

NEW ZEALAND MEDAL
H.M.C.S. VICTORIA

R. CLARK

EXTRACT FROM THE WELLINGTON INDEPENDENT.

Friday, April 12, 1861

"THE COLONIAL STEAM SLOOP VICTORIA. After close upon a year of arduous, honourable and unremitting service in the cause of New Zealand, the Victoria takes her departure from Waitara for Melbourne today, having first embarked Major General Pratt and a portion of his staff. Whether the Victoria may ever return to these shores is problematical, but whether she does or not we cannot permit her to depart without expressing our heartfelt thanks to Captain Norman and his officers for the able and energetic way in which they have handled their magnificent ship in every emergency and under every difficulty. Ship, officers and men have on all occasions proved themselves worthy coadjutors and confederates of the gallant Niger (who we are also soon to lose), by whom they were deservedly esteemed and appreciated. Like the Niger, the Victoria was ever on the alert, ever ready and efficient for duty from the hour of her arrival to that of her departure. Her career in these waters will be long remembered and gratefully acknowledged by the colonists of New Zealand, for while they have been of the last consequence to us they have, happily, been such as to reflect lustre upon the Government and the Colony of Victoria, who with so much forethought and liberality placed so fine a ship at our disposal: a ship whether for sailing or steaming qualities, whether for cleanliness inboard and outboard, whether for correctness and efficiency of discipline, claims the highest characteristics of a British Man-of-War. It would be superfluous to rehearse the Victoria's numerous services but we may well be pardoned for adverting to the promptitude with which she conveyed the Southern Chiefs to the Kohimarama Conference: to the chivalrous spirit with which she reinforced the Naval Brigade by placing Lieutenant Woods Mr Midshipman Horne and thirty of her picked A.B.'s under Commodore Loring's command: and last not least, to the marvellous celerity with which in July last she conveyed to Sydney the Governor's supplemental despatches consequent upon the reverse at Puketakauere, and the equal rapidity with which she returned with fresh succours from Melbourne. These, and such as these, are services not likely to be disregarded or speedily forgotten: in the name of New Zealand we wish her and her gallant band all honour, happiness and prosperity."

The shore party under Lieutenant Woods made AUSTRALIAN HISTORY by being the first men in the uniform of a Colony to see active service.

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OFFICERS, SEAMEN AND MARINES ENTITLED TO THE NEW ZEALAND
FOR SERVICE ON THE COLONIAL STEAMER VICTORIA IN 1861

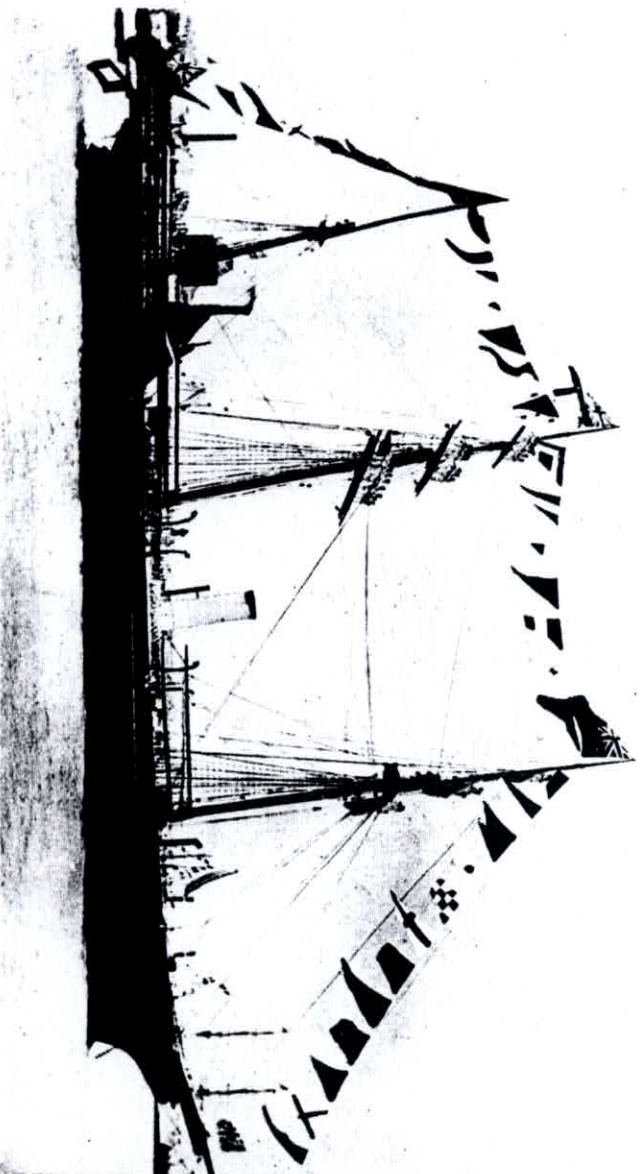
Lieutenant	G.Woods	Mentioned in Dis.
2nd Master	Samuel Long	
2nd Master	Robert Lindon	
Mate	William Howie	
Captain of the Foretop	Ambrose Kensington	
Captain of the Foretop	James Ovenden	
Gunner's Mate	Masco Luther	
Trimmer	Edward Ashwell	
Trimmer	Mark Davis	
Trimmer	Thomas McIntyre	
Trimmer	John McMyrn	
Trimmer	Robert Parkes	
Cook's Mate	William Jones	
Stoker	George Marey	
Stoker	Benjamin Rees	
Boy 1st Class	William Horseley	
Boy 2nd Class	Samuel Smith	Never traced- M Dept. Defence,
Drummer R.M.	Cuthbert Graham	
Leading Seaman	John Taylor	
A.B.	George Brett	
A.B.	Patrick Benfield	
A.B.	John Collingwood	
A.B.	James Cromarty	

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H.M.V.C.S. "Victoria" anchored off Port Melbourne in 1867. The ship was dressed and yards manned in honour of the arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh in H.M.S. "Galatea."

our first warship

By Capt. H. R. Watson

IN the early days of the State of Victoria the only protection from seaward was from occasional visits of a Royal Navy warship. One which made a fairly long stay was H.M.S. "Electra," and today a principal street of Williamstown is named after her.

Eventually, in 1856, after representation by Parliament, the Home Government sent out the newly built gunship "Victoria," the first of her kind to be presented to an Australian Colony.

Launched at Limehouse Dockyard, London, in 1855, the "Victoria" was built of wood, painted orthodox black with a yellow funnel, she was a handsome auxiliary barque-rigged vessel of 580 tons.

For armament she had on the bow one long 32 pounder swivel gun, and a broadside of six guns of the same calibre.

Port of Melbourne Quarterly

Her compound engines gave her a speed of twelve knots.

Maori Wars

Manned by officers and men of what was the first Victorian Navy, the "Victoria" in 1860 was lent to the New Zealand Government for use in the Maori war. On 14th April, 1860, "Victoria" left Hobson's Bay for Hobart, where she took on board two companies of the 40th Regiment for conveyance to New Zealand, and for 12 months remained at the disposal of that colony. Every man of the "Victoria" who could possibly be spared was also handed, and they were transported with the Imperial Naval Brigade. On one occasion when an attack by the Maoris on New Plymouth was considered imminent all the women and children

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Robert Burke.

by scurvy and short rations, Burke, Wills and another member of the expedition, Gray, starved and perished. One, King, found refuge with friendly aboriginals, being rescued by a relief party months later.

Following the return of the gallant little "Victoria" from her part in the Maori Wars, great consternation was being expressed in Melbourne at the lack of news of the now overdue Burke and Wills.

The "Victoria" Relief Mission

Relief expeditions were despatched overland from the south, and the Government sent the "Victoria" off on yet another heroic mission to convey a relief party to the Albert River, on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and work south from there. Still under the command of Captain Norman, the "Victoria" departed from Melbourne on August 4, 1861, accompanied by a sailing ship—the Brig "Firefly."

Captain Norman's instructions were to call at Brisbane and take on board the "Firefly" a party led by William Landsborough, a noted Queensland explorer. The "Firefly" carried all the stores and provisions for the party, including a number of horses, sailing in company, the two ships sped northward along the Barrier Reef for several days, when a hurricane blew up and they parted company.

Captain Kirby of the "Firefly", in the close confines of the reef, did his best to save the ship, but she was swept on to a small island and marooned, the crew, relief party, and horses scrambling safely ashore.

Once on dry land the crew of the "Firefly" mutinied, and bidding defiance to authority, raided the ships' and expedition's stores—including the rum barrels.

Two days later Captain Norman came on the scene in the "Victoria" putting down the mutiny by commandeering all the spirit barrels, ordering them to be broached and the contents poured into the sea.

Deciding the expedition must go on, Captain Norman found the "Firefly" could be repaired and refloated, and towed to the Albert River for use as a depot hulk.

This was done, the horses re-embarked, and Landsborough's party transferred to the "Victoria."

On September 29, they anchored off Sweet's Island, about 30 miles from the mouth of the Albert River, where Captain Norman established a depot.

The "Firefly" was towed a considerable distance up river and became the depot for Landsborough—the horses being glad to reach dry land once again. Shortly after, the expedition set off in search of the missing Burke and Wills. Walker's expedition from the south was replenished with provisions from the "Firefly's" depot, so too was Landsborough's, which returned for fresh stores before finally setting out on the long overland trek south.

Meanwhile, from his depot on Sweet's Island, Captain Norman in the "Victoria" was engaged in valuable exploration work in the Gulf, his name being perpetuated in the Norman River and the Town of Normanton.

On February 12, 1862, Captain Norman farwelled the turtles, mosquitoes, and natives, weighed anchor, and saddled but wiser, headed home, reaching Melbourne the following month. The final scene of this tragic expedition took place in Melbourne on January 21, 1863, with the State funeral of the remains of Burke and Wills. Following the principal mourners was a party of armed sailors from H.M.V.S. "Victoria" led by Captain Norman.

Royal Escort

On November 23, 1867, the "Victoria" played an honoured part in the visit of H.R.H. Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, the first member of the Royal Family to visit the colony of Victoria. The Royal visitor was met entering Port Phillip by the Governor, His Excellency Sir T. B. Manners-Sutton, K.C.B., flying his flag from H.M.V.S. "Victoria" (now promoted to corvette in naval nomenclature), still under the command of Captain

sink her should the convicts gain possession by mutiny.

During the "Victoria's" period of service she was largely engaged on marine survey, and lighthouse work, along the Victorian coastline, carrying out this important task with great efficiency. Although she never met in action (perhaps fortunately) the powerful Russian raiding warships expected to hold up Australian commerce, the "Victoria" did take part in one war, that against the Maoris in New Zealand.

When fighting was seen to be inevitable in the Taranaki region, the Government of New Zealand sent for aid to Australia, who despatched all the Imperial soldiers who could be spared. The colony of Victoria, generous in the emergency, lent the "Victoria" asking payment for nothing except her steaming coal. Between April 1860 and April 1861, H.M.V.S. "Victoria" was constantly on the move, transporting troops across the Tasman, and for many months served off the Taranaki coast, doing valuable work as a store and supply ship, in addition to other duties.

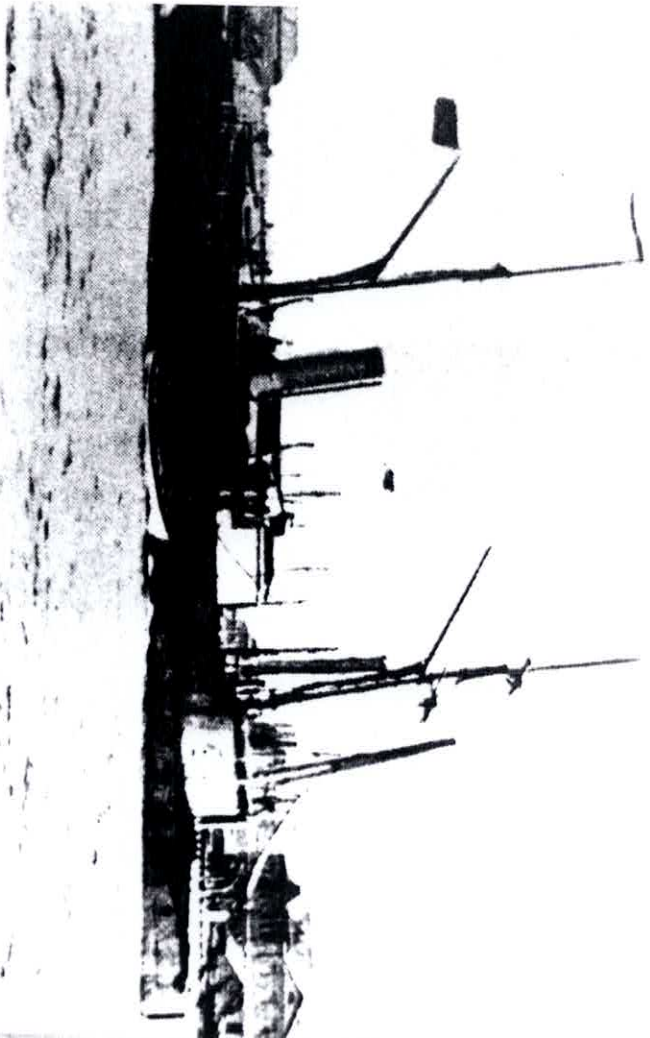
Whilst the "Victoria" was thus engaged, back in the colony of Victoria, an expedition was being equipped to force a trail across the vast interior of Australia from south to north. It was that led by explorers Burke and Wills, who departed from Melbourne 100 years ago on August 20, 1860, in a blaze of glory before a crowd of 10,000 people.

After reaching the Gulf of Carpentaria on February 11, 1861, tragedy struck on the return journey. Weakened



William Wills.

Port of Melbourne Quarterly



The gunboat H.M.V.S. "Victoria" (the second ship of Victoria's Colonial Navy to bear this name) off Fort Melbourne.

The gunboat H.M.V.S. "Albert" steaming down the bay.

Norman. As the Prince's barge, flying the Royal Standard, drew off from H.M.S. "Galatea" for the official landing at Sandridge Pier, H.M.V.S. "Victoria", anchored nearby, was privileged to fire the salute.

Following the arrival in 1869 of the training ship H.M.V.S. "Nelson" (an old wooden ship—of the line) and in 1871 by the powerful iron-clad harbour defence ship H.M.V.S. "Cerberus" the "Victoria" naturally lost importance as a means of naval defence. Captain Norman had been sent to England to supervise the building of the "Cerberus" and so highly was he regarded that many of his ideas were incorporated in her design. Unfortunately the strain was too much, and he died before the completion of the vessel. Her sailing for Victoria was held up pending the arrival of a relief captain.

Probably the last important job of H.M.V.S. "Victoria" was in 1875, when, following the large number of wrecks on King Island, she was commissioned to make a survey of Bass Strait. The last official reference to the "Victoria" was in 1880.

In such a short space of time the sturdy little "Victoria" initiated the proud heritage of our sea-going forces, so gallantly carried on by later ships of the Colonial and Royal Australian Navies.

A later "Victoria" was added to the colonial fleet—a gunboat of 530 tons and 300 h.p., along with the "Albert", 350 tons and 400 h.p. They arrived in Melbourne in 1884 to join the "Nelson" and "Cerberus", already in commission.

Port of Melbourne Quarterly
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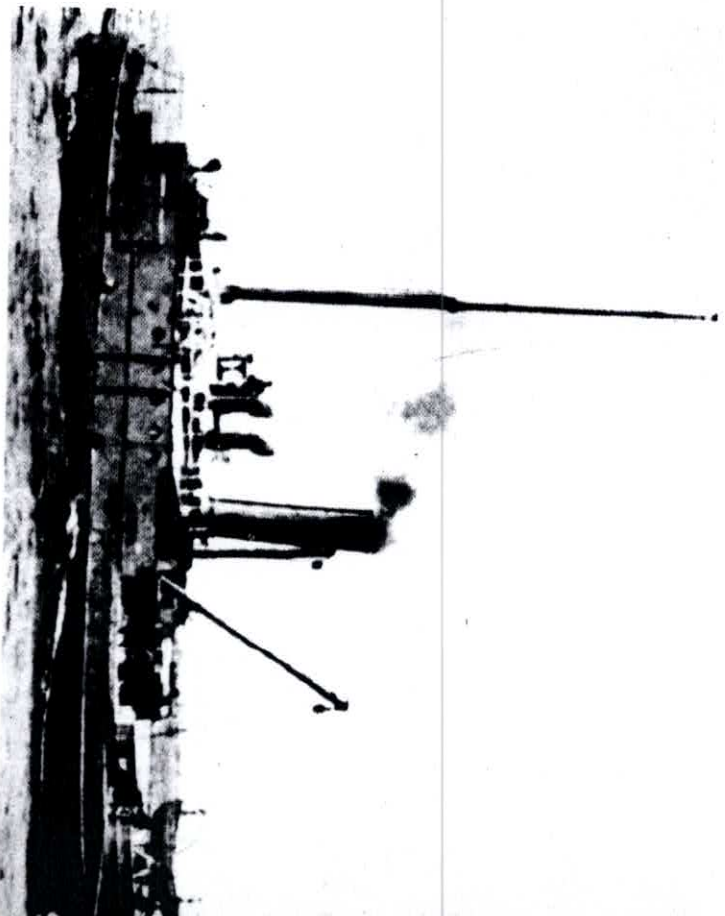
The "Victoria" and "Albert" were of the flat-front type, each mounting an 8-inch B.L. gun, with a restricted arc of fire ahead over a cut-away forecastle, and a 6-inch stern gun, firing abaft the beam bearings.

Their utility as mobile platforms for their heavy guns was restricted to calm seas or sheltered waters, otherwise their shooting would be most erratic. The behaviour of these little ships during gunnery practice was truly remarkable, mounting guns as they did, of a calibre usual in heavy cruisers or battle ships. The gun ranges were restricted by the

type of gun-mounting to 8,000 yards (four miles) but increased ranges could be obtained by listing the ships.

H.M.V.S. "Victoria" and "Albert" almost took part in a war before their arrival in Victoria. They were offered to Her Majesty and accepted for service in the Sudan War. While at Malta on their way out, they received orders to report to Admiral Sir William Hewitt at Suakin, a port in the Red Sea.

This they did, but the situation was such that it did not necessitate use being made of their services. ●



HMCS VICTORIA

Type: Colonial Steam Sloop.
Displacement: 580 tons.
Length: 166 feet.
Beam: 27 feet.
Builders: Young, Son, Magnay & Co, Limehouse, London, England.
Engines: 150 HP. Manufactured by George Rennie & Sons, London, England.
Armament: 1 x 56-cwt 32-pounder (9' 6") gun
6 x 25-cwt 32-pounder gun.

NOTE: VICTORIA was pierced and fitted for two 56-cwt 32-pounder pivot guns fore and aft and six 25-cwt 32-pounder broadside guns. The 56-cwt gun aft was not mounted and in 1859 the broadside armament was reduced to two guns.

Complement (As Colonial Steam Sloop): 50 - comprising commanding officer, two executive officers, two engineer officers, three warrant officers, six petty officers, twenty-one able seamen, eight firemen and seven boys.

HMCS VICTORIA represents the first local naval defence of the State of Victoria. She was built by order of Sir Charles Hotham, following a petition by the Legislative Council to the Imperial Government in January 1854.

VICTORIA arrived in Hobsons Bay on 31st May 1856 under the command of Captain W.H. Norman.

In the period 1856-59 a contemporary writer described her duties as that of an armed despatch vessel operating under the orders of the Chief Secretary of the Victorian Government:

'for the protection of the interests of the public, being always kept ready for sea on telegraphic notice'.

It was further stated that:

'since January 1858 in addition to the duties of despatch vessel, the Water Police of the port having been reduced from forty-two to ten men, the remainder were transferred to boats of VICTORIA, and the duties of policing the bay and port continued by her officers and crew, under the

orders and supervision of the Chief Commissioner of Police; and when the VICTORIA has to leave port for any special purpose, the above ten men, with one Sub-Inspector and two Sergeants, are left to continue the same on board the blockship until her return; this number being in addition to her crew of fifty'.

The sloop was thus used as a general purpose vessel, there being no armed threat to the Colony. Temporarily attached to the Royal Navy, VICTORIA took part in the Maori Wars (1860-61) under Commodore Frederick Beauchamp Seymour, Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, flying his flag in HMS PELORUS. On 29th December 1860 some of her complement were among 158 officers and men landed from HM Ships CORDELLA, NIGER and VICTORIA under the command of Commodore Seymour for the assault on the Maori positions at Matarikoriko in co-operation with British troops under Major General F.S. Pratt.

In August 1861 VICTORIA (Captain W.H. Norman) was sent to the Gulf of Carpentaria to search for signs of the missing explorers Burke and Wills. She returned to Hobsons Bay in March 1862.

In 1864 having been declared unfit for defence purposes VICTORIA was paid off and placed under Care and Maintenance. She was subsequently fitted for survey duty, and began a period of probably her most useful service to the State of Victoria with a survey of Port Phillip. In the following four years (1865-68) she was engaged in the following surveys in Victorian waters:

- 1865 - Westernport; coastline between Port Phillip and Westernport (Captain H.L. Cox) in company of Colonial Steamer PHAROS.
- 1866 - Completed coastline Port Phillip to Cape Otway (Captain H.L. Cox (retired) followed by Commander G.R. Wilkinson).
- 1867 - Outer soundings Port Phillip and Westernport, Loutit Bay (Commander G.R. Wilkinson (Died December 1867) Lieutenant H.G. Stanley).
- 1868 - Coastline Cape Schanck to Wilsons Promontory; charts of bays and anchorages within these limits. Re-surveyed entrance to Port Phillip (Lieutenant H.G. Stanley).

VICTORIA was laid up in January 1869 but was subsequently refitted and lent to the Marine Survey (Royal Navy) in 1875.

Following a break of four years (1869-72) during which the steamer PHAROS was used for the Victorian survey, VICTORIA resumed duty as a Survey Vessel in 1873 with a survey of King Island and soundings in western Bass Strait, Seal Bay and Franklin Road. In 1874-78 she carried out the following surveys:

- 1874 - Entrance to Port Phillip and Banks Strait (Staff Commander H.G. Stanley (promoted May 1873)).
- 1875 - Banks Strait; Hobsons Bay (Staff Commander H.G. Stanley).
- 1876 - Banks Strait; Waterhouse Anchorage; Bay of Firis (Staff Commander H.G. Stanley).
- 1877 - Banks Strait to Flinders Island (Staff Commander H.G. Stanley).
- 1878 - Survey of Victorian waters terminated (Staff Commander H.G. Stanley).

She was temporarily fitted out as a warship during the Russian war scare of 1878, afterwards resuming survey duty.

In 1880 she was handed over to the Victorian Customs Department for lighthouse maintenance duties but was found to be too expensive to operate.

Later she was employed as the first blasting vessel working on the removal of Lightning Rock in the Rip, Port Phillip. In 1882 she was chartered by Captain Patrick for use as a Port Phillip excursion steamer for the summer season of 1882-83.

In 1888 VICTORIA was sold to Captain James Deane of Melbourne and re-sold to Mr William Marr, shipwright of Williamstown in August 1894. In August 1895 she was broken up.