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Observations on the Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal

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One of Australia's lesser known and unusual medals is the Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal of 1881–1900 (VVLESM; see Figure 1). One reason this medal could be considered unusual is that it was distributed to the volunteer forces in Victoria from 1881 before Royal sanction had been given to allow it to be awarded. Thus, the first recipients were wearing the medal before Queen Victoria had given her approval for its award, an unusual and daring act in those days.

My interest in this medal stems from my research into the Royal Australian Naval Reserve Long Service and Good Conduct medal (see Figure 4), which was introduced in Australia in 1912. The VVLESM (often also referred to by the obverse inscription as the Victoria Local Forces Medal) was a forerunner in Victoria for the Royal Australian Naval Reserve Long Service and Good Conduct medal. No other State had a similar medal to the VVLESM. Full details of awards to military personnel for the VVLESM can be found in the book *The Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal* written by well-known numismatist and former Melbourne coin dealer Reg Williams. The book outlines the regulations for the medal and contains a list of military recipients, but Williams explains that even with research in Britain he could not find any details of this medal

being awarded to naval recipients, although a few of the medals had appeared on the market. I have searched documents in the Victorian Archives and in the Navy Office Canberra and have come up with the same conclusion—documents relating to the awarding of the medal to naval personnel have since either been lost or destroyed. This paper concerns mainly medals awarded to Victorian naval recipients as mentioned in two Victorian newspapers of the day, *The Argus* and *The Herald*.

The VVLESM is silver and two types exist. The design of both types shows on the obverse the stars of the Southern Cross on a plain cross, with the motto in a garter surmounted by a crown and the words *Local Forces Victoria*. The motto for Type 1 is *Aut Pace aut Bello*¹ clockwise, with *Victoria* beneath counterclockwise (Figure 1), and for Type 2, which was awarded in 1890, *Pro Deo et Patria*² clockwise, again with *Victoria* beneath counterclockwise. On the reverse of both types, in four lines, are the words *For Long and Efficient Service*. The recipient's initials, name and date of award were impressed on the edge for most issues of Type 1. The recipient's rank and unit were not included on the medal at this stage, although I have seen five Type 1 medals awarded between 1885 and 1890, the later issues of the Type 1, which give rank, initials, name and unit—it was earlier

believed this type of naming was found only on Type 2 medals. The qualifying period of service for receiving the medal was 15 years. Both types of the medal are suspended by a ribbon which is white with broad crimson stripes at the edges; and both types were produced by Stokes and Martin of Melbourne, making this a truly Australian award as all other medals awarded before this had been produced by the Royal Mint in Britain. The medals to military recipients are quite scarce on the market and those to naval personnel are considered rare.

It appears that no medals were awarded to military personnel from 1891 to 1896, and no military officers received the medal after 1893. There is another unusual aspect to this medal. Although it is named the Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal it was given not only to volunteers but also to qualifying permanent staff both in the army as well as the navy. Colonial awards of the British army long service medal had already been authorised but none was awarded in Victoria. In fact they were rarely awarded in the other Colonies. The Royal Mint had merely used the current Victorian reign design army long service medal and added the name of the appropriate Colony at the top of the medal's reverse. The Victorian authorities, however, chose not to issue the army long service medal, and perhaps that is why Victoria's permanent staff received the VVLESM along with their volunteer comrades.

When the VVLESM was first issued to military recipients in 1881 it had the date 1880 impressed on the edge. This was

the year in which conditions for the issue of the medal were published, although the award of such a medal to volunteers had been suggested some years earlier. In November 1883 the Victorian Minister of Defence wrote to the Victorian Naval Commandant requesting the names of those naval personnel who had qualified to receive the medal. This was two years after the first military recipients had received their medals. A note to this effect is among papers in the Victorian Archives. This led me to search the Victorian newspapers of the day. A list was prepared by the naval commandant so that the navy men, who served in the Port Melbourne and Williamstown divisions of the Victorian Naval Brigade, could receive the same award as their military counterparts. During the 19th century most members of Victoria's Naval Brigade had a connection with the sea. As a matter of interest, many were fishermen or boatmen or had an occupation involved with seafaring, and naturally many of them lived around Williamstown or Port Melbourne, the two Melbourne districts heavily involved in maritime activities.

When the first medals were presented to the navy men the list was broken up into two groups—Permanent Forces and Naval Brigade—making it quite clear that not only naval volunteers would receive the medal but the Permanent Naval Forces as well. The permanent navy men may have received the medal because for them there was no official long service medal before

1902. This omission had been rectified with the Federation of the States in 1901. Also, the naval authorities were following



Figure 1. Obverse and reverse of the Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal (VVLESM). Shown is Type 1.



Figure 2. Type 1 clasp of the VVLESM.



Figure 3. Type 2 clasp of the VVLESM.



Figure 4. Obverse and reverse of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve Long Service and Good Conduct medal.

the established procedure laid down by the military in issuing the medal to Permanent Staff.

The first medals to the navy were presented by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch, aboard the monitor Her Majesty's Colonial Ship *Cerberus* on Saturday 6 September 1884, before a large gathering of men from both the Permanent

Forces and the Naval Brigade. The first list for the navy contains the names of 14 members of the Permanent Forces and 21 volunteers who were members of the Naval Brigade. So far, I have noted only one of these first-awarded medals on the market; it was impressed only with the initial and name of the recipient and the year of issue, 1884, as was the practice at that stage with military recipients. Presumably the others

awarded to the navy in this first issue were named in the same fashion. However, all other naval medals I have noted on the market have full details of the recipient: rank, initials, name and various ways of describing their unit, and all medals have been Type 1 with the *Aut Pace aut Bello* motto. It is possible that so few of the naval awards were presented that the department issuing them still had a large enough stockpile of Type 1 medals not to have to dip into the Type 2 issue. This is borne out by the fact that some of the naval medals are suspended by the Type 2 attachment, which differs very slightly from that of the Type 1 (see Figures 2, 3).

Some of the naval awards have simply *Naval Brigade* impressed after the recipient's name but others give the division as well, such as *Port Melbourne* or *Williamstown*. Yet again, some I have noted with the impressed words *Victorian Naval Forces* which indicate members of the Permanent Forces.

Eventually I discovered a second listing of naval men receiving the VVLESM in 1899. This list contained five members of the Permanent Forces and seven of the Naval Brigade. Added to the earlier list, we now have 19 members of the Permanent Forces and 28 of the Naval Brigade, a total of 47 naval men known to have received the award.

On 2 April 1899, while the Permanent Forces and the Naval Brigade were on their joint annual Easter manoeuvres in Port Phillip Bay, the Naval Commandant,

Commander F Tickell, presented the VVLESM on the *Cerberus* to the 12 men mentioned above. The five Permanent Forces personnel who received the medal on this occasion later also received the Edward VII naval long service medal when it was introduced in 1902. One of the recipients in 1884 had the rating of Chief Leading Stoker, and judging by the order of the presentation it was a rating which came directly above Petty Officer 1st Class. I have been unable to verify that Chief Leading Stoker was a Royal Navy rating, making it a most unusual rating because in those days the colonial navies were regarded simply as branches of the Royal Navy whose lead in all procedures we tended to slavishly follow.

None of the medals noted by Reg Williams in his book is included in these lists except for the medal to G Morey in 1884.³ He is noted at the first presentation as being a Petty Officer 1st Class with the Permanent Forces and he also had the New Zealand Medal of 1860–1866. George Morey had seen service in the Maori Wars as a stoker on the sloop Her Majesty's Colonial Ship *Victoria*, the first Australian warship to see active service. Ten of the forty-man crew were landed to fight the Maoris and these men appear to be the only recipients of the New Zealand Medal. In those days it was a 'no shot, no gong' policy by the British Government and only

those men on active service received a medal.

Some naval recipients of the VVLESM

had earlier qualified for campaign medals with the Royal Navy. It must be remembered that in the early days of the colonies recruits to the naval forces were often men who had served with the Royal Navy, some having seen active service for which campaign medals were granted. Among the first recipients, five of the Permanent Force men between them had received campaign awards for service in the Baltic Campaign of 1854–1855, the Crimean War of 1854–1856 and the Maori Wars between 1860 and 1866. One of the recipients, Ship's Cook William Freeman, later went to the Boxer Rebellion in China as part of the Victorian Naval Brigade as a stoker and then in 1902 received the Edward VII naval long service medal as Stoker and the British War Medal for World War I service as Chief Stoker with the Royal Australian Navy—altogether outstanding service resulting in an exceptionally large group of four early Australian navy medals.

On the first list of 1884, four of the Naval Brigade volunteers lived to receive the Royal Australian Naval Reserve long service medal in 1912, and on the 1899 list five of the seven Naval Brigade recipients also gained this same long service medal.

The VVLESM is not common on the market, only 375 of Type 1 being awarded by the army, which also awarded 103 of Type 2 with the later motto, giving a total of 478 medals issued to army personnel. With the navy, the total number of awards is not yet known, but at least 20 so far have been noted. The naval awards presentation lists I discovered in the newspapers, however, indicate that more naval awards should exist and may surface in the future.

It has been claimed that some medals issued to naval recipients were presented without suspenders attached. I find this difficult to accept as the medals were issued to be worn from the ribbon provided, thus making it pointless to award them without suspenders—very likely these were removed after issue.

Whereas awards of the VVLESM ceased for the military in 1901 and became obsolete when its personnel then qualified for the newly instituted Colonial Auxiliary Forces Long Service Medal, this may not have been the case for the navy. Apart from the Permanent Naval Forces, who as stated earlier now qualified for an Edward VII navy long service medal, naval reservists did not receive an official Australian award until 10 years later. Did the Victorian authorities continue to issue the VVLESM to their naval reservists or were these sailors unrewarded for that 10-year period? Only further research in newspapers may provide the answer as official documentation appears not to exist.

References

- The Argus*, 1 January 1884–31 December 1901.
The Herald, 1 January 1884–31 December 1901.
The Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal 1881–1901, RD Williams, The Hawthorn Press, 1976.
Commonwealth Government Gazette, 12 October 1912.

Notes

1. Translation: *Either in Peace or in War*.
2. Translation: *For God and Country*.
3. It appears that the name Morey has also been recorded as Marey and Norey: in his article

‘Victoria’s Victory’ in Vol. 1 July 1985, pp.38–48 of this journal, Reg Williams notes that a New Zealand War Medal was issued to Stoker George Marey (this medal is now believed to be in a collection in the United States). The medal roll in *New Zealand Medal 1845-47, 1860-66* by WH Fevyer and JW Wilson, Naval & Military Press (n.d.) lists a medal issued to Stoker G Marey. In the Public Records Office in Britain the official roll for the same medal (PRO ADM. 171/16 ff. 72-73) to naval personnel on HMCS *Victoria* lists a Marey, George, Stoker 2450. However, it appears his surname was incorrectly written as Marey instead of Morey by a clerk in the Navy Office when the roll was being prepared. In *The Argus* of 8 September 1884 in the VVLESM list he is recorded as G. Morey, Petty Officer 1cl. He also appears on a roll published on the internet and compiled from Reg Williams’ article and the official PRO roll as Marey (Morey), George, Stoker 2450. The date 26 August 1872 entered against Morey’s name is the date his New

naval issue (1884) medal which I have seen and that medal is named George Morey, 1884. The name discrepancy would also most likely account for the fact that the two medals—the NZ Medal named to Marey and the VVLESM named to Morey—are at present separated.

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Zealand Medal was sent to him in Australia. On page 107 of his book *The Victoria Volunteer Long and Efficient Service Medal*, Reg Williams records a medal (noted by P Drage) inscribed George Norey, 1884. This is an obvious error for Morey, as it would appear to be the same first