

Chapter 6 - Brigade becomes a Militia

In 1871 the Volunteer Naval Brigade was reformed as the Naval Reserve with the same two divisions. The men were sworn in under the Discipline Act 1870 and could be called upon to undergo 200 hours of drill per year with no more than 100 hours ashore.^A Unlike with the land force, the men in the Naval Reserve were paid, and hence now constituted a militia. Boys received £3.15.00 per year, the men received between £12 and £80 per year depending on their rank. Fines were levied for non-attendance at parades with service compulsory if the Reserve was called out by proclamation.⁹⁸ Unlike its predecessor, there was no election process involved in selecting any of the officers.

The 1875 Volunteer Commission Report stated “The Naval Reserve a very efficient and well disciplined corps, are stationed as follows -One officer and 80 men to the Cerberus, and three officers and 138 men to the Nelson.”⁹⁹

When the Land Force volunteers were reorganised in 1885, they were placed on the same militia footing as the Naval Reserve had been fourteen years earlier.

Although there was talk of creating Geelong, Queenscliff¹⁰⁰ and Emerald Hill¹⁰¹ divisions of the new Naval Reserve, these did not eventuate. Eventually Queenscliff did however provide boatmen for the Victorian Military Torpedo Corps.

Second Reorganisation

On the 18th of September 1885 the Victorian Naval Reserve was reorganised and renamed the Victorian Naval Brigade.¹⁰² Although intended to be known as the Victorian Naval Militia, representations from the men of the Naval Reserve convinced Premier James Service and Defence Minister Frederick Thomas Sargood not to adopt the name Militia, but for the force to once again be known as the Naval Brigade,¹⁰³ albeit without the prefix of Volunteer this time. Having been reorganised as a paid militia in 1871, only minor changes were eventually made in 1885. Sub-Lieutenants were to be engaged on probation for six months, allowances were adjusted and the rules

^A Later changed to 100 hours ashore and 44 hours afloat.

and regulations of the Permanent Navy were to apply to the Naval Brigade when drilling or serving afloat.

Some proposed changes, as detailed on page 100 were reversed.

The change of name of the suburb of Sandridge in 1884 to Port Melbourne meant that the Brigade's two divisions were, from then on, the Williamstown and Port Melbourne divisions.

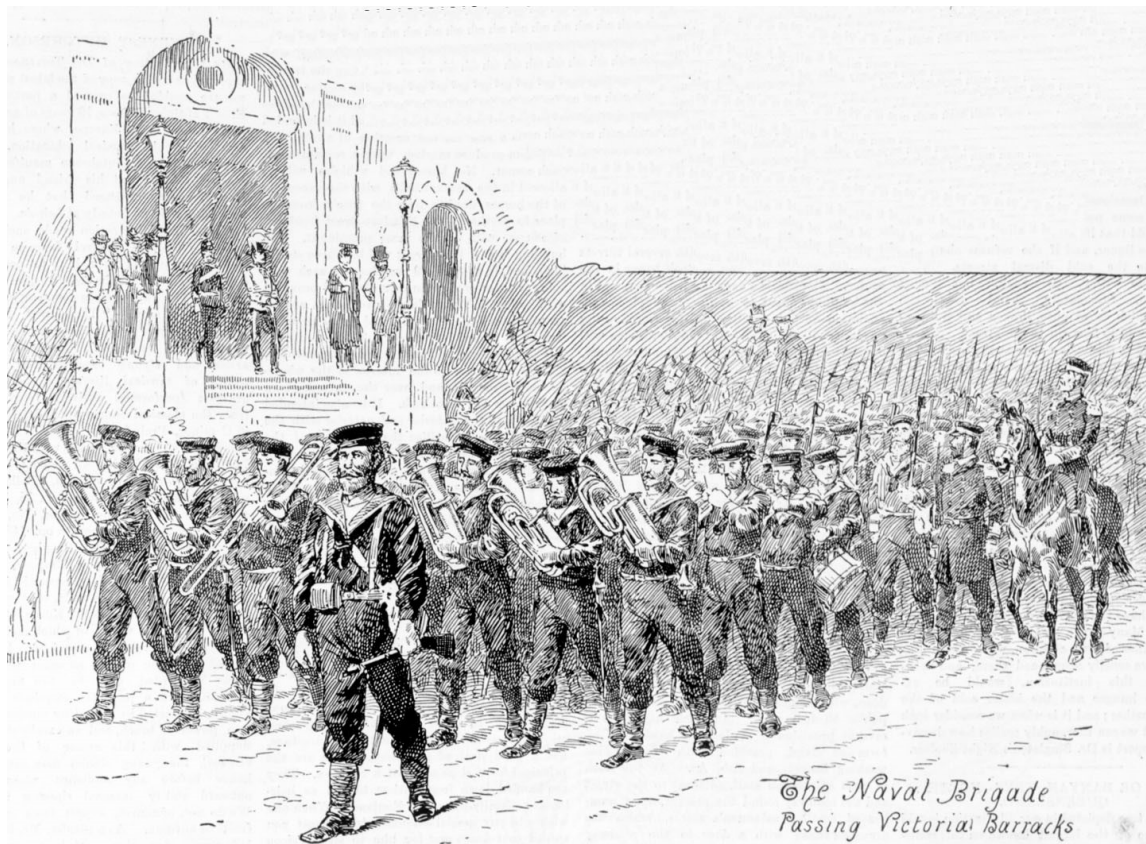


Figure 28 - Naval Brigade Passing Victoria Barracks

Detail from - *Illustrated Australian News*, 1 June 1891 (State Library of Victoria)

“Cheers along the line announce the approach of the Naval Forces & a very substantial square the force of 450 blue jackets makes.....The seamen have always been popular, and their popularity is not attributable to sentiment so much as the high state of their efficiency they have always maintained....”¹⁰⁴

Harbour Trust Support

The Harbour Trust made important contributions to the Victorian Naval Forces, not only through the use of many of its vessels as described in Chapter 11 -, but also through the encouragement given to its employees' involvement. The enthusiasm of its commander, Robert Russell Fullarton, was no doubt partly responsible for this linkage.

The second to enlist in the Volunteer Naval Brigade in 1859, just two years later Robert (Bobby) Fullarton was in command of the whole Naval Reserve. Fullarton's position as harbour master at Melbourne from 1869 and then of the Harbour Trust from 1877, put him in the ideal position to encourage the involvement of Harbour Trust employees in the part time Naval Brigade/Reserve. In 1885 Captain Fullarton was appointed to the colony's Council of Defence.

In early 1885 all existing employees of the Harbour Trust were invited to join either the Harbour Trust Battery or the Naval Brigade as vacancies became available. Men gaining employment with the Harbour Trust after May 1885 had to be eligible for, and prepared to join, either the Battery or the Brigade if called on to do so. In 1891 the Harbour Trust contributed 242 men of the 362 men serving in the Naval Brigade. However comparisons between pre and post 1885 figures suggested that all but 6% of those serving in the Naval Brigade would have served voluntarily anyway.¹⁰⁵

The main disadvantage of the part time force was the lack of long periods of time available for the men to practise afloat. Whole fleet manoeuvres were restricted to public holidays such as Easter when four consecutive days were available for the fleet to practise together.

In July 1886 two weeks paid leave for Harbour Trust employees serving in the Naval Brigade was trialled so that they could practise on board the navy's vessels for an extended period of time. By the end of the year this had increased to three weeks leave and when fifty men returned from practising on board *Nelson* in December 1886, fifty more men took their place.

After resigning from the Naval Brigade in 1892, Fullarton would have been distressed to see his beloved brigade disband itself three years later. That so many of these men marched in plain clothes a few months later at his funeral in September 1895, shows the respect with which they held him.