

Basic Detail Report



00009326

Title

Visit of HRH Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh

Date

1868

Primary Maker

Thomas Stokes

Medium

Metal

Dimensions

Overall: 0.05 kg

Name

Medallion

History

HMS GALATEA was a steam frigate of 3,500 tons and one of the fastest and best equipped ships in the Royal Navy. It was launched at Woolwich in 1859 and was fully-rigged in addition to its steam engines. The cruise of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (1844-1900), the second son of Queen Victoria, in GALATEA was a momentous occasion for the Australian colonies as it was the first visit of British royalty since British settlement in 1788. Prince Alfred entered the Royal Navy in August 1858 and travelled widely as a midshipman in the frigate EURYALUS. He was promoted lieutenant in 1863 and in 1866 became both a naval captain and Duke of Edinburgh. He commissioned his first command, HMS GALATEA, in January 1867, left for the Mediterranean in February and sailed for South America on 12 June for a state visit to the Emperor of Brazil. In late August, GALATEA left Brazil and headed for the tiny island of Tristan da Cunha in the Atlantic Ocean where the Duke was entertained by the 53 British inhabitants. On 6 September the ship headed to the Cape of Good Hope. After a few weeks in the Cape Colony, the GALATEA reached Adelaide on 31 October 1867 to commence the first royal tour of Australia. After three uneventful weeks in South Australia, the Duke moved on to Melbourne where a shooting incident between Orange and Catholic factions and a riot due to inept handling of a free public banquet marred the generally enthusiastic atmosphere. He then visited Tasmania and arrived in Sydney on 21 January 1868. After a month of festivities he spent a week in Brisbane and returned to Sydney. Despite rumours of sectarian strife, the Duke attended a picnic at Clontarf on 12 March where an Irishman, Henry James O'Farrell, succeeded in wounding him seriously. In a frenzy of outraged patriotism the New South Wales government sought unsuccessfully to uncover a conspiracy and, overruling the Duke's eminently sensible proposal to refer the sentence on O'Farrell to the Queen, refused to recommend clemency. O'Farrell was hanged on 21 April and

the Duke, who had recovered completely by 26 March, left Sydney for England on 6 April via Cape Horn. The events were fully covered in the newspapers of the day, the Illustrated Sydney News providing graphic illustrations. An attempt to stir up anti-Irish feeling on the back of the event was short-lived. A Norfolk Island pine, planted to mark the place where the Duke was shot, still exists in Holmes Avenue. The Duke visited Australia again informally, arriving in Fremantle on 28 January 1869 and leaving Sydney on 3 April. In both Sydney and Melbourne he dedicated hospitals (Royal Prince Alfred and The Alfred respectively) commemorating his escape from death. In 1870 the Duke made a final visit to dock the GALATEA. He arrived at Sydney on 15 September, visited Melbourne for the Cup from 22 October to 19 November, and sailed early in 1871 without any ceremonies. HMS GALATEA was scrapped in Britain in 1882.