

## Colonial defence personnel records held in Melbourne

The collection in Melbourne includes many personnel service records of the Victorian colonial defence force, which were transferred to the Commonwealth following Federation in 1901. Details of major records holdings are in the table below.

### **The Victorian colonial defence force**

**Volunteer Forces** – The first colonial military unit in Victoria (separate to regular British units, which maintained a presence until 1870) was the Melbourne Rifle Regiment, formed in 1854. Subsequent expansion, often through private initiative, resulted in the creation of Cavalry, Artillery, Engineer, Torpedo and Signal units, with titles deriving from the localities in which they were raised. All units were 'volunteer', with service part time and unpaid. The volunteer forces were disbanded in 1884.

**Militia Forces** – A 'Militia' organisation replaced the volunteer forces from 1884. The Militia were paid, and enrolled for a fixed term. Although service remained part time, members were obliged to attend a number of full days training per year, in the form of annual camps, to qualify as effective.

**Mounted Rifles and Victorian Rangers** – The Victorian Mounted Rifles (not to be confused with similarly named contingents to the Boer War) were first formed in December 1885, with companies recruited in rural centres. The Victorian Rangers, an infantry equivalent, were raised in 1888. A small allowance only was paid to members, and Mounted Riflemen were required to provide their own mount. Members of country rifle clubs formed significant components of both corps. No service records are held for these units, but information may be found in correspondence records for the period.

**Permanent Artillery Corps (or the Victorian Artillery)** – This force was created in 1870 to provide standing garrisons for fortifications in the colony, and instructional staff for Volunteer Forces artillery units. Its numbers never exceeded 300 men.

**Naval Brigade** – First formed in 1859, this force contained a high proportion of ex-Royal Navy men. Service was part time and unpaid. Trained in infantry and artillery drill, both ashore and aboard ship, the brigade supplemented the small permanent navy. The Brigade was divided into Williamstown and Sandridge (Port Melbourne) divisions.

**Permanent Naval Forces** – These came into effective existence in 1867 with the acquisition of the obsolete, Napoleonic era, line-of-battle ship HMVS *Nelson*. Further vessels were added in subsequent years. Generally, Permanent Naval personnel formed only a portion of these ships' total complement, being supplemented by members of the Naval Brigade.

## Personnel service records of the Victorian colonial defence force

### Volunteer force

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Volumes of records of service for the Victorian Volunteer Force (annual returns by unit which include name, rank, number of drills, parades and inspections attended, and classification of members – includes Naval Brigade for 1863–1871)</u>	1863–84	B5395

### Militia forces

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Volumes of muster rolls and pay lists for Victorian militia forces (half-yearly returns by unit which include name, rank, drills and parades and courses attended, dates of promotion, and effectiveness rating – includes Naval Brigade for 1885–1901)</u>	1884–1935	B5437

### Permanent Artillery corps

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Registers of salaries and allowances paid to the Defence forces, Victoria (includes rank, rate of pay, classification, and remarks re fines, promotions, transfers, discharges)</u>	1863–1912	B5721
<u>Registers of salaries and allowances paid to the Victorian Artillery and Victorian Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery (includes rank, Regimental Number, monthly pay, allowances and remarks concerning promotion and discharge)</u>	1890–1911	B5718

### Naval Brigade

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Registers of trainees, Victorian Naval Reserve (includes rank, date of birth, physical description, qualifications and employment, address, dates of enrolment and discharge, and training attended with pay)</u>	1871–85	B5493
<u>Victorian Naval Reserve, Victorian Naval Brigade and Commonwealth Naval Militia Muster Rolls (volumes) (includes monthly entries for training attended)</u>	1875–1908	B5549
<u>Victorian Naval Reserve enrolment sheets (includes name, age, height, profession and signature of the member and the date sworn in)</u>	1877–86	B5531
<u>Registers of attendance at drills and payment of retainer, Naval volunteer reservists in Victoria (continuation of B5493 but with training and pay information only)</u>	1885–1913	B5492

## Permanent Naval Forces

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>'Description Book' [List of crew], HMVS Nelson (includes rating, physical description, religion, residence and date of discharge. Most entries are for 1870s, with information incomplete for 1884 and ceasing altogether after 1885)</u>	1868–91	B5522
<u>Victorian Naval Forces enrolment book (entries are by date of swearing in and include age, height and profession)</u>	1884–1911	B5520
<u>Certificates of service, Victorian Navy and Commonwealth Naval Forces Victoria (includes date of enlistment, date of birth, trade, period of enlistment, examinations and qualifications, and details of discharge)</u>	1884–1911	B5537
<u>Register of salaries and allowances paid to the Victorian Naval Forces (financial year entries include date of pay, commencement within current year, rank, pay rate and date of discharge)</u>	1890–96	B5720

All records have been digitised and can be viewed online through [RecordSearch](#), with the exception of those records in series B5718 and B5549.

## For more information

See the following fact sheets for additional information on defence records held in Melbourne:

- *Fact sheet 67 - Boer War records*
- *Fact sheet 135 - Army administrative records held in Melbourne*
- *Fact sheet 136 - Army service records*
- *Fact sheet 137 - Navy administrative records held in Melbourne*
- *Fact sheet 138 - Navy service records held in Melbourne*