

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 our Chairman –

Our first meeting this year was very well attended, it was so good to catch up after the long break. Many came with “Show and Tell” items from over the summer. Thanks to all of you who contributed with their stories.

John Morrison’s presentation “*Lessons NOT Learnt from the Civil War*” was most thought provoking. I heard several people say it was the best meeting they had ever attended! This sets a high benchmark for the rest of the year. Please **visit our website** for a copy of the handout. Thank you John.

Our Program Director, Philip, has received 21 replies to his survey, with many suggestions for future meetings. In addition, nine members offered to give presentations. Thank you to all those members who responded and especially those who offered to give presentations.

Our upcoming meeting promises to be fascinating – something different. Please see the separate item in the adjoining column.

At the meeting after next we are expecting to hear from the participants of the Eastern Theatre tour, arranged by our member David Cooper. This year’s tour is fully booked.

Your committee has been busy following up members and former contacts to ensure we have maximum engagement and participation. I’m pleased to report that the membership position is now up to date. Thank you Brendan.

Peter Zacharatos in attracting new members via our Facebook page. If you have not already done so, please “**Like**” **our Facebook page** – our Facebook is embedded on the website:

www.americancivilwar.asn.au

Finally, I would greatly appreciate your taking the time to prepare a short “Show and Tell” (3 minutes) for our next meeting.

Bruce McLennan

Our Next Meeting

As advertised previously, the next regular meeting for the NSW Chapter of the ACWRTA in 2016 will be held at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway Roseville** will be held on **Monday, May 2**. As is our custom, the meeting will commence with a bistro-style meal from 6pm with the meeting proper to start at 7:15pm. The speaker at this meeting will be **Tom Zelinka**, who will present what looks like a most interesting topic titled:

A 1961 Perspective of the Causes of the Civil War

This presentation will involve a review of a selection of historians’ and politicians’ perspectives in *The Causes of the American Civil War*, published in 1961 on the 100th anniversary of the War. Contributors, among many, include Johnny “Never-say-die” Calhoun, Willy “God-help-us” Seward, Abe “It’s-not-my-Fault” Lincoln, John “Kumbaya” Buchanan, Charles “It’s-the-economy-stupid” Beard, Avery “Blame-the-media” Craven and Eddie Rozwenc the editor.

Given Tom’s descriptive terminology in his listing of the contributors to this review, you can be assured of most interesting and provocative presentation. All members present are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the evening’s proceedings. In this regard, we won’t be looking for consensus, but a lively and, hopefully controversial discussion following Tom’s presentation!

In addition to this presentation, we will continue with the popular part of our regular meetings, the **Show and Tell** segment and members are asked to bring with them for presentation any item that they consider would be of interest to members.

This is one meeting that you will find to be a most stimulating and of interest to anyone with a general interest in historical issues. It would be an ideal way to introduce someone you know to our Round Table activities so bring a friend!

It Happened in May

Hatches and Dispatches

May 10, 1863 – Thomas J (Stonewall) Jackson dies at Guinea Station, Virginia, aged 39 years;

May 11, 1864 – JEB Stuart is mortally wounded at the Battle of Yellow Tavern, Virginia;

May 23, 1824 – Ambrose Burnside (USA) is born in Liberty, Indiana;

May 28, 1818 – Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (CSA) is born in St Bernard, Louisiana;

Command Changes

May 2, 1863 – JEB Stuart assumes command of the Confederate cavalry after “Stonewall” Jackson is mortally wounded in the Battle of Chancellorsville;

Battles May 1, 1863 – Battle of Port Gibson, MS, which begins Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign;

May 1 - 4, 1863 – Battle of Chancellorsville, that results in stunning Confederate victory for Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia;

May 5, 1864 – Battle of the Wilderness begins; **May 8, 1864** – Fighting begins at Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia;

May 12, 1864 – Battle of Bloody Angle, Spotsylvania;

May 12, 1865 – The last land battle between large forces resulting in a Confederate victory takes place at Palmito Ranch, Texas;

May 16, 1863 – Battle of Champion Hill, Mississippi;

May 17, 1863 – Battle of Big Black River Bridge, MS;

May 18, 1863 – Siege of Vicksburg, MS, begins;

May 19, 1863 – Grant launches his first unsuccessful attack against the besieged Vicksburg;

May 23 – 26, 1864 – Battle of North Anna, Virginia;

May 25, 1862 – Jackson attacks the Federals in the First Battle of Winchester, VA and captures the town two days later;

May 27, 1862 – Battle of Slash Church (Hanover Court House);

May 31, 1862 – Battle of Seven Pines (Fair Oaks) where General Joseph Johnston (CSA) is severely wounded.

Other Significant Events

May 4, 1865 – Lincoln is buried in Springfield, Illinois;

May 9, 1865 – The trial of the 8 accused Lincoln assassination conspirators begins;

May 10, 1865 – Jefferson Davis is captured near Irwinville, Georgia;

May 16, 1861 – Tennessee is officially admitted to the Confederacy

May 20, 1861 – North Carolina becomes the 11th state to join the Confederacy whilst Kentucky issues a proclamation of neutrality;

May 29, 1865 – President Johnson grants amnesty and pardon to all who participated in “the existing rebellion”, with a few exceptions.

It Happened in June

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

June 1, 1831 – John Bell Hood (CSA) is born in Owingsville, Bath County, Kentucky;

June 3, 1808 – Confederate President Jefferson Davis is born in Christian County, Kentucky;

June 5, 1864 – On Matagorda Island, Texas, 13 black members of the Union’s Corps de Afrique are hanged by Federal military authorities after convictions for mutiny;

June 5, 1864 – Brigadier General William E (Grumble) Jones (CSA) is killed in action in the Shenandoah Valley;

June 14, 1811 – Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is born in Litchfield, Conn;

June 14, 1864 – General Leonidas Polk, (CSA) is killed at Pine Mountain, Georgia during the Atlanta Campaign.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

June 17, 1862 – Braxton Bragg succeeds General Beauregard as Commander of the Western Department of the Confederate Army

June 22, 1861 – Robert E Lee is named commander of the forces of Virginia.

It Happened in June (cont'd)

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

June 1 – 3, 1864 – Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia;
June 1, 1862 – Second day of fighting in the Battle of Seven Forks;

June 6, 1862 – The Battle of Memphis, Tennessee;

June 8, 1862 - Confederate forces under “Stonewall Jackson, successfully fight off Federal attacks and achieve victory at the Battle of Cross Keys, Virginia;

June 9, 1863 – Battle of Brandy Station, Virginia, which is the largest cavalry battle ever fought on American soil. In this battle JEB Stuart was surprised by the Union forces commanded by Alfred Pleasanton and narrowly escapes defeat;

June 10, 1861 – Battle of Big Bethel, Virginia, is the first major battle of the Civil War. Although outnumbering the Confederates by more than four to one, the Union attack failed disastrously:

June 12 – 15, 1862 – JEB Stuart’s spectacular four-day reconnaissance that develops into a ride around McClellan’s army on the Virginia Peninsula;

June 21, 1863 – Heavy skirmishing marks Lee’s advance north with engagements at several places in Virginia and in Frederick, Maryland;

June 27, 1864 – Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, results in a Confederate victory thus temporarily checking Sherman’s march on Atlanta.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

June 4, 1862 – Southern planters burn huge stocks of cotton on the Yazoo and the Mississippi to prevent their capture;

June 19, 1862 – President Lincoln signs into law a measure prohibiting slavery in the territories of the United States;

June 20, 1863 – By presidential proclamation West Virginia is admitted to the Union as the 35th State;

June 23, 1861 – Federal balloonist Thaddeus Lowe observes and maps the Confederate lines over northern Virginia;

June 25, 1864 – At Petersburg, Federal engineers begin digging a tunnel towards Confederate lines, which they hope will enable them to blow apart the Southern earthworks;

June 28, 1863 – Lee diverts Confederate forces from an intended drive to Harrisburg to march them towards Gettysburg;

June 30, 1865 – All eight alleged conspirators in the Lincoln assassination are found guilty.

Was this Smart?

Thomas Meagher, 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.

Meagher escaped from Tasmania and made his way to America, eventually settling in New York. He served as a field officer at the First Battle of Bull Run. Subsequently, he raised the Irish Brigade and led the Irishmen in the fighting at Seven Pines and during most of the Seven Days. At Fredericksburg his command was slaughtered in the assaults on Marye’s Heights.

After the battle of Chancellorsville he resigned on May 14, 1863, in protest over the proposal that the regiments of his brigade be distributed among other commands. His resignation was rejected on December 23, 1863, and he returned to duty, holding minor commands in the Western theater. He finally resigned on May 15, 1865.

After serving over a year as acting Governor of Montana, he fell off a paddle steamer on the Missouri River and drowned. He had been drinking.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS ...

Governor Harris: *“General, are you wounded?”*
General Johnston: *“Yes, and I fear seriously”*

The last words of Albert Sidney Johnston who bled to death after being hit in the leg by a stray Minie ball during the Battle of Shiloh. A simple tourniquet would have saved his life

“Well if we are to die, let us die like men”

The last reported words of Patrick Cleburne, Franklin 1864

“I shall come out of this fight a live major general or a dead brigadier general”

Brigadier General Albert Perrin, killed in action at the Battle of Spotsylvania, 1864.

A MATTER OF HISTORY...

One of the questions posed in the Trivia Quiz at our end-of-year meeting in 2015 was:

Who commanded the Union forces that received the official surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox on April 12, 1865?

Despite the advice that it was not Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, a number of members insisted Chamberlain was the correct answer to the question. In fact, the answer to the question was:

Major General Joseph J Bartlett

It is recognised that this answer is likely to be akin to blasphemy by the many diehard Chamberlain fans. Furthermore, the fact that Chamberlain's claim of commanding the Union forces at the surrender ceremony has widespread currency (even James M McPherson repeats the claim in his authoritative book *Battle Cry of Freedom*), suggested further research was required. The results of this research were reported in previous Newsletters (**Nos. 10 and 11, 2003**), extracts of which are reproduced below:

"...The "Bartlett answer" was first heard in a series of lectures presented by the leading Civil War scholar Gary W Gallagher from the University of Virginia. Dr Gallagher was contacted and has responded. Extracts of this correspondence follow:

"Dear Dr Gallagher,

I do have a query with which I hope you might be able to assist me. In Lecture 46 – "Petersburg to Appomattox" - of your Civil War lectures you state that at the official surrender of the ANV on April 12, Joseph J Bartlett, commanding the 1st Division of the V Corps commanded the Union forces. You also state that Chamberlain had said he commanded the Union troops but this was not so.

I have checked a number of references, all of which had Chamberlain in command and made reference to the compliments paid by Chamberlain's troops and Gordon's salute. I was quite happy to accept that these references were incorrect until I checked McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom" where, on page 850, he repeats the Chamberlain in command story. I note that McPherson's reference to the Chamberlain/Gordon incident is taken from the Southern Historical Society's Papers, which might be the reason for the error. Are you able, however, to give an authoritative reference on this matter that I might inform our Civil War Round Table members that the Commander of the Union troops was, in fact, Bartlett?"

Dr Gallagher's response was prompt and most informative:

*"... the best student of the Appomattox campaign and he events of April 9-12, is William Marvel, who has written two very deeply researched books about the subject. His most recent book, published last year and titled "Lee's Last Retreat: The Flight to Appomattox", discusses Chamberlain's claims to have commanded the Federals who received Lee's formal surrender on April 12 and concludes that Chamberlain who commanded just one brigade in Bartlett's division, later magnified his role – "Henceforth he (Chamberlain) would have it that he commanded the receiving troops in that illustrious ceremony – even that Ulysses Grant had personally chosen him for that honor (sic) – and from that inflated perspective he would remember offering the defeated foe a salute that banished sectional antagonism and launched the spirit of national reunion" Marvel points out that Chamberlain's earliest descriptions of the ceremony make no mention of the salute or Gordon's response. Neither did any Confederates mention a salute. See pp. 193-95 of the book for the full discussion. Again, thank you for taking the time to send me your kind note.
Best regards,
Gary W Gallagher"*

For all the ardent Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fans out there, this response by Dr Gallagher holds little comfort. It does show, however, that even the greatest of men can have their faults. Simply put, they are still human!

Where to Now? For Jennifer Kirkby and other diehard Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fans, who will find the answer presented in the previous article akin to blasphemy, our former Chairman, Paul Kensey, came up with a great idea.

No doubt these Chamberlain fans will want to cling to McPherson's version of the official surrender story in his "Battle Cry of Freedom". Paul suggested, therefore, that we write to McPherson in the same way that we wrote to Gary Gallagher, seeking references to support his "Chamberlain in command" version of the surrender story. This contact with McPherson, as suggested by Paul, has been actioned so...

Watch this space!

(To be concluded in our next Newsletter)

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 9449 3720 or at PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to

secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au