness' of the Australian troops 'channelled against the enemy rather than their officers and hapless civilians by means of firm discipline'.[47] Once again, the rugged and undisciplined image of the colonial troops was even embraced by senior military officers. This image, however, was not only held by the Australian bushmen. Wilcox claims that '[p]opular wisdom held that to outmanoeuvre mounted farmers', the military would need 'its own mounted farmers, men who had ridden and shot and found their way around the countryside since boyhood', and most importantly, 'natural soldiers who had never had their initiative stifled by military drill and discipline'.[48] It was believed that such soldiers could be found in the harshest terrains of the empire, such as in the Canadian prairie, the Australian bush, and the southern African veldt.[49] Many of the contingents were also named after these seemingly rugged environments, such as the Roughriders from both Canada and New Zealand, as well as the Bushmen from Australia.[50] The colonial troops were therefore seen, and projected, to possess ruggedly masculine upbringings and skills which would help the British empire in its fight against the Boers. Mitcham adds that these perceptions were also reinforced by the British settler colonial societies themselves, as they largely 'embraced this frontier persona and incorporated it into ongoing construction of national identity', and that 'Canadians, New Zealanders, and

[46] *Ibid*.
[47] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War* , 326.
[48] *Ibid*., 30-31.
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] *Ibid*.

in particular, Australians relished the opportunity to depict their societies as masculine “Better Britains,” embracing the full cultural and racial heritage of their ancestors but flourishing in the purer environments of their frontier societies’.[51]

Moreover, newspapers throughout the empire latched onto this idea that the unorthodox and resourceful nature of the British settler colonial troops made them superior troops in southern Africa. Such newspapers include *The New Zealand Mail*, which stated on 14 February 1901 that the horsemanship of British soldiers ‘may have seemed somewhat stiff to colonial eyes’, but that ‘the machine-like regularity—the free, quick, even pendulum-like swing—of the foot soldiers, must have been a revelation to many’.[52] Such excerpts model the more casual and undisciplined image which the British settler colonial troops received in the press. That stated, their skill was also expressed in the media. The 11 December 1900 issue of *The Clarence and Richmond Examiner* stated that during a review of the troops in Pretoria, although the Australian soldiers rode on horses that were ‘more or less, unbroken and untrained’, the solders and their new horses ‘wheeled into line and marched past with the exactness of a machine’.[53] Such a report was indicative of the notion that Australian soldiers, and colonial troops more broadly, were natural riders. Additionally, in the same article, an encounter between a New Zealand Victoria Cross recipient and an Australian bushmen soldier is recounted. The excerpt states that the New Zealander remarked on the skills of the bushmen troops, and stated that while fighting alongside them, he ‘hardly ever saw a single Bushman’, to which the Australian confirmed that the ‘ability to take cover comes naturally to the bushmen’.[54] The notion that bushmen troops were naturally better at camouflaging

[51] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, 69.
[52] ‘The Imperials’, *The New Zealand Mail*, 14 February 1901.
[53] ‘The Bushmen in South Africa’, *The Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 11 December 1900.
[54] *Ibid*.

into their environment, and the fact that this was reported by an Australian soldier and published in an Australian newspaper, demonstrates that these stereotype depictions were embraced by the British settler colonial societies and acted out by their troops. Karageorgos adds that these men, 'who travelled to South Africa as martial representatives of Australia', 'personified the bushman ideal, and they believed in their superiority as Australians', thus becoming 'representative of [Australia's] prominent masculine ideal'.[55]

Furthermore, these British settler colonial society newspapers which promote the rugged depictions of colonial troops also demonstrate a growing sense of national pride. For example, the 12 February 1901 edition of *The Examiner* stated 'that the great Commonwealth of Australia contains in the back-blocks thousands of sturdy, loyal fellows' who were 'born in the saddle with a gun in their hand, every man of whom is worth twenty Tommy Atkinses on the veldt', and 'who can beat the Boer hands down at his own game'.[56] This article, which was written shortly after the federation of the Australian colonies, shows that the strong and skilled depiction of Australian soldiers was used to help promote the greatness of the new Dominion. The same article also stated that 'New Zealand ha[d] just sent away its sixth contingent of 500 men', and that these men were 'the very flower of New Zealand manhood'.[57] Once again, this excerpt seems to convey national pride, as it promotes the idea that even by the sixth contingent, New Zealand was still able to send men that met the masculine expectations of a colonial soldier. Additionally, the 20 June 1900 issue of *The Sydney Morning Herald* appears to promote a broader Britannic nationalism. More specifically, it states that the southern African troops 'are some of

[55] Karageorgos, 'The Bushman', 18, 28.
[56] 'South Africa and New Zealand', *The Examiner*, 12 February 1901.
[57] *Ibid*.

the best shots in the whole force', and that because many of them live 'among mountain ranges where game is still plentiful', they 'have trained every faculty that is valuable to warfare against such an enemy as the Boer'.[58] In terms of the other British settler colonial societies, it states that the Australian soldiers were 'all good riders, and nearly all skillful marksmen', that New Zealand sent 'men with Māori blood in their veins', and that Canada had sent a force 'that wins admiration from every soldier'.[59] The fact that the article goes on to state that these British settler colonial troops 'can challenge comparison with any battalion of Lord Roberts' army' appears to show a sense of Britannic pride which uses the rugged and masculine depiction of British settler colonial troops to show the increasingly prominent role of the British settler colonial societies in the British empire.[60] Mitcham notes that 'the settler communities promoted their image as masculine frontiersmen as part of an identity construction that afforded an elevated status among the white leadership of the empire', and that as a result, 'they became copartners in forging and disseminating this message to British and colonial societies alike'.[61]

In addition, the promotion of the seemingly natural abilities of the British settler colonial troops to convey the importance of the British settler colonial societies to the empire can be seen in the 9 December 1901 issue of *The Wanganui Herald*. The article begins by stating that 'the value of colonial troops has been frequently demonstrated and freely admitted by all those in high command, from Lord Roberts downward'.[62] It continues by stating that the value of the British settler colonial troops can in part be explained by the fact that they 'were more at home in the country than

[58] 'The Army in South Africa', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 1900.
[59] *Ibid*.
[60] *Ibid*.
[61] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, 92.
[62] 'Colonial Troops', *The Wanganui Herald*, 9 December 1901.

their British-bred and trained relatives, who were quite at sea in the country of such vast distances, varied conformation, and great differences in temperature and climate'.[63] Moreover, compared to the metropolitan British troops, 'the Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand mounted infantry were from the first of the greatest assistance in helping Lord Roberts to carry out his great programme of cutting off the Boers from their chief centres of supply'.[64] This excerpt demonstrates that the British settler colonial troops were advertised in the media as being superior soldiers in places with harsh terrain and extreme climate. In other words, unlike the metropolitan British, the British settler colonial troops were seen to be able to beat the Boers at their own game. The article also states that there was a concern regarding how troops from throughout the British empire 'would stand the terrible strain of a rapid forced march through the desert under a pitiless sun', however it was discovered that the 'colonials had had experience and been inured to the hardships in their own countries, and bore the strain better than their less accustomed British comrades'.[65] In terms of the importance of the British settler colonial societies to upholding the empire, it also states that '[f]rom that period the colonials have been in constant requisition' due to their 'good work in both the Transvaal and Orange colonies, where they are still upholding the reputation of being resourceful soldiers, who fight with their heads as well as their rifles'.[66] The media thus depicted the British settler colonial societies as militarily invaluable to the British empire, as it was perceived that they could 'send many thousands of splendid mounted men to the assistance of the Mother Country whenever the necessity

[63] 'Colonial Troops'.
[64] *Ibid*.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] *Ibid*.

ar[ose]'.[67] Mitcham notes that these positive reviews of the British settler colonial troops may have in part been because in 'an era of doubt about the state of British manhood, the rugged colonial citizen-soldier constituted a masculine ideal type that offered a glimmer of hope for the reinvigoration of the imperial spirit'.[68]

Moreover, the rugged and masculine depiction of the British settler colonial troops could have also derived from the large amount of praise that they received from high-ranking British officers, politicians, and members of the royal family. The 12 February 1901 edition of *The Age* claims that 'Lord Roberts stated that he deeply regretted the departure from South Africa of the first Australian and Canadian contingents, whose absence from the field, he said, materially impaired the mobility and efficiency of the army' and that he 'recognised in the colonial troops many soldierly qualities, and heartily appreciated their self-sacrificing, uncomplaining attitude on all occasions'.[69] The praise from Lord Roberts thus not only spoke to the abilities of the British settler colonial troops, but also clearly differentiates them from the metropolitan British troops. This is similarly reported in the 13 June 1900 issue of *The Otago Daily Times*. In this report, the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, in echoing the Prince of Wales, remarks on 'the splendid qualities which the colonial soldiers have displayed—their magnificent courage, their admirable training, their great skill', and that in many battles, 'not only have they assisted, but they have borne the brunt of them'.[70] The article continues to quote Lord Salisbury, stating that the colonies 'have sent their best material, their best blood, and the manhood of our colonies to fight with us side by side', and that he has 'heard what magnificent troops [the] colonial troops are, how well disciplined they are, what dash and courage they

[67] *Ibid*.
[68] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, 95.
[69] 'The Boer War', *The Age*, 12 February 1901.
[70] 'British Empire League', *The Otago Daily Times*, 13 June 1900.

evince, and of what value they have been to us in this great campaign'.[71] The highest echelons of the British military, government, and monarchy, then, all publicly commended the skills and abilities of the British settler colonial society troops. Such comments highlighted the masculinity of the British settler colonial troops, while also providing them with a clearly separate identity from the metropolitan British troops. Interestingly, such reports rarely present a direct comparison between the latter and the former, likely to prevent causing offence or creating animosity amongst the soldiers. That said, Mitcham highlights that the 'hardened white colonial trooper became a powerful idealized symbol of British masculinity, combining the virtues of sacrifice, self-reliance, and patriotism'.[72]

Furthermore, in addition to high praise, the British settler colonial troops also gained attention for their bravery in notable battles, which likely also contributed to their rugged and masculine identity. Of these British settler colonial battles, the most famous was Paardeberg, in which the Canadian soldiers became the focus of the media. Even after the battle was finished, it was constantly referenced in discussions and articles regarding the Canadian troops. In the 5 April 1902 issue of *The Globe*, the article 'Well Done, Canada' states that neither before nor after 'Paardeberg have the wires borne to Canada news at once so glorious and so mournful', and 'that the honor of the country is safe in the keeping of the lads who are making the maple leaf known in South Africa'.[73] The article then describes a later battle in which the Boers 'were driven back by the steady fire the Canadian lads maintained', and that it was 'quite unlikely that the Boer horsemen came within 200 yards of the muzzles of their rifles without suffering for their temerity'.[74] Additionally, the rugged and masculine

[71] *Ibid*.
[72] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, 69.
[73] 'Well Done, Canada', *The Globe*, 5 April 1902.
[74] *Ibid*.

image of Canadian troops is evident, as 'these Canadians who stood the brunt of battle like the seasoned veterans of a hundred fights have but just arrived in South Africa', and that '[t]hey could scarcely as yet have been shook into shape; nevertheless, under their courageous young officer they lie down on the bare veldt, shut their teeth, and repel the withering assault of the best light horsemen and riflemen in the world to-day'.[75] This article clearly depicts the Canadian troops as hardy soldiers, and such reports of British settler colonial victories surely contributed to the rugged image of British settler colonial soldiers promulgated throughout the empire. Shaw adds that the 'audience for these images was a public that wanted to be assured that it was Canada's bracing climate and geography, along with its British racial heritage, that produced such fine specimens of manliness'.[76]

Lastly, it is important to note that the British settler colonial troops gained a reputation in the media which did not always represent the reality. In returning to the argument that masculinity is imagined and shaped in the mind, in many cases the British settler colonial soldiers gained a romanticised image that focused on their exotic appearance, the harsh terrain and climate of their homelands, and their rural upbringing. Although there were certainly times in which the British settler colonial troops showed great skill and abilities, and achieved great victories such as Paardeberg, this was not always the case. Wilcox argues that the 'Australians showed the weaknesses as well as strengths of most of the volunteers in the war' as '[t]hey were expensive to pay, they resented discipline, and they wore down their horses with alarming profligacy'.[77] He adds that on top of that, 'they rarely knew the terrain, languages, and loyalties of the districts they fought in', and 'most Australian

[75] 'Well Done, Canada'.
[76] Shaw, 'The Boer War', 109.
[77] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 346.

officers were poorly trained and unready to lead soldiers into action'.[78] Most of these arguments ran counter to the natural skill that the Australian troops were depicted as possessing. Phillips adds that New Zealand troops were deemed 'raw and callow' and 'ill-trained according to the barrack-square code'.[79] Denis Judd and Keith Surridge also argue that the British settler colonial 'forces did not quite match the stereotype of the country-bred tough as described by numerous British boys' journals or the press'.[80] They also highlight that there was a lot of variation in the composition of the contingents, as some units would have a large number of men who grew up in the urban centres of the British settler colonial societies, rather than in the romanticised countryside.[81] Wilcox adds that although 'the mounted rifleman came to be seen as Australia's military specialty', '[h]is khaki uniform was copied from India', '[h]is slouch hat was found on many frontiers of European civilisation', and '[h]e learned to fight in much the same way as horsemen in India and South Africa and North America', and was thus 'hard to distinguish'.[82] The exotic colonial troops were therefore, like the rugged masculinity they were seen to possess, largely created in the imagination.

In conclusion, throughout the Boer War, British settler colonial soldiers were depicted in newspapers, books, and government reports to possess a rugged masculinity that metropolitan British troops did not. More specifically, these Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand troops were seen to have natural riding and shooting skills because of their harsh British settler colonial upbringings, which made them particularly well-suited to fighting the Boers on the veldt. Although such images

[78] *Ibid*.
[79] Phillips, 'Rugby', 87.
[80] Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 79.
[81] *Ibid*.
[82] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 8-9.

of the British settler colonial troops can in part be accounted for by the strict entry requirements of volunteers and by the uniforms that they were required to wear, these images became exaggerated and popular because of books and newspaper reports, as well as the high praise that many British settler colonial troops received from British officials. Therefore, like masculinity more broadly, the rugged masculinity which the British settler colonial soldiers were seen to possess was shaped partially in the imagination. That stated, such depictions nevertheless spread throughout the British empire, and even to the extent in which the highest echelons of British society repeated tales of the rugged and wild capabilities of the British settler colonial troops. Newspaper reports show that such stereotypes were also embraced by the British settler colonial societies themselves and were acted out by the British settler colonial troops. It can also be seen that a connection existed between masculinity and the British settler colonial societies, as it was perceived that those who grew up in these societies somehow gained exotic, wild, and hardy attributes, although most were of metropolitan British descent. In essence, the rugged masculinity projected onto the British settler colonial troops demonstrates the fascination with which people both from the UK and the British settler colonial societies viewed the British empire, and those who fought for it in southern Africa.

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