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A RARE COLONIAL MILITARY AWARD

By L.D. Matthews FNSSA

Hanging in a display case at the Penrith Returned & Services League club in New South Wales is a pair of interesting naval medals awarded to a member of the NSW colonial navy.

One is a first issue of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve long service medal with George V obverse, of which 632 were gazetted. The other medal is a most ornate silver colonial medal of local manufacture.

Both medals were awarded to H.J. Maxwell, a member of the NSW Naval Brigade for many years. The colonial medal dated 1887 was awarded to him when he was a Leading Seaman in the NSW Volunteer Artillery, part of the NSW Naval Brigade. By 1912 he received the Royal Australian Naval Reserve (RANR) long service medal and had reached the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

The colonial medal was won at a combined army and navy tournament in Melbourne in June 1887, to honour the Jubilee reign of Queen Victoria. The contest attracted entries from the many units of the NSW and Victorian colonial army and naval forces. This was some 14 years before the Federation of Australia, a period when each colony had its own defence program.

Victoria became a separate State in 1851, and was free of control from NSW, and a great rivalry developed between the defence forces of both colonies. It was fitting, therefore, that army and navy units from both colonies should join in friendly rivalry at a tournament to honour the long reign of Queen Victoria.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE COMPETING COLONIAL FORCES

New South Wales

Australia's first mainland military unit was raised in New South Wales in September 1800. Governor Hunter requested 100 free male settlers in Parramatta and Sydney to form Loyal Associations. They were to be instructed in military drill to combat any rebellion by the Irish convicts. By the 1850's the colony had formed volunteer and militia units. On May 19, 1863, a Naval Brigade was formed in Sydney, and the first parade consisted of 20 officers and men.

Victoria

Rifle companies were formed in Victoria in 1854 under the new Volunteer Act. Early records of these units are somewhat sketchy. The Victorian Naval Brigade was operating by September 1870.

THE TOURNAMENT

The tournament was held at two locations in Melbourne – on the evening of June 20, 1887, at the Exhibition Building in the city and the following day at the Flemington site of the National Agricultural Society of Victoria. It attracted wide publicity and was well attended. On the final night of the tournament the NSW naval contingent was entertained at a dinner in the Melbourne Town Hall, with music supplied by the Naval Artillery Band.

THE MEDALS WON BY CHIEF PETTY OFFICER H.J. MAXWELL.



MAXWELL'S ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVAL RESERVE LONG SERVICE MEDAL:
is impressed in small capitals C.P.O. H.J. Maxwell, the style of naming adopted in NSW at the time of the original issues in 1912.
REVERSE OF THE COLONIAL TOURNAMENT MEDAL.

Newspaper reports give a reasonably detailed account of events which included tent pegging, tilting at the ring, lemon cutting, naval cutlass drill and an intriguing competition of wrestling on horseback. Maxwell's volunteer naval artillery unit did especially well, winning the naval cutlass drill and sword and bayonet competitions.

One would assume Maxwell was not the only recipient of the Tournament colonial medal, as he was only one member of the

NSW Naval Brigade team which won the events described on his medal. Newspaper articles reporting the events do not mention medals being distributed at the end of the tournament, so it is possible they may have been forwarded at a later date. The medal is obviously of local manufacture, and may well have been produced in Melbourne by a jewellery firm like Stokes, but that is a subject for further research

As the medals were semi-official and not

H.J. MAXWELL'S COLONIAL TOURNAMENT MEDAL



Obverse: Crossed Martini-Henry rifles with cutlass bayonets overlaid, left. and underlaid, right, with cutlasses touching at the tip. Between the rifle butts engraved in capitals is Won By N.S.W. Navy | the Y of Navy is hidden by the right rifle butt. | The medal has a thin corded perimeter on both sides set within a raised rim.

Reverse: Inscribed in engraved capitals "Intercolonial Naval and Military Jubilee Sports Melbourne" and in lower case "June 1887" The lower half of the centred engraving is surrounded by an engraved laurel wreath.

Naming: Engraved Capitals around the rim with abbreviated rank, initial, name between arrows pointing left and right.

SIZE: 39mm diameter, (3mm larger than British campaign medals.)

MANUFACTURE: Hand assembled.

SUSPENSION: This is an ornate piece of jeweller's work with a ring at the top from which the ribbon is attached by a hook from a suspension bar engraved in capitals "Sword Bayonet". The top of the ribbon has a similar suspension bar with pin backing and is engraved similarly "'Cutlass".

METAL: Silver. (medal and bars)

RIBBON: A piece of Royal Navy Long Service and Good Conduct Medal ribbon has been used to suspend the medal, but whether this is the ribbon as issued with the medal is not known

awarded by the Sovereign they would not have been issued for wearing on parade, but they may well have been proudly worn by the recipients on other occasions.

Sergeant Ferguson, of the Sydney Light Horse, is credited as having won three of the tournament's competitions – tilting at the ring, tent pegging and lemon cutting. Presumably, if Maxwell received one medal with bars for his two victories, Ferguson would have received one medal suitably engraved with his three successes in the form of bars. It would be interesting to know if his medal still exists.

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