

# 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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## A Message from the Chairman –

In presenting my first Newsletter as your new Chairman, I must say that this was not a position that I had actively sought. Given the fact, however, that no one else was willing to stand and, importantly, my wife, Helen, didn't seem to object, I was the "last man standing" and I am happy to give it a go. In saying this, it is my fervent hope that I will not be the Chairman to preside over the demise of our NSW Chapter of the Round Table! To ensure this does not happen, each of us has the responsibility to contribute to success of our meetings, not only by our attendance but with our active participation in the meetings' proceedings.

My tenure as Chairman commenced with an absolute disaster – Bruce Dennett the professional historian, scholar and challenging speaker, who was scheduled to be the first speaker for 2010, 'phoned to tell me he had suffered a stroke. Although he expects a full recovery and will be able to speak at one of our meetings later in the year, he is not well enough to be at our February meeting. Damn! The gods were really shining on me, however, when with a single 'phone call I was able to get Len Traynor the doyen of Civil War studies, to agree to speak at our first meeting.

At our February meeting, also, I intend to raise a proposal from John King, one of our members residing in Queensland, on how we might commemorate the sesquicentenary (150<sup>th</sup> anniversary) of the Civil War. Some details of John's proposal are outlined on the last page of this Newsletter and it hoped that members' views might be gleaned from the discussion at our February meeting.

As the previous Newsletter went to print, we received a generous offer from a Mr Alec Dalglish who wished to donate to the Chapter a collection of some 69 Civil War books including a number of the classic books on the era. Although we have accepted Mr Dalglish's kind offer and I have taken delivery of them, we still have to consider precisely what we will do with the books. If you have any suggestions on how we might utilise this resource, please speak to me.

I hope to see you at our first meeting for 2010.

*John Cook*

## Our Next Meeting

Our first regular meeting for 2010 will be held at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, 64 Pacific Highway, Roseville** will be held on **Monday, February 22**. As is our custom, the meeting will commence with a bistro-style meal from 6pm with the meeting proper to start at 7:30pm.

As foreshadowed in the message to members in the adjoining column, this meeting is to be a very special one with Len Traynor as our guest speaker.

Members who have heard Len speak previously at our meetings and conferences will attest to his knowledge and deep understanding of all Civil War matters. Len's presentation has been left up to him but you can be guaranteed that it will be informative, enthralling and will rise plenty for discussion.

Come prepared to have your thoughts challenged and have a great time!!

Although it has been our custom to provide a paper to support our presentations, the short notice means that such a resource will not be available either at the meeting or following the meeting with the next Newsletter. I'm sorry for this but you may be assured that this will not take away from what is to be an outstanding presentation from a distinguished Civil War scholar,

Please make a special effort to come to this meeting and, if possible, bring a guest. You may be assured that the effort will be well worth it!

# It Happened in January

## HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

**January 8, 1821** – James Longstreet, CSA, is born near Edgefield, South Carolina;

**January 19, 1807** – Robert E Lee is born in Stratford, Virginia;

**January 21, 1824** – Thomas J (Stonewall) Jackson is born in Clarksburg, Virginia;

**January 25, 1825** – George Pickett, CSA, is born in Richmond, Virginia;

**January 30, 1816** - Nathaniel Banks, USA, is born in Waltham, Massachusetts;

## COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

**January 6, 1865** – Grant asks Lincoln to remove Butler from command of the Army of the James;

**January 8, 1861** – Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson of Mississippi, the last Southerner in Cabinet, resigns;

**January 12, 1865** – Hugh Judson Kilpatrick is promoted to the rank of major general in the Union Army;

**January 15, 1862** – The US Senate confirms Edwin M Stanton's appointment as Secretary of War;

**January 22, 1864** – Major General William Rosecrans is named Commander of the Federal Department of Missouri;

**January 23, 1865** – General Richard Taylor assumes command of the Army of Tennessee which now has fewer than 18 000 troops;

**January 25, 1863** – As a result of the "Mud March" General Burnside resigns as as Commander of the Army of the Potomac;

**January 26, 1863** – Lincoln appoints Joseph Hooker as Commander of the Army of the Potomac;

**January 31, 1865** – General Robert E Lee is appointed General-in-Chief of the Confederate Armies;

## BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

**January 2, 1861** – South Carolina troops seize Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbour;

**January 2, 1863** – Confederates defeated at the Battle of Murfreesboro (Stones River), Tennessee;

**January 3, 1861** – Georgia state troops seize Fort Pulaski before Federal troops can occupy it;

## BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS cont'd

**January 4, 1861** – Alabama takes over the US arsenal at Mount Vernon;

**January 14, 1861** – Louisiana state troops seize Fort Pike near New Orleans;

**January 15, 1865** – Fort Fisher in North Carolina falls and Wilmington, the Confederacy's most important blockade running port is closed;

**January 19, 1865** – Sherman begins his march and destruction of the Carolinas;

**January 19, 1862** – Federals push back Confederates in the Battle of Mill Springs (Logan's Cross Roads), Kentucky;

**January 23, 1863** – Burnside's Federal army pulls back to Fredericksburg ending its famed "mud march";

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

**January 1, 1863** – Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation takes effect which ends slavery in the rebelling states. This action changed the War's focus from preserving the Union to abolishing slavery, thereby making it unlikely that European nations would support and intervene on behalf of the Confederacy;

**January 9, 1861** – Mississippi secedes from the Union;

**January 10, 1861** – Florida secedes from the Union;

**January 11, 1861** – Alabama secedes from the Union;

**January 13, 1863** – Federal officials formally authorise the raising of black units for the South Carolina volunteer Infantry;

**January 16, 1861** – Arkansas completes a bill calling for a referendum on secession;

**January 17, 1861** – The Crittenden Compromise, proposing several amendments to the Constitution in order to save the Union, is "killed" in the US Senate;

**January 18, 1862** – The Confederate Territory of Arizona is formed;

**January 20, 1863** – General Burnside's "Mud March" begins as the Army of the Potomac seeks to start an offensive against Lee at Fredericksburg. Paralysed by mud and snow the Union Army loses over 13,000 men;

**January 26, 1861** – Louisiana secedes from the Union;

**January 29, 1861** - Kansas is admitted as the 34<sup>th</sup> state of the Union.

## It Happened in February

### HATCHES AND DESPACHES

**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, 16<sup>th</sup> 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;

### BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS cont’d

**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 13<sup>th</sup> 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

*“Mosby has annoyed me considerably”*

- General Philip Sheridan,  
Army of the Shenandoah

*“Hurrah for Mosby”*

- General Robert E Lee

*“Forward! For God’s sake, forward”*

General John Reynolds, before  
being mortally wounded Gettysburg,  
July 1, 1863

*“I’m as dead a man as Julius Caesar”*

Brigadier General Stephen Weed  
Union brigade commander, wounded  
mortally at Little Round Top, July 1863

*“I hope that I may never see such a sight again.  
The dead were thicker her than I had seen  
them anywhere else”*

Union officer, following the  
Battle of Antietam, September. 1862

## A Proposal to Commemorate the Sesquicentenary of the Civil War –

As advised previously in this Newsletter, John King, one of our members from Queensland has put together a proposal for commemorating the sesquicentenary of the beginning of the American Civil War in April, 2011. This proposal involves providing a map for a wall in the National Maritime Museum part of the display of the CSS Shenandoah.

Any member interested in looking at this proposal in detail prior to our February 22 meeting should contact John Cook who will arrange a copy of the proposal to be sent to them. John Can be contacted by 'phone on 9412 3214 or 043 777 000 6.

## Lincoln – The Man and the Myth

*As a sample of Bruce Dennett's scholarship and a taste of what to expect at the meeting later in the year when he will speak to us, this article is an extract of his last presentation to us in 2008. Enjoy!*

Abraham Lincoln is one of those iconic historical figures. His image stares down from Mount Rushmore where he resides as part of the pantheon of American presidential Gods. His statue sits in the Lincoln memorial, one of the focal points of Washington DC, symbolic – if Frank Capra's *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* is to be believed - of all that is best in the American democratic ideal. Honest Abe, and father Abraham, the rail splitter, the martyred President, a political Moses who led his nation through Civil War and an enslaved race out of bondage are all images and ideas that have become Abraham Lincoln and in doing so cloud and complicate any hope we might have of finding the flesh and blood man.

In 1876 Frederick Douglass, a former slave, said of Lincoln that any man could say things that are true about Lincoln, "*but no man can say anything that is new of Abraham Lincoln.*" Douglass could not have been more wrong. I will in fact argue that the comments of British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes when she claimed that "every generation gets the Stonehenge that it desires and deserves" –is more appropriate when considering the historiography of Lincoln. There have been many Lincoln's and frequently each generation makes it's own.

The point I seek to make is that we all know – or we all think we know Abraham Lincoln. It is not my intention to review Lincoln's life or to tell or re-tell the oft told stories. Rather I want to help challenge existing ideas and the accepted wisdom. History teaches critical and even sceptical thought. It encourages its students to think analytically. Real History, unlike the version advocated by our Prime Minister is not meant to make people feel proud of their past, it isn't about myth making. It's about accepting that there is no such thing as objectivity. We are all the product of our families, our generation and their values.

Once we acknowledge the myth of pure and objective truth we can begin to be open and fair in our judgements. In the process the real Abraham Lincoln offers us far more than the myth – the mark of Lincoln's greatness is confirmed by the fact that the man is more than the myth. The famous British historian Edward Hallet Carr warned – "before you read the history – study the historian" – useful advice. In the last twenty- five years any list of the greatest American Presidents prepared by academics has included Lincoln. He is consistently rated among the top two (the other nominee is FDR). The modern Republican Party embraces this Lincoln as one of its heroes and yet Lincoln would be a stranger in the ranks of the modern GOP. President Nixon during the Watergate crisis took comfort in the fact that his public opinion ratings were as low as Lincoln's during the Civil War. People embrace or shun Lincoln for reasons of their own.

Each generation has created its own Lincoln. In the aftermath of his assassination he was the martyred President. He then became the epitome of the real American, the humble self made man from the log cabin. Taking just three of the most recent books about Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin *Team of Rivals* (2005), Joshua Wolf Shenk *Lincoln's Melancholy* (2005) and the contentious, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* by C. A. Tripp (2005), we have a cross section of some of the modern Lincoln scholarship. Goodwin's outstanding historical scholarship reveals Lincoln to be the consummate politician for the all the good and ill that that might bode for any reader. Goodwin's Lincoln is profoundly ambitious, even driven. Goodwin's portrait reflects her own political intuition, evident in previous presidential biographies. Joshua Wolf Shank makes the point that comments about Lincoln's melancholy were common during the nineteenth and early twentieth century but somehow disappeared from 1940. Students of American presidential politics will remember how, Vice Presidential nominee, Senator Tom Eagleton had to withdraw from the Democratic Party ticket in 1972 when it was revealed that he had undergone electric shock therapy for nervous exhaustion. Clearly we are now far more enlightened about many aspects of mental illness. Lincoln's melancholy needs to be acknowledged because it was as much a part of the real Lincoln as his stove-pipe hat and his beard. C.A. Tripp gives us the 'gay Lincoln'. Tripp quotes from a letter Lincoln wrote to long time friend Joshua Speed "*The sweet violet you enclosed came safely to hand, but it was so dry, and mashed so flat, that it crumbled to dust at the first attempt to handle it ... The juice that mashed out of it stained a place in the letter, which I mean to preserve and cherish*". Tripp's book is more a reflection of the time in which it was written than the real Lincoln. It does not go far in trying to understand the nature of Lincoln's friendships or the differences in language and nuance from Lincoln's time to the present. In these three books we have just some of the twenty-first century Lincoln's – make up your own mind and go in search of your own Lincoln.