

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 11, September 2003

A Message from the Chairman –

At our last meeting we had the election for the office-bearers and Committee of the Chapter. As a result of these elections the following members will comprise the Chapter's executive team for the next two years:

Chairman	...Paul Kensey
Secretary / Treasurer	...Brendan O'Connell
Program Director	...John Cook
Publicity Officer	...Jennifer Kirkby
Committee	...Terry Cartwright ...Robin Haines ...Angus Hordern ...Maureen Morris ...Margaret Neil Smith ...David Wilson

I look forward to working with these members over the next two years, particularly those new to the Committee, as we seek to expand the Chapter's activities to meet the diverse needs and interests of our increasing membership.

We have appointed, also, one of our new members, Bruce McLennan, to the newly created position of Webmaster, with the specific tasks of developing and maintaining an internet web-site for the Chapter. Such an initiative will provide another means of publicising our Chapter's activities.

Over the past months we have had the opportunity to publicise our activities over the Community Radio Station 2NSB - FM. This has been made possible by Maureen Morris, whose brother, Stephen Sim, is a regular announcer at the station. I was surprised to learn of the wide audience this community radio station has and we are looking to make appearances with Stephen a regular part of our Chapter's publicity. Well done Maureen and thank you for your efforts in getting this initiative up and running.

Finally, I would like to thank Terry Cartwright for his most interesting and thoroughly researched and documented presentation on Patrick Cleburne at our last meeting. For those who missed the meeting a copy of his paper is a "must read". Well done Terry!

Paul Kensey

Special Meeting – September 11

A special meeting of the Chapter has been arranged, courtesy of Angus Hordern, for the evening of **Thursday, September 11**, where we will hear from two Americans, father and son, who will speak on the United States Military Academy, West Point and some interesting aspects of the performances and relationships of West Point graduates at Gettysburg.

David Noesges is a graduate of West Point and will speak about life at the Academy. His father, Tom Noesges, has undertaken research that focused on the heroics of Armistead's brigade during Pickett's Charge on the final day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Tom will address the performance of and the relationship between particular Union and Confederate officers at Gettysburg who were graduates of West Point.

This special meeting will be held at our normal venue, the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific H'way, Roseville**, on **Thursday, September 11**, commencing at 7pm. As with our regular meetings, a bistro meal will be available at the Club from 6pm.

You can be assured of a most interesting and informative set of presentations on this night and it is hoped that you will be able to spare the time to join us at this time.

Vale – Godfrey Bailey Hindmarsh

It is with great sadness that we record the death of one of our long-standing members, Godfrey Bailey Hindmarsh. Godfrey was a most knowledgeable person not only on the Civil War but on matters military in general. His warm and friendly manner and his thoughtful comments and observations on the strategic and tactical aspects of the War will be sorely missed by our members.

To his family we would wish to extend our deepest sympathy for their loss.

Next Month's Meeting

Our next scheduled meeting for this year is to be held as usual at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Wednesday, October 8**, commencing at 7pm.

Please note that because of the Club's arrangements, this meeting is being held on the second Wednesday of the month. As for our previous meetings this year, members will be able to meet at the Club from 6pm for a bistro style meal.

We have had to change the previously advertised presentation because of the work commitments of the former speaker. Dr Alan Winkworth our distinguished medico from Orange now will be speaking on the topic:

Don't Get Sick or Wounded - Medical Services During the Civil War

Alan's medical background and experience provides an excellent and authoritative knowledge base for this presentation.

You can be guaranteed that this will be a challenging and thought provoking presentation that will be followed, no doubt, with a lively question/answer and comment session.

As for all our meetings, a written paper for the 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 with the next Newsletter.

The *H L Hunley*

The Confederate submarine *HL Hunley* disappeared on the night of February 17, 1864, after sinking the *USS Housatonic* in Charleston Harbour. It was not until 1995 that the Hunley was located by Clive Cussler's non-profit organisation, NUMA - National Underwater Agency. The hand-cranked submarine was raised in 2000 and delivered to the Warren Lasch Conservation Center, where an international team of scientists continue to work on excavating and conserving the historical vessel and its artefacts.

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 by telephone on 9449 3720 or at PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to bpoconn@bigpond.com

Time Stands Still on the *Hunley*

For almost 140 years, scholars have wondered how long the *HL Hunley* lasted after torpedoing the *USS Housatonic* in 1864. Did the concussion cause the world's first successful military submarine to sink immediately or did it last longer before disappearing into the sea?

Scientists are now closer to solving this intriguing mystery, thanks to a pocket watch belonging to the Hunley's captain, Lt George Dixon. The scientific team excavating the submarine opened the watch and were able to observe the position of the hands when the watch stopped. "We are now able to narrow the time frame down to between 6:00 and 9:00, but the question remains, is it am or pm?" the Hunley Project Director, Dr Robert Neyland said. "After further excavation, we may be able to establish a more precise time."

There was a pocket of air trapped inside the watch and it is probably for this reason the hands of the watch still exist after all these years. Other parts of the watch where there was no air are not as well preserved. The precise time that the watch stopped is hard to establish. The hour hand of the watch is broken around the dial where the hands connect although the other hands are in better condition with the minute hand stopped at 22 after the hour and the second hand stopped at 20 seconds.

On the night of February 17, 1864, the Hunley and her crew of eight made their historic journey in Charleston's harbour by becoming the first submarine to sink an enemy ship in battle, but afterwards mysteriously disappeared. According to historical records the Hunley attacked the *USS Housatonic* at around 8:45 that night. So what does the time on the watch mean?

Senator Glenn McConnell, Chairman of the Hunley Commission, suggests that the watch supports one long standing theory. "I believe the apparent time suggests the watch outlived the crewmen and continued to tick for many hours after their deaths," McConnell said. "It raises the supposition that the submarine may have remained less than flooded long after the demise of the crew. If the submarine had flooded shortly after the attack, it seems probable the watch would have stopped at a time closer to 8:45pm when the attack on the Housatonic occurred." McConnell's theory suggests the crew may have died later from a lack of oxygen and not from drowning after the attack. "One thing is certain," McConnell added, "We should not draw any firm conclusions. Instead, now is the time to accent the importance of carefully collecting the scientific data to put together an accurate picture of this fascinating historical puzzle."

What Happened in September?

Hatches and Dispatches

September 4, 1864 – The Confederate raider and cavalry commander, John Hunt Morgan is shot and killed in a Federal raid on Greenville, Tennessee:

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, Georgia;

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, 1809 – Raphael Semmes, the Confederate naval commander responsible for the destruction or capture of 64 Union ships, is born in Charles County, Maryland;

September 29, 1862 – Federal Brigadier General Jefferson Davis shoots and mortally wounds Brig. Gen. William (Bull) Nelson during a quarrel in a hotel in Louisville.

Command Changes

September 28, 1863 – Federal Generals, Alexander McCook and T L Crittenden are relieved of their commands and ordered to a court of inquiry following the Battle of Chickamauga.

Battles

September 11, 1861 – Lee begins the 5-day Cheat Mountain Campaign (Va) which ends in a Confederate withdrawal;

September 14, 1862 – Union forces push the Confederates back at the Battles of South Mountain and Crampton's Gap, Va;

September 15, 1862 – Confederates capture Harpers Ferry, Va, taking about 12000 prisoners:

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

September 19, 1864 – Federal troops commanded by Sheridan defeat Early's Confederates in the Third Battle of Winchester, Va;

September 19-20, 1863 – Battle of Chickamauga resulting in a Federal retreat to a defensive position in and around Chattanooga, Tennessee;

Other Significant Events

September 1, 1864 – Confederates begin to evacuate Atlanta;

September 2, 1864 – Union forces under General Sherman occupy Atlanta;

September 3 1864 – In Charleston Harbour Confederate and Union forces exchange captive surgeons and chaplains;

September 5, 1863 – Under pressure from the US Government, the British do not deliver two ironclads they had built for the Confederacy;

September 7, 1964 – General Sherman orders civilians to leave Atlanta so that he might more easily feed and supply his army;

September 22, 1862 – President Lincoln issues the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation declaring that all slaves in the rebel states to be free as of January 1, 1863;

September 24, 1862 – Fourteen Governors from Northern States meet at Altoona, Pa, and endorse Emancipation Proclamation.

A Drop in Enrolments

The University of Virginia found that, in the autumn of 1862, there were fewer than 50 students enrolled in its study programs. This represented a drop of some 92% over the previous year's enrolments and was the result of hundreds of its students giving up their studies to join the Confederate army.

Source: North and South, Vol 6, No. 3,

Famous Last Words...

Governor Harris: "General, are you wounded?"

General Johnston: "Yes, and I fear seriously"

These were the last words of Albert Sidney Johnston who bled to death during the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862, after being struck in the leg by a stray minié ball. A simple tourniquet would have saved his life.

The Continuing Trivia Question...

The trivia question posed in our may Newsletter regarding who commanded the Federal troops at the official surrender ceremony of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox on April 12, 1865 has created considerable interest amongst our members. Contrary to the commonly quoted answer that it was Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, research has suggested that, although Chamberlain commanded one of the three Federal brigades at the ceremony, the overall command of the Federals fell to Major General Joseph Bartlett, commanding the 1st Division of the Union's V Corps.

The "Bartlett answer" was confirmed by the eminent Civil War scholar, Gary W Gallagher in an e-mail to us (see our Newsletter, No.9, May 2003 for the text of Dr Gallagher's detailed response to our inquiry). It was noted, however, that the "bible" of Civil War history, James M McPherson's Pulitzer Prize winning book *Battle Cry of Freedom*, repeats the "Chamberlain in command" version of these events (see page 850). As a means of resolving the issue, Paul Kensey suggested that we e-mail James McPherson in a similar manner to our contact with Gary Gallagher. This action was taken and extracts of this correspondence are presented below:

"Dear Dr McPherson,

...
In your book "Battle Cry of Freedom", a reference that we use as our "bible" on matters Civil War, you refer to the fact that at the official surrender ceremony at Appomattox on April 12, 1865, the Federal troops were under the command of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (page 850). Indeed, this "Chamberlain in command" version of events is reported in a number of other references, particularly with reference to his calling his troops to attention and the return of the salute by General John Brown Gordon (CSA).

In listening to a series of Civil War lectures by Dr Gary Gallagher, however, Dr Gallagher claims that Chamberlain did not have overall command of the Federal troops at this ceremony.... According to Dr Gallagher, command of the Federal troops fell to Joseph J Bartlett ... This version is confirmed by William Marvel in his book "Lee's Last Retreat – the Flight to Appomattox" with a fairly critical assessment of Chamberlain's claims. Are you able to clarify these seemingly contradictory versions of the surrender ceremony?

I hope that you might have time in your busy schedule to assist us Civil War enthusiasts from the antipodes.

Sincerely..."

McPherson's Response

Within four working days a response to our query was received from Dr McPherson in Princeton via e-mail. This response is presented in full below:

"I think Gallagher and Marvel are right. Bartlett had overall command of the troops at the official surrender ceremony and Chamberlain commanded only his brigade. Chamberlain's later claim that he was in official command of the surrender ceremonies seems to be a product of a faulty or inflated memory. But it does seem true that it was Chamberlain's decision to order his men to Carry Arms.

James McPherson"

It is hoped that the explanations from these eminent Civil War scholars satisfactorily conclude discussion on this matter.

A Postscript ...

Following receipt of the correspondence from both Dr Gallagher and Dr McPherson letters of thanks were sent to them expressing our delight at their willingness to engage in discussion on Civil War issues in such an informative and prompt manner.

Was this Smart?

Thomas Meagher (pronounced Marr), the commander of the Union's famous Irish Brigade until it was decimated at the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863, was part of an unsuccessful uprising in Ireland in 1848.

Brought before the court on charges of treason and found guilty he made the following statement to the court prior to sentencing:

"My Lord, this is our first offence, but not our last. If you will be easy with us this once, we promise, on our word as gentlemen, to try to do better next time. And next time – sure we won't be fools to get caught"

The judge then sentenced him to death by hanging, a sentence that was later commuted by Queen Victoria to transportation for life to Tasmania.