Gibraltar of the south: defending Victoria: an analysis of colonial defence in Victoria, Australia, 1851-1901

Download
- Thesis text - Gibraltar of the south: defending Victoria: an analysis of colonial defence in Victoria, Australia, 1851-1901 (6.365Mb)
- Map 1.1 Victoria and Port Phillip Bay (173.0Kb)
- Map 2.1 Scratchley Plans, proposed defences at Hobson's Bay, 1860 (121.2Kb)
- Map 2.2 Scratchley Wiseman plans, Hobson's Bay 1865 (92.89Kb)
- Map 2.3 Scratchley Plans, proposed defences at South Channel, 1860 (60.93Kb)
- Map 6.1 Defences at the Heads to Port Phillip Bay, 1880s (219.5Kb)
- Map 7.1 Map of Defence Positions published in Argus, 1888 (343.2Kb)

Citations

Author
Marmion, Robert J.

Date
2009

Affiliation
Faculty of Arts, Historical Studies

Metadata
Show full item record

Document Type
PhD thesis

Citations

Access Status
Open Access
During the nineteenth century, defence was a major issue in Victoria and Australia, as indeed it was in other British colonies and the United Kingdom. Considerable pressure was brought to bear by London on the self-governing colonies to help provide for their own defence against internal unrest and also possible invasions or incursions by nations such as France, Russia and the United States.

From 1851 until defence was handed over to the new Australian Commonwealth at Federation in 1901, the Victorian colonial government spent considerable energy and money fortifying parts of Port Phillip Bay and the western coastline as well as developing the first colonial navy within the British Empire. Citizens were invited to form volunteer corps in their local areas as a second tier of defence behind the Imperial troops stationed in Victoria. When the garrison of Imperial troops was withdrawn in 1870, these units of amateur citizen soldiers formed the basis of the colony’s defence force. Following years of indecision, ineptitude and ad hoc defence planning that had left the colony virtually defenceless, in 1883 Victoria finally adopted a professional approach to defending the colony. The new scheme of defence allowed for a complete re-organisation of not only the colony’s existing naval and military forces, but also the command structure and supporting services. For the first time an integrated defence scheme was established that co-ordinated the fixed defences (forts, batteries, minefields) with the land and naval forces. Other original and unique aspects of the scheme included the appointment of the first Minister of Defence in the Australian colonies and the first colonial Council of Defence to oversee the joint defence program. All of this was achieved under the guidance of Imperial advisors who sought to integrate the colony’s defences into the wider Imperial context.

This thesis seeks to analyse Victoria’s colonial defence scheme on a number of levels – firstly, the nature of the final defence scheme that was finally adopted in 1883 after years of vacillation, secondly, the effectiveness of the scheme in defending Victoria, thirdly, how the scheme linked to the greater Australasian and Imperial defence, and finally the political, economic, social and technological factors that shaped defence in Victoria during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Keywords
colonial defence; Victoria; British Empire; 19th century

Collections
- School of Historical and Philosophical Studies - Theses [1544]

3. Colonial forces of Australia – Until Australia became a Federation in 1901, each of the six colonial governments was responsible for the defence of their own colony. From 1788 until 1870 this was done with British regular forces, in all, 24 British infantry regiments served in the Australian colonies. This move incited protests around the colony, including the Forest Creek Monster Meeting of December 1851, in Ballarat, historian Weston Bate noted that diggers became so agitated that they began to gather arms. The government hastily repealed its plans due to the reaction, nevertheless, the oppressive licence hunts continued and increased in frequency causing general dissent among the diggers. The History of Australia (1851–1900) refers to the history of the indigenous and colonial peoples of the Australian continent during the 50-year period which preceded the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. gold rushes, exploration of the interior, booms, depressions and trade unions, development of Australian democracy, cultural development. Further reading: The discovery of gold in New South Wales, Victoria and then Western Australia had dramatic consequences for Australia. The story of gold in Australia is best told through analysis of modern day Victoria. Historian Richard Broome remarked that it was rare in history to see a society so radically transformed as Port Phillip was from the year 1851 onwards. The population boom in Victoria was fuelled by immigrants from across the globe, with huge numbers of colonists coming from Britain, California, other parts of Australia and China in search of their fortunes. This original artwork by Robert Russell depicts Collins Street in 1844, it shows economically the state of Melbourne prior to the discovery of gold. (Source: State Library of Victoria).