

Interesting Reminiscences.

VICTORIA'S FIRST WARSHIP.

RICHARD GRIMWOOD'S STORY.

"I am the only solitary survivor of the H.M.A.S. Victoria now living, who snipped in that man-o'-war at London, when she was launched in 1855," remarked Mr. Richard Grimwood in a recent chat, "and I was the last to have authority in connection with her, when, as foreman of a gang of laborers, I supervised her being broken up for the timber and copper she contained. She had been purchased at auction by Captain James Deane for £350. She cost £60,000."

Mr. Grimwood has just left Williamstown to reside at Footscray, after a citizenship of some 56 years. For many years he was in the forefront of local yachting. Pressed for some further details of the Victoria's career, Mr. Grimwood then went on to state a little of his boyhood's career and his youth, as it led up, eventually, to his association with H.M.A.S. Victoria, the first vessel owned by this State, and the forerunner of the present Commonwealth fleet.

"I was born on the Cornish coast—well known as one of the roughest parts of England; you could fish, too, from out of my bedroom window, our house overhanging the sea—not far from a place called the Ram's Head, on January 8, 1838."

Reporter: So that now you're 74 years of age?

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An affirmative smile came from the smart, alert septuagenarian.

Mr. Grimwood: Yes; my father was a coast-guardsman. I had very little schooling. I worked first for a farmer. After that I served six months with a blacksmith. Then I ran away to sea. That was when I was about fifteen. My first vessel was the John Moore, of Plymouth. On the transport, Edwin Fox, we took cargo to the Black Sea ports at the time of the Crimean War, and brought back 450 invalid soldiers of different British regiments, from Scutari to London. Among those who came on board was Miss Florence Nightingale, the great nursing heroine, subsequently decorated by Queen Victoria.

Proceeding, Mr. Grimwood sketched lightly the intervening period. He made a trip in the brig, Jane Clark. In her he became "castaway" at a place called "The Scaw," on the coast of Denmark. The crew was saved from drowning by the Danes. Next he found himself in the despatch boat, Baron von Humboldt, running despatches to the British Admiral in command of the Baltic fleet. Eventually, this led to his association with the Victoria, then building.

Reporter: Could you give some description of the new war vessel?

Mr. Grimwood: You'll find it there on that piece of paper.

This turned out to be a copy of a footnote to the photographs taken at the time by the builders, and read:—H.M.S.S. Victoria. Seven guns. Built by Young and Sons and Magnay in

by Young and Sons and Magnay in 1855. The first ship of war ever built at the cost, and for the special service of a British colony. Built at Deptford." This is respectfully inscribed by their very obedient and humble servants, Young and Son and Magnay, the builders, to the Honorable the Speaker and the members of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Victoria; this engraving of the steamship, Victoria." A copy of this photograph, Mr. Grimwood still retains.

The narrator next went on to tell that the Victoria had been built very much at the instance of the then State Governor, Sir Charles Hotham.

Reporter: Captain Norman brought her out?

Mr. Grimwood: Captain Henry Norman, father of one of the present Railways Commissioners. The captain brought his wife and family with him. Later on he was deputed by the Government to again return to England to bring out the H.M.A.S. Cerberus, but he died in London.

Reporter: When did your voyage to Australia commence?

Mr. Grimwood: We left London about December 21, 1855, for Melbourne, and got down to Southampton on the 23rd. And here we were held up for three months owing to a lawsuit over the Victoria's new patent propeller. Finally, we left England on March 8, 1856. We took 84 days on the passage, and cast anchor off Williamstown on May 31 of the same year. When we arrived we found that Sir Charles Hotham was dead. The new vessel was then put on the police list. And there was plenty for her to

new vessel was then put on the police list. And there was plenty for her to do; what with scores of rowdy diggers, sailors and convicts about. Altogether, just then, there was a lot of trouble in the harbor. We had a crew of 30 men. Lieutenant G. Hosking Woods (well known in Williamstown for years) ranked second in command, and I think a Mr. Bowling was second mate. The chief engineer was Mr. Griffiths. Mr. Woods' son was a midshipman, and Mr. Horne (a nephew of Captain Norman's) was also a midshipman.

Altered from her intended avocation as a war-vessel, the trim sloop, Victoria, seems to have performed many useful missions during her career. For a time she did the work in which the Government steamer, Lady Loch, is engaged to-day—supplying the lighthouses periodically with stores. Before that she had gone to assist at the wreck of the ship, Arthur the Great, in Geelong Bay. One time Captain Norman was engaged with the Victoria in laying the first cable from this colony to Tasmania. The cable itself had been brought out from England by the s.s. Omeo, a steamer scores of Williamstown people will recollect ran on this coast for years after. The starting spot for the laying of the cable was at Cape Otway. It was laid across King's Island, the three Hummocks Islands, finally landing on the Tasmanian side at Circular Head. It came in through the back of Georgetown, at the entrance of the Tamar River. The whole place was en fete. Flags flew, the Victoria's seven guns fired volleys in honor of the occasion, and the public houses kept open all night. There

In honor of the occasion, and the public houses kept open all night. There was a regular jollification. At the time of the Port Curtis rush, the Victoria was employed in bringing back the stranded Victorian diggers that had sought their luck at that first Queensland goldfield. This was in 1858. The H.M. Victoria brought back 450, as the rush had at that time turned out a duffer.

(Gold was subsequently got there in good quantities, the writer having wrought there since for twelve months, in and around Calliope, the digging township, some 16 miles from Gladstone.—Ed. "Chronicle.")

Another special Queensland trip of the Victoria was proceeding to the Gulf of Carpentaria to rescue, if possible, the members of the Burke and Wills' expedition in 1862. The H.M. Victoria was at King's Island serving Government stores while the s.s. Admilla lay wrecked at Cape Nelson, with passengers and racehorses on board, on her voyage to Melbourne from Adelaide. During the progress of the New Zealand War, the Victoria was entrusted with the work of carrying despatches—her final work of a public character as her utilization as a surveying vessel.

"The poor old Victoria," musingly concluded Mr. Grimwood, "was sold, as I told you, to be broken up. All that's left of her—so far as I know—are the rudder standards, now in the possession of Cr. A. S. Heriot, in his sailmaking loft, while I have the tiller of my crack yacht, Athlete, wrapped up safe and sound made out of a piece of her Wood, and I intend to keep it till my

Wood, and I intend to keep it till my

dying day. As I've told you before, the Athlete swept the board those days for the Hobson's Bay Yacht Club. Here's the clock (pointing to a very fine old ormolu timepiece on the side-board, and bearing an inscription, showing that Mr. A. S. Heriot was the donor) she won in 1888. And here's the Carlton Brewery trophy I won with her in 1889." The exhibition of a handsome gold repeater, suitably inscribed, and a hearty handshake concluded a most interesting interview.

—We have received a cutting from Mr. Grimwood, written in May, 1888, on the opening race of the Hobson's Bay Yacht Club (then the Williamstown Yacht Club). The race was won by the Athlete, which beat the crack Brighton yacht, Galatea. Captain Gunwood sailed the winner, and Robert Ray was the builder.