

Sumter to Appomattox

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

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Please visit our website www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message from the Chairman –

As we begin another year's activities, I would want to wish all our members a happy and prosperous New Year and welcome each and every one of our members to what I hope might be a most successful year of activities.

I believe that 2008 is going to be a critical time for our Chapter of the ACWRTA in which we will again reach the heights of being a most worthwhile group committed to informed discussion of the political, social and military aspects of the seminal conflict of 19th Century America. Alternatively, we could continue the downward trend of 2007 meeting attendances to the extent where we cease to be a viable organisation. It is my fervent hope that this year will see the former alternative come to pass. In this regard, I would wish to refer you to the extract of a discussion paper reproduced in tis Newsletter that your Committee will be considering in detail in the coming weeks prior to referring the matters to the members.

Our February meeting scheduled for Monday evening, February 25, is the first step in our road to recovery. In addition to Terry Cartwright's presentation, we will be holding our Annual General Meeting that was deferred from November because of the lack of members present. I ask that you make a special effort to get to this meeting so that we can begin the long and difficult task of ensuring our Chapter continues to be a viable organisation.

Your Committee is looking for new ideas and ways we can more readily meet the needs of our membership. In this regard, please consider if you are able to stand for nomination/election to our Committee at this February meeting. All positions on the Executive and Committee and I mean **all**, are "up for grabs" and I can assure you that every one present incumbents will not be upset to be "rolled" in the election on election night.

At this meeting, I hope to be able, also, to provide an update on our planning for the 2009 Conference that is proposed to coincide with the 200th Anniversary of Lincoln's birth. I do hope to see you at the February meeting to show your support for our continued activities

Paul Kensey

Our Next Meeting

Our next regular meeting, the first for 2008 will be held on **Monday, February 25** at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**. The meeting will commence with a bistro-style dinner at the Club from 6pm with the proceedings of the meeting proper to commence at 7:15pm. At this meeting Terry Cartwright will address the question in his presentation:

Who Was the Civil War's Premier Cavalry Commander?

Members can be guaranteed that Terry's presentation will inform, raise plenty of discussion and "kick off" our 2008 program on a high note!

As is the normal practice 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.

Annual General Meeting

On the evening of our first meeting (**February 25**), we will be holding our **Annual General Meeting** that had been deferred from November.

In addition to holding **the elections for the Executive and Committee**, we propose to hold a general **discussion on the future of our Chapter of the ACWRTA**. To facilitate informed consideration on our future, if any, an extract of a Discussion Paper that your Committee will be discussing in the coming weeks is included in this Newsletter.

It is proposed that a summary of the Committee's consideration, including recommendations for our future, will be provided to members at the AGM.

Please make every effort to attend this meeting.

It Happened in February

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

February 3, 1807 – Joseph E Johnston (CSA) is born at “Cherry Grove”, Prince Edward County, Virginia;

February 6, 1833 – JEB Stuart (CSA) is born in Patrick County, Virginia;

February 8, 1820 – William Tecumseh Sherman (USA) is born in Lancaster, Ohio;

February 11, 1812 – Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy is born in Wilkes (Taliaferro) County, Georgia;

February 12, 1809 – Abraham Lincoln, 16th US President is born in Hardin County, Kentucky.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

February 9, 1861 – Jefferson Davis is elected as provisional President of the Confederacy by the Confederate Provisional Congress;

February 9, 1865 – Lee appointed General-in-Chief of Confederate Armies;

February 18, 1861 – Davis is inaugurated as President of the Confederacy;

February 22, 1862 – Davis is sworn in as President of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

February 5, 1864 – Sherman’s Federals march into Jackson Mississippi en route to Meridian;

February 10, 1862 – The remainder of the “Mosquito” fleet is destroyed at Elizabeth City, NC;

February 14, 1864 – Sherman’s Union troops capture Meridian, Mississippi;

February 16, 1862 – Confederates surrender Fort Donelson, Tennessee, to Ulysses S Grant

February 17, 1865 – Columbia, SC, is captured and Charleston, SC, is evacuated;

February 18, 1865 – Charleston, SC, surrenders to Union troops under Brigadier General Alexander Schimmelfennig;

February 24, 1862 – Federal troops under General Nathaniel Banks occupy Harpers Ferry, Virginia;

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

February 1, 1865 – Illinois is the first State to ratify the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery;

February 4, 1861 – First session of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America is held in Montgomery, Alabama;

February 7, 1865 - Lincoln meets with the Confederate peace commissioners aboard the *River Queen* at Hampton Roads, Virginia;

February 19, 1862 - New Confederate Congress orders the release of 2,000 Federal POWs;

February 20, 1865 – The Confederate House of Representatives authorises use of slaves as soldiers;

February 23, 1861 – Texas voters approve secession by a wide margin;

February 25, 1862 – Federal War Department takes control of all telegraph lines to facilitate military movements;

February 26, 1863 – The Cherokee Indian National Council repeals the ordinance of secession, proclaims for the Union;

February 27, 1864 – Near Americus in Georgia, Federal Prisoners of War begin arriving at the unfinished Camp Sumter (Andersonville) prison camp.

Famous “Last” Words...

“I don’t know if I am standing on my head or feet”

- Union General Joseph E Hooker,
June 1863

“... In my latest writing and utterance, I repeat my unmitigated hatred to ... the vile Yankee race.”

- Edmund Ruffin, June 17, 1865
prior to his committing suicide.

Did you Know?

Did you know that Abraham Lincoln was born on the same day as Charles Darwin of *The Origin of Species* fame? It was February 12, 1809.

(2009 is the 200th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth, which we plan to commemorate this with a special conference)

Inescapable Logic...

"I have just heard that one of my brothers was killed in the war. Since he chose to be our deadly enemy, I see no reason why I should bitterly mourn his death. Why should I sympathise with the Rebels? They would hang my husband tomorrow if it was (sic) in their power!"

- Mary Todd Lincoln, 1862.

"A battery of field artillery is worth a thousand muskets"

- William Tecumseh Sherman

"The shot that struck me down is the very best that has been fired for the Southern cause. While (I do not have) the confidence of the government, now they have in my place one who does possess it"

- Joseph E Johnston commenting on Lee's promotion to command the Confederate Army, June 1862

Words of Wisdom...

Lincoln made many profound statements that remain in our memory and this is one of his best:

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

Abraham Lincoln

Grant's Family in the War

As was the case with many families during the Civil War, Ulysses S Grant found his family divided by the War. Grant himself, of course served with the Union. His two brothers, however, did not serve on either side.

Peter Todd Hudson, the son of Grant's aunt, Susan Grant Hudson, served on Grant's staff during the War, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, but seems to be the only one of Grant's kinsmen to serve for the Union.

Noah Grant, the son of Grant's uncle, Peter Grant, had served as a volunteer officer in the Mexican War, but at the outbreak of the Civil War joined the Confederacy's 5th Missouri Infantry Regiment rising to the rank of Captain. The sons of Grant's aunt, Maria Grant, raised in western Virginia, also served the Confederacy. One of these cousins of Grant, Charles Clifton Tompkins served as a surgeon and was present at Appomattox when Lee surrendered to Grant.

Grant's wife, Julia, had even more Confederate ties, but that is a whole different story!

- Source: *North and South, Vol10, No. 4, (January 2008)*

Has Our Round Table A Future?

Presented below is an extract of a discussion paper prepared for the Committee of the NSW Chapter of ACWRTA to consider the future of the Chapter. This extract has been prepared for the information of all members and will be supplemented in due course with the Committee's views.

Presented in TABLE 1, below, is a summary of the number of our Round Table members that attended the various scheduled meetings in 2007, together with an indication of the format of the respective meetings. This table has been compiled from the official attendance records of these meetings.

TABLE 1: 2007 Meeting Attendances

Meeting Date	Meeting Format	No. Attending
12. 2. 07	Lecture	14
12. 3. 07	Videos	23
16. 4. 07	Trivia Quiz	13 (incl 3 guests)
14. 5. 07	Lecture	18
18. 6. 07	Lecture	12
9. 7. 07	Lecture	14
10. 9.07	2 mini-lectures	16
12. 11. 07	Lecture / Inter-Active Quiz	12
30. 11. 07	Xmas Function	18 (incl 2 guests & partners)

Perusal of this table reveals a problem with respect to our meeting attendances, considered serious enough to question the viability of continuing our program of regular meetings in the future. Accordingly, this paper has been prepared initially as a discussion document for the consideration of our Committee. The paper examines some options for the future operation of our Chapter of the ACWRTA and might be used to present some recommendations to the membership about our future activities.

It is worth noting that for a number of years the number of financial members of our Chapter was around 50 including our 2 Honorary Members and some 10 - 12 members from non-Sydney Metropolitan areas and interstate. For the past two years, however, there has been a significant decline in these numbers. Indeed, in the current year, 2007 - 2008, we have had, for the first time, a number of members formally resign from the Chapter and there have been, also, a significant number of members that simply have not renewed their membership by paying the annual subscription. Currently, there are 34 financial members of the Chapter.

Furthermore, the pattern of attendance at the regular meetings is characterised by a small cadre of members who are present at all meetings and varying subsets of the remainder of the membership that attend on occasion. In recent times, the numbers of each of the “hardcore” of regulars and the “occasional” attendees is shrinking.

These small attendances at our meetings have direct implications for our future viability as a group of Civil War enthusiasts in at least two respects. First, the small numbers of members present at the meetings places limitations on inviting high-profile external speakers to address our group. It is quite unreasonable to expect a speaker to prepare and present a paper to such a small group of people. In simple terms, such a situation is simply not a cost-effective use of use of limited personnel resources. Furthermore, from a financial viewpoint, since our meeting costs involve primarily monies raised from raffles at each meeting, the smaller the attendance at the meeting, the less money is likely to be raised to cover the cost of venue hire. Such a situation then requires using our financial reserves, which are not unlimited.

Given this situation, it is considered necessary to carefully examine the viability of the operation of our Round Table Chapter to ascertain whether a way forward can be seen. In this regard, several options are presented for consideration and it is hoped that these might serve as a catalyst for discussion, initially by our Committee, then by the total membership of the Chapter and from such discussion a way forward for the group will be endorsed.

Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo

In presenting this option, it is not suggested that the problem be ignored but that the efforts to improve attendances focus on such aspects as consideration

- The format of the meetings, including venue and structure/subject of individual meetings;
- Ways of ensuring members become more involved with our program and change their current mind-set regarding attendance; and
- Ensuring regular communication with members is strengthened, possibly by enhancing the publication and circulation of our regular newsletter, *Sumter to Appomattox*.

Such an approach will require a detailed evaluation of members’ interests and wishes and necessitate some lateral thinking on ways to achieve the essential changes to format required. In this regard, the recent survey of members’ views may be of some value. Furthermore, it may require changes to key personnel presently responsible for the program.

Option 2: Implement Major Changes to the Meeting Program

This option involves consideration of alternative programs of meetings with changes to the frequency, timings and structure of our meetings and is a more radical option than that proposed as Option 1.

Whilst the variations within this option are only limited by parameters that we need to articulate, one such structure that might characterise this option would be to abandon the bi-monthly evening meetings and replace them with a series of “mini-conferences” conducted regularly throughout the year, say, quarterly, with these activities being held on weekends. In considering this option, the additional workload for key personnel responsible for coordinating such activities should not be underestimated. Furthermore, as with the previous option, the successful implementation of this new form of activity will require personnel with organisational skills, vision and time to plan and conduct such “mini-conferences”.

Option 3: Accept the Reality of the Situation and Wind-up the Affairs of the Chapter

Whilst such an option may be unpalatable to most members who wish to retain the group as a support for their interest in the American Civil War, the fact remains that the shrinking nature of the group is forcing us to question the viability of continuing to operate our Chapter of the ACWRTA under the present arrangements. Increasingly, the workload for our operations falls on the willing few and those who are contributing to the present activities are questioning whether they are taking the Chapter in the “right” direction, viz., providing activities that meet the needs and interests of members.

This option is deliberately negative and, hopefully, provocative. It is intended to focus members’ thoughts on the future in a dispassionate manner, thus ensuring whatever decisions are taken are realistic and provide a sound basis for the future.

These three groupings of options presented in this discussion paper seek to apprise our Committee and, subsequently, members of the Chapter of different ways in which we might address the critical problem of our falling meeting attendances. Obviously, within Options 1 and 2, there are many specific strategies for change that will address the problem and each should be considered in the light of members’ wishes so that whatever emerges for the future will be what our members want or with which they are comfortable. To this end, therefore, this paper should be considered initially by the Committee who will provide comment on both the problem and each of the options presented. It is suggested that the discussions of the Committee might focus on specific strategies for change within Options 1 and 2 and that some indication of the Committee’s preferences be presented. Following these discussions, it is suggested that the paper together with the Committee’s recommendations for change be presented formally to the membership of the Chapter for final determination.

It is proposed that a summary of your Committee’s deliberations of this paper and the general problem of our falling attendances at meetings be presented to the AGM and will be reported in full in the next edition of the Newsletter in March/April.