A Military History of Victoria, Australia 1803-1945

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Gibraltar of the South

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Bob Marmion and Andrew Dagg

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GLOSSARY

CMF	Commonwealth Military Forces, Citizen Military Forces
CNF	Commonwealth Naval Forces
Cwt	Hundredweight. Imperial measurement of weight
Dimensions	Length x width x draught In Imperial measurements. i.e., 1' 3" = 1 Foot, 3 inches, see below for metric conversions
Draught	The distance from waterline to bottom of the ships keel
HMAS	Her Majesties Australian Ship – The official nomenclature of navy ships from recognition of the RAN in 1911, but unofficially Australian ships had been designated thus since 1904
HMCS	Her Majesties Colonial Ship
HMVS	Her Majesties Victorian Ship
HP	Horse Power or Hydro-Pneumatic in the case of Disappearing gun carriages
ihp	Indicated Horse Power
MG	Machine Gun
QF	Quick Firing. Usually a gun that utilises a one piece shell and cartridge
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
Razee	To remove a deck from a wooden warship, i.e. Reduce a three decker First rate to a two decker Third rate
RE	Royal Engineers
Tons	Imperial measurement of weight
TT	Torpedo Tube
Vavasseur	A mounting for controlling the recoil of breech-loaded guns patented and developed in 1877 by Josiah Vavasseur.
VMF	Victorian Military Forces or Militia forces
VNF	Victorian Naval Forces
VPA	Victorian Permanent Artillery, likewise VPE would be Engineers

Imperial – Metric Conversion Table

LENGTHS:

1 inch	(in. or ”)	=	25.4 mm.
1 foot	(ft. or ‘)	=	30.5 cm.
1 yard	(yd.)	=	914 cm. (0.914 m.)
1 mile		=	1.16 km.
1 knot		=	1.85 km per hour.

WEIGHTS:

1 pound	(lb.)	= 0.45 kg
1 hundredweight	(Cwt.)	= 50.8 kg
1 ton		= 1.02 tonnes

INTRODUCTION

Defence was of critical importance to the colony and later, the state of Victoria. From the earliest defences in 1803 through to the end of World War 2 in 1945, defence was at the forefront of government thinking. Initially there were fears of French incursions, followed by possible attack by the Russians during the gold rush. During the course of the 19th century, Russia, France, the United States and Japan were all regarded as potential threats at various times. Melbourne in particular grew from a minor settlement on the banks of the Yarra to one of the most important cities in the British Empire. The vast quantity of gold coming from the colony of Victoria meant that it was a potential target if war should break out.

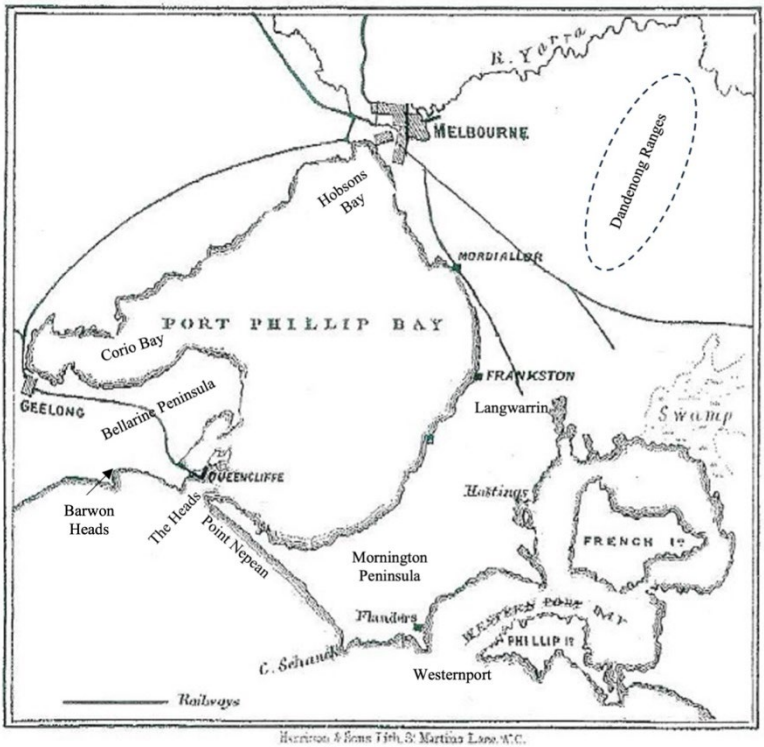
Defence was not only about protecting the colony from external attack. In a period when the fledgling Victoria Police Force struggled to maintain law and order on the goldfields and in the developing towns, the government relied heavily on the military to carry out these tasks. As this book will show, an attack never came from external sources. But having said this, successive Victorian and Imperial governments were not prepared to take the risk of having an undefended colony. During the 19th century, millions of pounds were spent on ensuring the defences were adequate. Millions more were spent upgrading the defences after Federation. In effect, it was an insurance policy.

However, the defence story was much more than this. After initially struggling with the concept of what formed an adequate defence, by the mid-1880s, the Victorian Government had developed a finely tuned defence system. The colonial era (pre-Federation) saw considerable debate over how best to protect Melbourne, Geelong and the western ports of Warnambool, Portland, and Port Fairy from external attack. Finally, a decision, in the case of Melbourne, was made to defend the city at the Heads or entrance to Port Phillip Bay. By the mid-1880s a complex system of forts, naval defences and land forces had been developed to defend the Heads and block entry of an enemy trying to invest Melbourne or Geelong.

By the end of the 19th century, Victoria was known as the "Gibraltar of the South". It was the most heavily defended British colony in the southern hemisphere. Not only could it defend itself, but it could also play a part in Imperial ventures such as the Boxer Rebellion or the Boer War at the turn of the century. In addition, the Victorian Defence Department (the first in

the country) was the basis for the new Commonwealth Defence Department post Federation. Likewise, the Victorian Military Forces and the colony's Naval Forces provided the foundations for the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Navy respectively in the early years of the 20th century.

During the two World Wars the defences continued to be expanded upon. This included airfields, naval facilities, numerous batteries including, both seacoast and anti-aircraft, military camps, training grounds, magazines and even a 'tank trap' designed to stop enemy tanks. Supporting industries such as ship building and repairs, ammunition and ordnance factories, aircraft factories and naval facilities had been constructed. The defences were expanded to protect them. It can be argued that by 1942, Melbourne and Geelong were possibly the most heavily defended areas in the country; over 250 defence sites have been identified protecting these areas. By 1945, the advent of missiles and sea borne air attack had made the coastal defences, such as the forts at the Heads, obsolete.



CHAPTER 1

WHY WAS DEFENCE SO IMPORTANT?

Defending Victoria can be broadly divided into three distinct eras. The first was in the early years of the 19th century, when there were plans to establish outposts in what was later to become Victoria. The second was the early colonial era following Victoria's separation from New South Wales in 1851 and the establishment of a new Crown colony. It was then that defence planners and politicians struggled to identify how best to defend the colony. It was not until the 1880s, with the advent of a dedicated Department of Defence and a comprehensive Scheme of Defence, that protection of the colony was placed on a sound footing both in terms of local protection and inclusion in the wider Imperial defence. Ironically after twenty five years of fluffing around, the defence planners went back to the early 1860s and basically adopted the ideas of experts such as Sir Peter Scratchley.

The third era lasted from Federation until 1945. In 1901 responsibility for defence may have passed from the individual colonies or new states to the Commonwealth, however the need to defend key sites such as Melbourne or Sydney remained a priority. By the 20th century, the defences had been modernized and expanded. At the end of World War 2, coastal defence of the major cities had become obsolete in the face of nuclear weapons, missiles and long range air attack. In addition, slowly but surely, defence of specific areas in southern Australia, such as Victoria, was replaced by a new emphasis on defending Australia's northern frontiers.

Initially there were two main thrusts in defence – protection from external attack and acting against any internal unrest. The former was a consistent theme throughout the period under consideration and later evolved from just protecting the colony to also becoming involved in the wider defence of the Empire and the projection of Imperial aims. Minimising civil unrest was a key concern during the early days, when Victoria was establishing itself as an important British colony. The Victoria Police was established in 1853. Over the years, as a result of their increasing professionalism and their ability to handle crime and social unrest, the role of the military acting in aid of the civil power was considerably reduced. Despite being a regular occurrence in the 1850s and 60s, only twice, during

the Kelly Outbreak of 1880 and during the Maritime Strike of 1890, was the military called out to aid the police. During the 1923 Victoria Police strike, the military was on standby but not actively involved.

In the pre-Federation years, the Colony of Victoria spent £7.1 million on defending itself from real or imagined enemies in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was a staggering amount in this period. This was colonial defence.

What were the colonists' fears based on?

Foreign powers had long been interested in Australia. However, it was during the 1850s, that this interest began to be perceived by London and the Australian colonies as a possible threat to Imperial and colonial security. Gold and the growing sophistication of the colonies, made them appear (at least in the eyes of the colonists) more valuable to foreign powers and therefore more likely to be targets for attack. Britain's view was slightly more sanguine. The Imperial view, as stated during the (Victorian colonial) 1858 Royal Commission into the defence of the colony, was that Victoria did not face the threat of a full scale invasion, but at worst, Melbourne was open to a hit and run attack.[1] This was small consolation to the colonists who were afraid that a foreign ship or squadron, suddenly appearing in Hobson's Bay might hold Melbourne to ransom: hand over the gold or else face a bombardment. Obviously, London's main concern should Victoria be attacked, was the loss of gold shipments and the temporary seizure of a major harbour.

A number of factors led to concerns in the colony over the possibility of external attack. The rise of European imperialism in Africa, Asia and the Pacific contributed to many invasion scares in the Australian colonies during the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially the perceived threats derived from Russia during the Crimean War, however French expansionism in the south Pacific created a deal of uncertainty in both colonial and Imperial minds. Tensions between Britain and France reached crisis point with France's part mobilisation along the (English) Channel ports in 1859. This action led to another round of invasion fears and caused the British government to embark on a program of constructing major defence works along the south coast of England in addition to the raising the (British) Volunteer Force. Fears of a possible French attack on the Australian colonies led to similar defensive measures in Victoria, but on a smaller scale.

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[1] *Report of the Royal Commission into the Defence of the Colony*, dated 9 December 1858, 5. VPP 1858-59, Vol. 2.

The threat did not have to be tangible or based on a calculated, logical and realistic scenario. Though the French war preparations along the English Channel in 1859 were clear and tangible, their intentions were unclear. Similarly, the risk of war between Britain and the United States during the American Civil War of 1861-65 also gave rise to fears of an attack from that quarter.

An invasion scare may be described as a real or perceived threat to the security of the colony by another country or external force.

Robert Hyslop documents over two hundred war scares in Australia during the nineteenth century.[2] His research shows that these scares fall into two distinct categories, namely those generated by external factors and those generated from within the colony. They can be broken down into a number of sub-groups including the outbreak of wars or the threat of war, activities by foreign powers within Australia's sphere of interest, unexpected visits by foreign ships and public reaction to rumours. While two hundred individual scares might sound a large number, the importance of the figure is that it suggests that colonists were in an almost continual state of anxiety over defence issues.

There are a number of points to be considered when discussing the phenomenon of invasion or war scares. It is a natural reaction in wartime to be concerned about an enemy invading one's country. It was also a natural reaction to strengthen defences along one's coastline to negate this threat of invasion or to defend key points from attack. Examples of this are apparent from the earliest batteries at Port Jackson through to the extensive coastal defences that ringed key Australian ports during World War 2. What sets the scale of the nineteenth century scares aside from other periods is the lack of actual hostilities. The Crimean War of 1853-56, was the only period during the mid to late nineteenth century where Britain was at a war with a European power. It is worth noting that the vast majority of the invasion scares actually occurred during peacetime.

In Victoria, the expected type of anticipated attack fell into two broad categories: either a large scale attack by a foreign fleet including armoured warships and troop transports, or an armed commerce raider slipping through the defences at the Heads and then threatening Melbourne. Though the potential threats from France and the United States receded as the international relations between these countries and Britain cooled, throughout the remainder of the century the main threat appeared to come from Russia. The Russian Empire's expansion continued to challenge Britain's

[2] Hyslop, Robert, War scares in Australia in the nineteenth century*, VHJ,* Vol. 47, No. 1, 1976, 24.

dominance on numerous fronts ranging from the North West Frontier (of India) to East Asia and the Pacific. Russia's regular disagreements with the Ottoman Empire were also causes for further concern to the colonists due to Britain's support for Turkey.

As Kipling later wrote, Britain and Russia were "playing the great game", with both trying to outmanoeuvre the other diplomatically, while steadily gaining ground at the other's expense. The two nations began the nineteenth century some two thousand miles apart in Asia and ended it with outposts only twenty miles apart on the North West Frontier. In British eyes, Russia was seen as the perennial threat of the nineteenth century and the root cause of much of the xenophobic fear amongst the colonists in Australia and New Zealand. In his excellent book, The Great Game, on the politics, machinations and warfare on the North West Frontier, Peter Hopkirk explores Russian interest in the Indian sub-continent and the resultant friction with Britain.[3] He traces the British fear of Russian expansionism back to the years immediately after Waterloo, when in 1817, a retired British General and Member of Parliament, Sir Robert Wilson, launched a diatribe against Tsarist Russia titled "A Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia". [4]

In 1853 New Caledonia was annexed by France which put that country's colony on Australia's doorstep. Following the formation of a six ship, Far Eastern Squadron in 1857, the Russians established a major Pacific naval base at Vladivostok three years later. In August 1858, the French invaded Tourane (Da Nang) in Vietnam leading to the establishment of a major naval port and the French colony of Cochin China.

Russian, French and American warships were regular visitors to Australian ports for many years. For example, in January 1862, the Russian frigate, *Svetlana*, sailed through the Heads into Port Phillip Bay without attracting any attention from the fort at Queenscliff. When she arrived off Williamstown, again the batteries failed to fire the customary salute. In March the following year, an even newer and more formidable Russian corvette, the *Bogatyr*, sailed into Melbourne on a good will visit under the command of Admiral Popov. The *Argus* wrote: "for several hours the Bogatyr had the shipping at the anchorage at her mercy and vessels not so friendly may not have been so merciful."[5] Both Russian ships were part of Russia's Far Eastern Squadron operating out of Vladivostok. In January 1865, during the American Civil War, the Confederate commerce raider, CSS *Shenandoah*, also sailed into Melbourne. All three ships had arrived

[3] Hopkirk, Peter, *The Great Game*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.
[4] Ibid, 60.
[5] *Argus,* 25 October 1863.

unannounced off Melbourne to the amazement and shock of local citizens the following morning. Twenty five years later, the commander of the Victorian Navy awoke one morning to find another (unnamed) foreign warship emerging from the fog in Hobson's Bay after having slipped past the defences undetected.[6]

The first Russian warship visited Port Jackson, New South Wales, in 1807.[7] In the years prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War, Russian visitors were essentially pursuing trade links and that they were well received by the Australian colonists. However, with the outbreak of the Crimean War, the Australian colonies expected a Russian invasion at any moment. In the post-Crimean years, however, there was a significantly different relationship between the Australian colonists and Czarist Russia.[8] In March 1863 when the *Bogatyr* visited Port Phillip, some 5,000 people visited the ship on the Sunday; both Russian visitor and local citizens were mutually impressed and keen to develop friendly ties. This bonhomie however masked a fear by colonists that the Russians had a more sinister motive for visiting than simply fostering good relations between the two countries.

The friendly relationship changed abruptly when reports emerged that the Russians has used the visits to gather intelligence in case of war between the two countries. In September 1864, *The Times* wrote that the Victorian government had been previously warned that Melbourne was a target.[9] Apparently, the source of this information was a disgruntled Polish officer serving under Admiral Popov. There were various hoaxes about alleged Russian plans to invade. Research into these plans has ranged from the scholarly to largely unsubstantiated claims of Russian invasion plans.

The world's second oldest profession has been practised by military and naval commanders from ancient times and it is hardly surprising that the captains of foreign warships would have taken the opportunity to spy out the land (and shipping channels) during their regular visits to Australian ports. What is surprising is that it took the Russians until 1862 to actually visit Port Phillip Bay for the first time. During the 1862 voyage of the *Svetlana,* her commander, Captain Boutakov, kept a detailed journal. It described, amongst other things, the shipping channels, railways, and

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[6] *Letter from Captain Mann to the Minister of Defence*, dated 22 July 1890. NAA Agency No CA6761, Series B3756, File 90/2340.

[7] Barratt, Glynn, *The Russian Navy and Australia to 1825*, Melbourne, Hawthorne Press, 1979, 1.

[8] Fitzhardinge, Verity, Russian naval visitors to Australia 1862-1888, *JRAHS*, June 1996, Vol. 52, Part 2, 129.

[9] Ibid, 139. See also *The Times*, 17 September 1864.

facilities around Port Phillip.[10] The following year, Russian Admiral Popov, reportedly made further studies of Victoria, including the anchorages at Hobson's Bay and Westernport. His reports and those of his crew members, Lieutenant Linden and Midshipman Mukhanov, provide a keen appreciation of colonial society as well as detailed observations of the colony's infrastructure and natural features.[11]

Fig. 1 Looking for a French or Russian navigator

[10] Fitzhardinge, Verity, Russian naval visitors to Australia 1862-1888, 129-137. According to Fitzhardinge, these officers' reports appear in the *Morskoy Sbornik.*
[11] Ibid, 129.

It is possible that Russian naval visits to Victoria in the early 1860s were simply goodwill visits where the Russians thoroughly enjoyed colonial hospitality.[12] Contemporary newspaper reports showed the Russian officers and men certainly did enjoy themselves in Australian ports and that the sailors generated a great deal of interest amongst the general public. Goodwill visits alone does not take into account the exigencies of naval service. Every navy needs to continually upgrade its intelligence files on potential foes, particularly with regard to changes in offensive and defensive capabilities and assets. In the nineteenth century this not only included the obvious forms of defence such as batteries, forts, magazines, local warships and minefields, but also extended to coaling stations and port facilities such as anchorages, or graving docks, along with information on tides and channel markers.

Less tangible forms of intelligence would have included the general mood of the population towards defence, new infrastructure such as railways, and the location of important government buildings. The fact that the forts at Queenscliff and Hobson's Bay failed to fire a salute when the *Svetlana* sailed by in January 1862, and again in 1863 with the *Bogatyr*, would have certainly been noted by the Russians. Naval visits offered an ideal opportunity to gather intelligence under the guise of friendly visits.

Figure 1 shows that even as late as 1888, there were fears that the French and Russians were more familiar than the Royal Navy with the Port Phillip channels. Russian intentions continued to be regarded with mistrust and concern throughout the remainder of the century. Time and again, Victoria was plunged into despair as news from "home" reached the colony that Britain was again on the brink of war with Russia.

The invasion literature of the late nineteenth century can also be seen in the light of potential aggression by Japan and China.[13] The fear of invasion came from the actions of European powers, usually acting alone or in concert with another European country. However, on the odd occasion, the invasion scenario described China or Japan as the ally of a European power. Initial fear of the Chinese stemmed from the influx of miners onto the goldfields during the 1850s. The resultant racism and lack of cultural awareness and understanding developed into a fear of an alien and unknown race.

There is no evidence to suggest that during the nineteenth century, either Japan or China had the capability, or inclination, to attack Australia. In fact,

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[12] Barclay, Gregory, *The Empire is Marching: A study of the military effort of the British Empire 1800-1945*, London, Weidenfeldt and Nicholson, 1976, 9-11.

[13] Walker, David, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the rise of Asia 1850 -1939*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1999. Refer to Chapter 8, 98-108.

during the latter decades of the century, individuals and governments were attempting to develop trade with Japan.[14] "It was not until the 1890s that Japan's military capacities and territorial ambitions began to induce some anxiety over a looming yellow peril."[15] This was certainly the case with Japan in the twentieth century, but we are not convinced it was the case during the nineteenth.

The fear of invasion has been explored at some length by a series of nineteenth century authors. In the 1880s and early 1890s, a number of short stories were written about hypothetical invasion scenarios. The most widely read were G.T. Chesney's The Battle of Dorking and William Le Quex's The Great War in England in 1897; both were concerned with fictitious invasions of England by a European power.[16] Two pieces of invasion literature, The Battle of the Yarra and The Battle of Mordialloc had a more colonial flavour which described an attack by a combined Russian-Asiatic force on Melbourne.[17] Invasion literature of the period contained one common trait – they tended to be of the Victorian heroic style, whereby the brave yeoman sons of England, after fighting with their backs to the wall, eventually defeat the barbarian hordes. Heroic though they may be the stories cleverly tapped into public unrest over the state of the defences.

We suggest that the invasion fears held by local citizens, and indeed, the colonial and Imperial governments, were in response to European powers rather than a perceived Asian "yellow peril". After examining many thousands of contemporary documents relating to Victoria's defence, we could find only one passing mention of an Asian power or country. In December 1896, an appraisal by the Admiralty of likely threats to Australia, included a brief statement that in light of Japan's victory over China in 1895,

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[14] Walker, David, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the rise of Asia 1850 -1939*. Refer to Chapter 8, 68. This was further reinforced with the Anglo – Japanese Treaty of 1894.

[15] Ibid, 3. The visits to Australia in 1903 and 1906 of the Japanese Navy, combined with that country's resounding victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 certainly focussed attention on the growing strength of Japan.

[16] Chesney, G.T., The Battle of Dorking in M Moorcock (ed) *Before Armageddon: An anthology of Victorian and Edwardian fiction published before 1914*, London. W.H. Allan, 1975. See also LeQuex, W., The Great War in England in 1897, in Moorcock. *Before Armageddon.*

[17] 'An old colonist' (unnamed), *The Battle of the Yarra*, Melbourne, McCarron Bird and Co, 1883 and Mullen, Samuel. *The Battle of Mordialloc or how we lost Australia*, Melbourne, self-published, 1888.

"Australia may have to reckon with her [Japan] in the future".[18] All invasion scenarios and responses during the period under review were predicated on an attack by a European power (or to a lesser extent, the United States during the Civil War).

Foreign warships obviously had the capability to sail over long distances to ports such as Melbourne. To date, no evidence, beyond contemporary news reports, has come to light suggesting that any foreign power proposed (or had the capability) to invade Victoria in the nineteenth century. The fact that single ships could visit does not suggest that foreign powers had the capability to mount an invasion involving a flotilla of warships, with or without a supporting land force of sufficient size to oppose colonial forces. With the value of hindsight, the fear of invasion appears to have been over rated. However, during the nineteenth century these fears were real and had to be acted on.

It is interesting to note that similar fears were evident in the 20th century. Chapter 12 explains how Japan became the main threat during this later period.

There was another side to colonial defence. In addition to defending against external attack, the Victorian government needed to maintain internal law and order. In the absence of an effective and efficient police force, the military was generally called upon for this task, particularly on the goldfields. This dual role of the military providing outward defence and assisting the civil power in maintaining law and order was a well-established doctrine in British society by this period.

It is worth briefly expounding on the major internal issues here as they are an important part of the defence story. In the 1850s, the internal threat to security and the maintenance of law and order in Victoria was firmly based on two fears. One was that the radical sections of the reform movements in Britain or the sectarian issues in Ireland would become entrenched in Victoria. The other lay in the mass immigration of thousands of non-British subjects during the gold rushes, many of whom had experienced life in a republic or who had come to Australia seeking a better life after the 1848 revolutions in Europe. The sudden acquisition of wealth by many immigrants challenged the long accepted norms of a British colonial society.

There was no guarantee that immigrants would accept a colonial society which was based to a considerable extent on the British model. Nor was there any certainty that they would not agitate for change to another form of

[18] *British Colonies and the Australia Station: Precis of existing and proposed coast defences 1896*, The Admiralty Intelligence Department, dated December 1896, Department of Defence Library (Aust), File 31.08 – 13908, 9.

government. When agitation did occur, it was over conditions on the goldfields rather than an attempt to overthrow the British system in Victoria. When it came time to respond to the agitation, such as on the Bendigo goldfields in 1853 or at Ballarat in 1854, the Victorian government demonstrated that military force would be used to quell unrest regardless of the rights or wrongs of the agitators. In this sense the government fell back on the time honoured British tradition of using the military to crush dissent.

The Victoria Police Force had been established in 1853 but took most of the decade to develop into an effective organisation. The subsequent rise in the effectiveness of civil policing conversely allowed a reduction in the reliance on the military as the authority for maintaining law and order. The Victorian Volunteer Force was raised in 1858-60, primarily as a defence force against external aggression, but with the dual role of providing a bulwark against internal strife.[19] After a number of examples on the central Victorian goldfields, where the Volunteers had been called out in aid of the police during the early 1860s, generally speaking the need for the military to help maintain law and order had passed by the 1865. Attention then returned to how best defend the colony from external attack.

There were four distinct periods of colonial or local defence in Victoria during the 19th century. There was a nascent settlement in existence for a few months at Sorrento on the southern tip of Port Phillip Bay. As a shore based battery built to defend the settlement, technically this was the first instance of local defence in Victoria. Another battery was erected at Rhyll on Phillip Island in 1826. The second, from 1835 to 1851, following the decision to establish a white settlement at Melbourne, defence was entirely the domain of the Imperial garrison. The third period, from 1851 to 1882, began with Victoria's separation from New South Wales and the creation of a new Crown colony. In this period, colonial defence was in direct response to Imperial and popular demands for a system of defence as part of the colony's transition to responsible government. Colonial governments developed a voluntary system of citizen service in the Victorian Volunteer Force (based on the British Volunteer Force), but failed to establish a proper integrated defence scheme based on a network of forts and batteries operating in conjunction with the land and naval forces.

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[19] *British Colonies and the Australia Station: Precis of existing and proposed coast defences 1896*, The Admiralty Intelligence Department, dated December 1896, Department of Defence Library (Aust), File 31.08 – 13908. See Chapter 5 of Marmion's MA thesis, 'The Volunteer Force on the central Victorian goldfields 1858-1883', Latrobe University 2003, for a detailed explanation the dual role of the Volunteer Force in providing for external defence and maintaining law and order.

The fourth period of colonial or local defence, from 1883 to 1901, saw a radical shift in the colonial government's policy towards defence. Realising that previous attempts to implement an effective defence scheme had failed, Victoria engaged a number of professional military consultants from Britain to advise on an integrated scheme of defence. In one respect, this shift was also in response to a significant revolution in military-naval technology and defence doctrine, particularly in the area of harbour defence. Furthermore, it was in response to changes in Imperial defence thinking and the subsequent realisation by Britain that, in defence terms, the colonies were no longer a millstone around the Imperial neck with regard to defence, but rather assets to be utilised.

Colonial military involvement in British Imperialism and the consequent defining of an Australian national identity is certainly an important aspect of Australia's history, but the Boer War and Gallipoli should not be mistaken for the beginning of Australia's military heritage. This heritage can be traced back to the First Fleet and the subsequent role played by British military and naval forces, and later, colonial forces, in Australia's history. Australian military history (as distinct from the British military history in Australia) really dates from the 1850s when Britain began to pressure the self-governing colonies to take a greater responsibility for their own defence rather than relying solely on Imperial forces.

In Victoria's case, the watershed year was 1854 as prior to then "the defence of Victoria was entirely entrusted to Imperial Forces".[20] In that year, for the first time, Victoria enlisted concerned citizens into a locally raised defence unit. It also placed an order for the *Victoria* – the first warship to be purchased by a colony, and to complete the trilogy of colonial defence essentials, the colony also commissioned its first study into fixed defences, i.e., the forts, batteries and other forms of defence that were critical to the security of the colony. All three components, (land forces, naval units and forts) were to dominate colonial defence for the rest of the century. From humble beginnings in 1854 when a small local military force was raised, Victoria had developed a significant self-defence capability by the century's end. This in turn provided the foundation for the extensive defences at the Heads (the entrance to Port Phillip Bay), and around Melbourne and Geelong during the 20th century.

The aim of this book is therefore to explore the defence of Victoria from its earliest example at the fledgling settlement of Sorrento in 1803 through to the key developments of the 20th century up until the end of World War

[20] Memorandum 75/195 from the Commandant (of Victorian Military Forces) to the Secretary, Royal Commission on the Volunteer Force, *Report of the Royal Commissioners into the Volunteer Force, 1875-76*, 127, VPP 1875-76, Vol. 3.

2. The period from 1851 when Victoria became a separate Crown colony, through to 1901 when defence became a national responsibility following Federation can be likened to laying the foundations. The story however continues on for another 44 years as coastal defence was maintained through the two World Wars and a defence industry was established. With the advent of air power and the threat of long range missile attack, the century old system of Victorian fixed defence became obsolete. The era of a combined defence system involving land forces, naval units and forts was effectively over by 1946, though coastal defence wasn't officially disbanded until 1963.

The book is a study of how Victoria's defences developed between the 1850s and the end of World War 2. Included in this is the supporting arms such as industry and the defence bureaucracy. This book goes beyond the actual physical defences and looks at the issues which had to be confronted before an effective defence scheme could be instituted. It analyses the military, political, economic, social and technological factors during the second half of the 19th century, from within and without the colony, which affected defence.

Thirdly, the role of government is examined against a background of political conflict and instability from the late 1850s until the early 1880s. The reasons for the vacillation and a continuing lack of understanding of defence issues by successive Victorian colonial governments are analysed. The thirty year delay in establishing an effective defence scheme is set against an atmosphere of local paranoia over possible invasion scares on one hand. On the other, there were Imperial demands for increasing self-sufficiency in defence. Britain demanded that the colony provide for its own defence and to also contribute towards a policy known as co-dependence in Imperial defence matters.

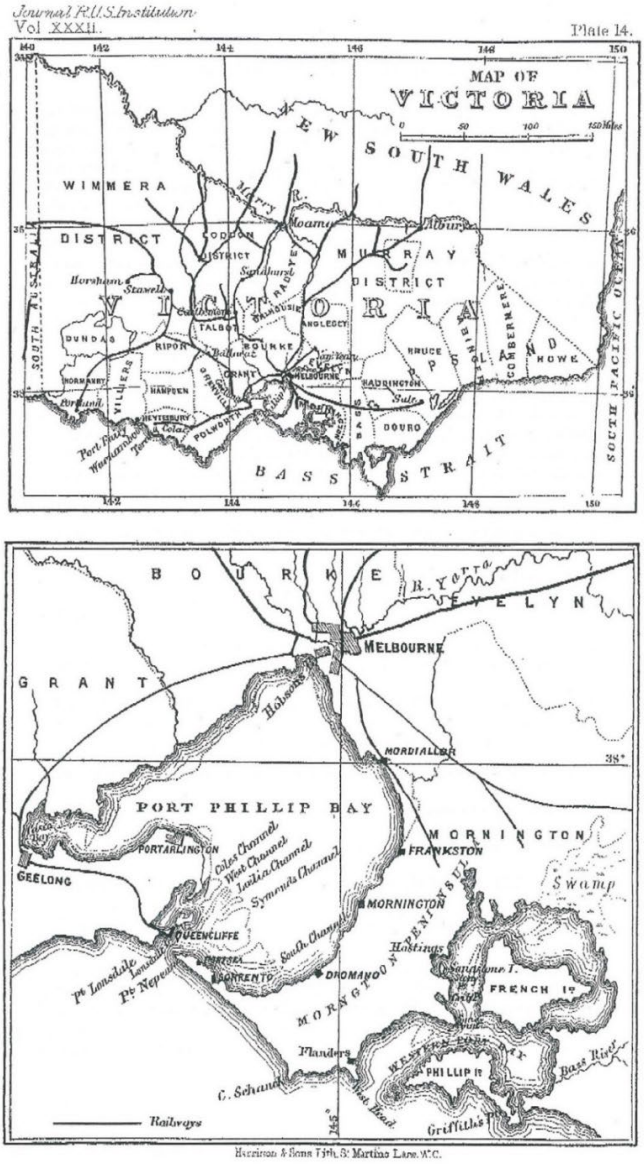
The period 1851 until Federation in 1901 was essentially one of the irregular development of colonial defence. Despite pressure from the Colonial Office, Victoria made decisions primarily in its own interest, and only secondly with regard to the greater Imperial need. While the needs of both parties often coincided, the timing of events remained in the colony's hands. The colony was prepared to listen to British demands, but at the same time, make its own decisions. As in any family relationship, there were disputes. In resolving these, the colony revealed a growing sophistication and independence from Britain. The growing level of independence (in defence and other areas of the Imperial-colonial relationship) was enough to generate debate over the future relations between Britain and the Australian colonies should the latter federate. This fascinating area, however, is outside the scope of this book.

There is an area of Victorian colonial history which needs to be acknowledged when discussing colonial defence and that was the "frontier warfare" between white settlers and indigenous people particularly during the 1830s and 1840s. The wars were at times savage with casualties being high on both sides. In the wake of the initial establishment of colonies, settlers struggled to establish a new white society, whilst at the same time, indigenous people fought to protect a way of life thousands of years old. "There were literally hundreds of violent incidents of various magnitude across these frontiers".[21]

The "frontier wars" need to be recognised as a significant period in Australian colonial history. After forty years of research and the examination of many thousands of documents relating to defence, we have not come across one mention of the military in Victoria being used against indigenous people. As such, the warfare between white settlers and indigenous peoples, especially in Victoria between the 1830s and 1840s, does not come under colonial or Imperial defence and is therefore outside the scope of this book.

There are a number of reasons for this statement. Even though Broome identifies a number of instances in other colonies where Imperial troops were used against First Nations people, either in support of settlers or to enforce British law, we have found no evidence to suggest that the same methodology was adopted in Victoria. In Victoria, where action was taken against indigenous people, it was either by private citizens acting without or without official sanction or by government employees including the Native Police. Secondly, even though it is generally referred to as period of frontier warfare and the period demonstrated many of the aspects of war, it was still essentially a policing issue. In other colonies and in the absence of an organised police force, military units were used against indigenous people. In Victoria during the 1830s and 1840s, the military were too small in number, lacked mobility and were tasked with the defence of Melbourne. In the 1850s following the discovery of gold, the military was expanded to provide a better defence of Melbourne; in regional areas the expansion occurred to meet the requirements for maintaining law and order on the goldfields and to cement a form of British society in newly developing areas.

[21] Broome, Richard, *Aboriginal Victoria: a history since 1800*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2005, 69.



Map 1 Victoria and Port Phillip Bay, 1889