

Sumter to Appomattox

The Official Newsletter of the New South Wales Chapter of
The American Civil War Round Table of Australia

No. 5, September 2002

A Message from the Chairman –

Dear Round Table Members and Friends,

The final meeting for 2002 has had to be deferred until November because of the October Long Weekend and the lack of availability of our usual venue on other Mondays in the month. While we will gather together again as a group in early December for our Christmas function, it might be appropriate, at this time, that we reflect on this year's program with a view to ascertaining what we need to plan for in 2003. In this regard, your Committee is actively seeking your views on the success of the 2002 program and, more importantly, what would you like to see included in next year's activities.

Last month, Virginia Crocker treated us to a fascinating presentation on the topic of 'Civil War Veterans in Australia'. Although I had heard Virginia speak on this subject previously, her recounting of her father's work and the personal and family history associated with finding the veteran's gravesites throughout Australia continues to intrigue me. A number of members spoke to me after the meeting expressing similar sentiments about the presentation. Thank you Virginia for a most stimulating and informative address.

In the next Newsletter we will be providing full details of this year's Christmas function. Your Committee is considering a number of options for this function but if you have any suggestions, however, we would like to hear from you. Although it seems an impossible task, we are seeking to match Elaine and Roger's efforts from last year. We hope to hear from you.

Our November meeting's presentation is to be given by Paul Hardey who will speak about Walt Whitman and the roles he played during and after the War. This is a topic that has not received as much attention in the past as it might have, but you are guaranteed a well-researched and most interesting and challenging presentation. I hope to see you at the meeting.

Paul Kensey

Next Month's Meeting

Because of Labour Day Public Holiday on October 1 and the Roseville Memorial RSL Club not being available on other Monday nights in October, **the next meeting of the Chapter has been deferred**. This meeting now will be held on the first Monday evening in November, that is, **Monday, November 4**, and scheduled to commence, as usual, **at 7pm** at:

**The Roseville Memorial RSL Club,
Pacific Highway, Roseville**

Prior to the meeting, members will meet at the Club from 6pm, as usual, for drinks and light refreshments.

The presentation planned for this meeting, is something quite different from the presentations of previous meetings. One of our long-standing members, **Paul Hardey**, is to speak to the topic:

**“Walt Whitman – Poet, Patriot
and Hospital Aide”**

You may be assured of a challenging, thought provoking presentation that will be followed, no doubt, by a lively question and answer/comment session.

A written paper for this presentation will be available at the conclusion of the meeting and later, on request. Members living outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area will have the paper mailed to them automatically.

Note: The change to the schedule of meeting dates is for this meeting only.

Our First Honorary Member

It is with the great pleasure we announce that, at our August meeting, Honorary Membership to the New South Wales Chapter of ACWRTA was conferred on Mrs Virginia Crocker for her outstanding contribution to Civil War research in Australia. Congratulations Virginia!

Boys in Blue who Weren't!

The phrase "Blue and Gray" to describe the two sides of the Civil War derives from the uniforms that the men of each side wore or, rather, the colour of the uniforms they supposedly wore.

Particularly in early in the War, however, there was not a lot of uniformity in the uniforms that each side wore. Presented below, are a few examples from the boys supposedly in blue:

- Company A, 2nd Massachusetts, (the California Company) wore green and gold uniforms;
- The 3rd New Jersey Cavalry wore hussar uniforms complete with pill-box hats literally "...smothered in gold";
- The 39th New York, better known as the "Garibaldi Guard" wore a modified Italian Bersagliere (light infantry) style uniform and sported their hero's famous red shirts for camp wear;
- The 84th New York (14th Brooklyn) wore a modified chasseur uniform with its straight legged trousers;
- The 12th New York Militia also wore a French style uniform of *chasseur* cut, with sky blue trousers;
- The two regiments of "United States Sharp Shooter" wore dark green uniforms.

The many variations in the colour of the uniforms led to considerable confusion on the battlefield, particularly since early in the War, Confederate units wore blue or Zouvre uniforms not dissimilar from the standard blue of the Union forces.

As time passed and their initial issue of uniforms wore out, most regiments who had adopted non-standard dress, found themselves changing to the standard blue uniform.

Sources: North and South, Volume 5, Nos. 3 and 4.

Did You Know? ...

The Civil War provided the first two presidents who were West Point graduates – Jefferson Davis of the Confederate States of America and of the Eighteenth President of the United States, Ulysses S Grant.

In later times three other presidents emerged from the West Point Academy – Dwight D Eisenhower (United States), Anastasio Somoza (Nicaragua) and Fidel Ramos (Philippines).

An Interesting Bit of Trivia...

All three of the Groomsman at Ulysses S Grant's wedding in August 1848 later went over to the Confederate side in the Civil War.

Civil War Songs

The musical interlude that we have had in our recent meetings has been well received by members and some have indicated they would like to obtain the words of these and other Civil War songs. There are a number of Internet web-sites that provide this information and one of the best is:

<http://users.erols.com/kfraser>

Accessing this web-site will give you three icons on your computer screen:

Confederate Poetry
Songs of the War
Union Poetry

If you click on 'Songs of the War' and scroll down to the bottom of the display, you will get three options:

Songs of the Union
Songs of the Confederacy
Popular Songs of the Day

Click on these options and you get a comprehensive listing of the songs in each category. Then click on the song title and the words of the song are displayed and by clicking on the 'Music' icon in the top left-hand corner of the display the music of the song you have chosen will play.

This is a web-site well worth visiting for a 'sing-a-long'.

The Battle of Chancellorsville

For anyone interested in a detailed study the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863, there is a series of articles available on the Internet web-site:

<http://www.fredericksburg.com>

After accessing this web-site, click on "Civil War" and then on "Battles". Then click on the detail under the heading of "The Battle of Chancellorsville". This will give you the title of each part of a continuing series written by historian and author, Robert K Krick. Clicking on the respective titles will bring up the particular part in the series.

This is a series well worth reading!

It Happened in September

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

September 4, 1864 - Confederate raider and cavalry leader, John Hunt Morgan, is shot and killed in a federal raid on Greenville, Tenn;

September 6, 1819 – William S Rosecrans (USA) is born in Delaware County, Ohio;

September 10, 1836 – Joseph (Fighting Joe) Wheeler (CSA) is born in Augusta, Ga;

September 12, 1818 – Richard J Gatling, inventor of the first machine gun (Gatling Gun) used in the Civil War is born in Hertford County NC;

September 27, 1808 – Raphael Semmes, the Confederate naval commander responsible for the destruction or capture of 64 Union ships is born in Charles County, MD;

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

September 1, 1864 – Union forces under General Sherman occupy Atlanta;

September 8, 1863 – General Braxton Bragg retreats into Georgia;

September 9, 1863 – Federal forces commanded by General Rosecrans occupy Chattanooga, TN;

September 15, 1862 – Confederates capture Harpers Ferry, W.VA, taking 12 000 prisoners;

September 17, 1862 – The Battle of Antietam halts Confederate advance into the North;

September 18, 1862 – Lee withdraws his Army of Northern Virginia from Maryland under cover of darkness;

September 19-20, 1863 – The Battle of Chickamauga – a Confederate victory after they exploit a gap in the Federal lines and force a hurried and confused Northern retreat;

September 19, 1864 – The Third Battle of Winchester where Federal forces commanded by Sheridan defeat Early's Confederates;

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

September 11, 1864 – Generals Sherman and Hood enter into a ten-day truce to allow for the evacuation of citizens of Atlanta, GA;

September 22, 1862 – Following the strategic Union victory at Antietam, Lincoln issues the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

The Next Time I Tour the Battlefields - An Interview with Paul Kensey

This interview was given by our Chairman following his latest tour of the Civil War battlefields in June/July of this year and focuses on what he might do differently and what he must see again if he were to undertake another battlefields tour as a tour guide.

Q: Well Paul, now that you are home from the your latest tour of the Civil War battlefields and had a chance to reflect on the tour, what were its highlights?

Paul: That's not an easy question to answer, as you will appreciate when you read Alan Winkworth's tour diary. Every day had its highlight and the range of experiences that the group encountered made for an exciting tour. If I were forced to nominate one part of the tour as my favourite, however, I would have to say it was our day trip to Lexington, Va. As you will see from Alan Winkworth's account, we left Richmond very early in the morning in three hired Chevy 4x4 Blazers and travelled about 300 km right across Virginia. Driving on "the wrong side of the road" was an experience - John King had difficulty finding the centre line, Carl Bryant, the right side of the road and Rhonda O'Dwyer needs training in navigation. She would be lost without her "Sat-Nav" having obviously lived in US for too long! Still they got us there and back safely and on time. We were met at VMI by Colonel Keith Gibson, Director of their Museum who spoke on the history of the college and introduced to a young female officer cadet who briefed us on what it is like to be a student there today. We then went to the Washington Lee University – who would not be moved by the visit to the tomb of Robert E Lee? When we reached Appomattox Court House on the way back, not even the rain could dampen the enthusiasm of the group – it was quite emotional. A truly memorable and moving day!

Q: Even as a now experienced traveller to the Civil War battlefields, you must have encountered some new experiences on this tour that you could share with us.

Paul: Certainly, there is always something new to see. This time it was the newly opened National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, Pa, that really impressed me. Its exhibits involved the latest in technology and the Museum provided a most comprehensive study of the War. A visit here is a "must" for any tour and I'll certainly be going back there next time I travel to the US.

(continued overleaf)

Q: Were the local guides/historians helpful in providing insights and a “local flavour” to the group?

Paul: The short answer is “yes” but the saying “comparisons are odious” applies here. We had three historians during the tour and each was excellent in their own way. I must say, however, that in Charlestown, Benjamin Blair of the SCV was outstanding with his wealth of knowledge. A Confederate to the bootstraps, he was truly amazing. The time spent in his company was most rewarding. When he joined us for dinner we found him to be not only knowledgeable but a most enjoyable and convivial guest,

Q: How did you find the re-enactments at Gettysburg?

Paul: I have to say from the outset that I am not a “re-enactment person”. If you like this sort of thing, however, then Gettysburg is certainly the one to see. What I do enjoy at a re-enactment are the Sutlers’ Tents. You can view and/or buy all manner of Civil War memorabilia here. I have really acquired the taste for their “Beef Jerky”. At re-enactments, I also rather enjoy speaking with the re-enactors, both male and female, in their camps – you can learn a lot about the era in this way.

Q: If you were to lead another battlefields’ tour are there any things you might drop from your itinerary?

Paul: Some time ago I wrote a paper entitled “So You Want to Visit the Civil War Battlefields?” where I said “Don’t be greedy! You cannot see everything in one visit”. Well, perhaps I broke my own rule. This is a difficult decision for any planner to make. Your group will travel a long way and will want to see as much as they can in the available time. The itinerary, however, must be consistent with the age and fitness levels of the group. On this tour we visited every battlefield in the Eastern Theatre and there is a lot of them! Was this too much? Not for me but for some it might well have been. If you are to drop a battlefield from the itinerary, which one would it be and why that choice? Would such a move displease the younger and/or fitter members of the group? To extend the tour to cater for a more leisurely pace, increases the tour cost – transport, accommodation and historians all cost money! I’m afraid I really don’t have the answer.

This publication is the official newsletter of the New South Wales Chapter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia. All inquiries regarding the Newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary/Treasurer of the Chapter on 9449 3729 or at PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075, or by e-mail to bpconnell@bigpond.com

Q: How would you sum up this battlefields’ tour?

Paul: The group makes the tour! Travel companies and tour leaders only think they do. The group on this tour was the best I have ever been associated with. They were most agreeable, friendly and in all matters appertaining to the Civil War, intelligent in their questioning of historians and guides. Fred Hawthorne, our historian in Virginia and Pennsylvania, was a comparatively young man and was determined to show us everything there was to see. Before leaving, he said to me that it was the finest group he had ever been with and for him it was more of a holiday than work. Personally, I feel we did ourselves proud – everyone seemed to enjoy themselves despite our getting off to a bad start with an airline problem. As it turned out, this problem turned into an additional bonus visit to the US West Coast. There were no fights, arguments or harsh words except for the occasional “go” at the Poms. As Chairman of the NSW Chapter of the ACWRTA I can honestly say, I was very proud of our tour party. To answer your question about the tour itself, I could sum it up in one word – Excellent.

Q: Finally, with the success of this tour, when are you going again?

Paul: Never! – But I have said that before. A number of people have asked me about a Western Theatre or Mississippi tour. I wouldn’t mind that but only if I could get at least 18 people to go. If we could get the same group as this tour, however, I would off tomorrow!

Thank you Paul for sharing these thoughts with our members.

Editor’s Comment:

This record of interview shows clearly how fortunate the members of the Chapter are in having someone like Paul Kensey as our Chairman. Not only is he very well informed in matters Civil War, he is also most generous in the giving of his time to help others wishing to learn about America’s Civil War. The tour’s success was largely due to Paul’s commitment and his willingness to do that “little bit extra” that turns a good tour into a great tour. Well-done Paul, your work for the Chapter and its members is greatly appreciated!

Famous Last Words ...

“They couldn’t hit an elephant at this distance...”

- General John Sedgwick during the Battle of the Wilderness just before being shot and killed by a Confederate sniper, May 1864