

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 6, October/November 2002

A Message from the Chairman –

As we have now nearly completed our program of meetings for the year, I believe it is appropriate, that we reflect on the increasing membership of the Chapter and the year's program with a view to ascertaining what are our needs for 2003.

The past year has seen a steady increase in our membership and we now have over 50 financial members including 12 "country members" whose personal circumstances preclude their regular attendance at our meetings. The numbers attending our meetings have increased to 30 – 40 and, whilst this increase is pleasing, it does suggest that more attention needs to be given to ensuring members perceive our meetings as "must attend" events. This aspect of the meetings and the general issue of retention of members are being addressed by your Committee as the 2003 program is being developed.

I think you will agree that this year's program has been both varied in its scope and interesting in its presentation. As your Chairman, I have particularly appreciated the provision of a written paper associated with each of the presentations as providing not only a permanent record of our meetings but a valuable reference for later study of significant aspects of the Civil War. These papers provide, also, the opportunity for our "country members" to be an integral part of the NSW Chapter of the Civil War Round Table. The preparation of these papers has involved considerable effort on the part of each of the presenters and I would wish to acknowledge their efforts and extend the thanks of all members for this extra work in making our program something a little more special.

On a somewhat lighter note, our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell, has asked me to inform members that he is **not** the Editor of this Newsletter. Brendan claims he is receiving "undeserved kudos" for the newsletter. The present Editor claims that this is not quite true, however, and what Brendan has been receiving are regular servings of "undeserved brick-bats" about the publication. Well, I guess some one has to take them and Brendan certainly has broad shoulders. Nice try Brendan!

Your Committee has been considering an appropriate theme/venue for **our Christmas function** that might be in some way comparable to the magnificent function organised last year by Elaine and Roger. I must now report our absolute failure to achieve this!

We are still having our Christmas function, however, which will have a similar format to last year – barbeque etc in a relaxed environment. This year, **the venue will be John Cook's home, 17 Range Street, Chatswood and it will be held from 12 noon on Saturday, November 30.** Adjacent to John's home is an open reserve / park where children will be able to play safely. In this regard, John is making arrangements for child minding facilities for any younger children attending the function. You and your family, partner and children, can be guaranteed a great day.

As with last year's function, there will be no charge for the function but we will be having a raffle with some top prizes to help defray costs. I hope that as many members as possible will be able to come to this function and to assist with the catering arrangements I ask that you let our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell (telephone 9449 3729) of your attendance.

A Supplement has been prepared to go out with this Newsletter setting out the arrangements that have been finalised so far for our 2003 program. I'm sure that you will find this program an interesting and varied one.

Also included, is a survey seeking your views on the Newsletter. I hope you might take some time and the trouble to complete this survey.

Finally, I would want to wish all Chapter members and others who receive this Newsletter the compliments of the Season with a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. I hope to see you at our first meeting for 2003 in February.

Paul Kensey

Cavalry Action at Gettysburg

The unsuccessful Confederate attack on the Union defensive position on the Cemetery Ridge feature, commonly known as 'Pickett's Charge', on Day 3 of the Gettysburg battle (July 3, 1863), tends to overshadow the cavalry battles that also took place on that day.

In particular, there was final action of the day, an ill-advised mounted cavalry charge ordered by Brigadier General Judson (Kill-Cavalry) Kilpatrick, commanding the Union 3rd Cavalry Division, of his newly promoted brigade commander, Brigadier General Elon Farnsworth.

This charge was over ground simply not suited for a cavalry charge. The stone fences behind which the Confederate defenders were located and the general rocky nature of the ground made for an operation that was doomed for failure and reinforced Kilpatrick's reputation for lavish expenditure of men and horses.

After consulting with his subordinate regimental commanders, Farnsworth questioned the wisdom of a mounted charge and protested personally to his divisional commander. Kilpatrick retorted by first suggesting the Confederates were in retreat (he appears to be the only one who was of this view) and then, increasing the heat of the exchange, went onto say:

"So you refuse to obey my orders? If you are afraid to lead this charge, I will lead it."

Farnsworth remonstrated with Kilpatrick demanding that he withdraw his assertion of Farnsworth being afraid and then demonstrated his metal by saying:

"General, if you order the charge I will lead it, but you must take the awful responsibility."

He then turned and rode away to brief his regimental commanders and was himself killed in the subsequent charge.

Further Reading

A full account of Farnsworth's cavalry charge outlined in the article, above, is presented in an excellent paper by the well-known Civil War historian and author, Jeffrey D Wert, titled '*All The Powers of Hell Were Waked to Madness*'. This paper may be accessed in the magazine *America's Civil War*, Volume 15, No. 3, July 2002.

Did He Commit Suicide?

One of the enduring controversies about Farnsworth's ill-fated charge on July 3, 1863 is whether the young brigadier, when grievously wounded in the charge took his own life. This claim came from Confederate sources in the years following the War.

The most credible Southern account came from William C Oates, the Colonel of the 15th Alabama and later governor of Alabama. Oates alleged that skirmishers from the Alabama Brigade shot and wounded Farnsworth and killed his horse. Approaching the fallen officer, they demanded he surrender to them. Farnsworth's refused, saying:

"I'll be damned if I do"

Oates reported that Farnsworth then put his pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. Later, Oates claimed he inspected the body, found some private letters that identified Farnsworth, which he then destroyed. This story was confirmed by a number of Confederate sources each claiming that Farnsworth, knowing he was mortally wounded, shot himself in the head.

Despite these various Confederate accounts of Farnsworth's suicide, there is still conjecture regarding the circumstances of his death. Contemporaneous testimony of two surgeons with the Union brigade that found Farnsworth's body on July 5 presents quite a different story. Their report noted that Farnsworth had suffered five wounds – four in the chest and abdomen and one in the thigh – there were no wounds to the head!

As with many stories from the Civil War, there are conflicting accounts and it is left to the students of today to weigh the available evidence and make a judgement for themselves. Suffice to say, however, that the judgement of the respected historian Jeffrey D Wert is quite definitive on the issue when he asserts that "Postwar accounts by Confederates alleging ...he (Farnsworth) committed suicide **are bogus**" (*emphasis added*).

If we accept Wert's judgement on this issue, the questions could then be asked of 'how' and 'why' did the Confederate version emerge? Was this another manifestation of the "Lost Cause" myth? Was it a vain attempt to denigrate the Union commanders and, thus, in some way, change the perception of result of the Gettysburg battle? Did it seek, in some way, to relieve Lee of any responsibility or blame for the Confederate defeat? There is no doubt that the Farnsworth controversy provides fertile ground for any conspiracy theorists in our midst!

Source: America's Civil War, Volume 15, No 3, July 2002.

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“May I Quote You General Sheridan?”

(page)

“Reduction to poverty brings prayers for peace more surely and more quickly than does the destruction of human life”

“The people must be left with nothing but their eyes to weep over the War”

“The only good Indian is a dead Indian”

“If I owned Hell and Texas, I would rent Texas out and live in Hell”

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Civil War Papers Available

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October 17, 1863: President Lincoln issues a proclamation calling for 3000 000 more men for the army.

October 19, 1864: A small Confederate raiding party robs three Vermont banks escaping with over \$200000

October 20, 1863: Lincoln proclaims Thanksgiving Day as a national holiday to be observed on the last Thursday in November.

October 24, 1861: Western Union completes the first transcontinental telegraph transmission.

October 25, 1861: The keel of the ironclad *USS Monitor* is laid at Greenpoint, Long Island.

October 26, 1864: In a daring raid Lieutenant and a 15-man crew sink the ironclad *CSS Albemarle* at Plymouth NC.

October 31, 1864: Nevada, which will become known as the “Battle State” for gaining statehood during the War, is admitted as the 36th State of the Union.

The Navy Got It Right!

Famous Last Words

It Happened in October

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

October 1, 1864: Confederate spy, Mrs Rose O'Neal Greenhow, drowns at sea, pulled under by the weight of gold sewn into the hem of her dress, gold she was attempting to smuggle into the Confederacy.

October 11, 1864: Roger B Taney, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and author of the notorious Dred Scott decision (1857), dies at the age of eighty-nine.

October 15, 1863: The Confederate submarine *H.L. Hunley* sinks for the second time during a practice dive in Charleston harbour. Seven men die including its inventor Hunley.

October 26, 1864: Confederate guerrilla, "Bloody Bill" Anderson is ambushed and killed near Richmond, Missouri.

COMMAND MATTERS

October 2, 1862: President Davis gives orders to Beauregard to assume command of Western Theatre forces under Hood and Taylor.

October 8, 1861: Brigadier General William T Sherman is named to command the Union Department of the Cumberland, quartered at Louisville.

October 16, 1863: Lincoln names Grant to command all Union forces in the Military Division of the Mississippi, viz., all Union forces west of the Appalachians.

October 19, 1863: Thomas replaces Rosecrans as commander of the 35000 man Army of the Cumberland in Chattanooga.

October 30, 1862: Rosecrans replaces Buell in command of the redesignated Army of the Cumberland.

WANTON DESTRUCTION

October 2, 1864: A Federal raid into southwest Virginia is defeated near Saltville and over 100 Union prisoners, mostly black soldiers, are murdered by their Confederate captors.

October 6, 1864: Sheridan begins the systematic destruction of the Shenandoah Valley.

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October 3-4, 1862: The Battle of Corinth between Rosecrans's Army of the Mississippi and a combined Confederate force comprising the Army of West Tennessee and Price's Army of the West under overall command of Major General Earl Van Dorn. Van Dorn hoped to seize Corinth and sweep north into Middle Tennessee but in the final attack Federal artillery inflicted heavy casualties and forced a general retreat. Rosecrans delayed pursuit until the next day, allowing Van Dorn's forces to avoid capture or destruction.

October 8, 1862: The Battle of Perryville, fought between Bragg's Army of Mississippi and Buell's Army of the Ohio was a strategic Union victory resulting in Union control of Kentucky.

October 19, 1864: The Battle of Cedar Creek was the last major battle in the Shenandoah Valley and giving the Federals control of the Valley for the rest of the War.

October 21, 1861: The Battle of Ball's Bluff.

October 23, 1864: The Battle of Westport fought between General Sterling Price's Confederate force and the Union forces commanded by General Curtis resulted in a resounding Confederate defeat that was to end their threat to Missouri.

October 25, 1863: The Battle of Pine Bluff.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

October 7, 1864: Ten Confederate prisoners escape from Elvira Prison in New York State through a 66-foot tunnel.

The *USS Wachusett* captures the troublesome Confederate raider *CSS Florida* in a controversial action in Bahia, Brazil.

October 10, 1862: President Davis asks Virginia for a draft of 4500 slaves to work on completing the fortifications of Richmond.

October 13, 1864: By a slim majority, Maryland adopts a new state constitution abolishing slavery

October 13, 1864: Confederate partisans under Mosby capture a train near Kearneyville and escape with nearly \$2 million from Union paymasters on board

October 16, 1858: John Brown's raid on the arsenal and armoury at Harper's Ferry. Brown was successful in capturing the armoury complex that was guarded by a single watchman. He was captured within 24 hours and hanged on December 2, 1858.

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May I Quote You General Sheridan?

"Reduction to poverty brings prayers for peace more surely and more quickly than does destruction of human life"

"The people must be left with nothing but their eyes to weep over the War"

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian"

"If I owned Hell and Texas, I would rent Texas out and live in Hell"

One nasty response to this last quote has been that "Little Phil" could be disinterred from where he is now buried in Arlington Cemetery and then buried somewhere in Texas. He would then be in both places!

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Civil War Papers Available

Paul Kensey prepared a number of papers for participants in his Civil War Eastern Battlefields tour earlier this year. These papers include:

- Prelude to the War;
- Recommended Civil War Reading and Viewing – A First Look.

If any member would like a copy of one or both of these papers please contact Paul.

The Navy Got It Right!

"Men trained to arms will never fail,
if properly led"

David Glasgow Farragut

ACWRTA Lapel Badges Available

We have been advised that ACWRTA lapel badges that were once given to new members are now available through our Melbourne friends.

Members interested in purchasing one of these lapel badges should speak with our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell, who will provide a badge for you when you hand over \$5:00.

The Battle of Fredericksburg

In an earlier Newsletter details were given of a web-site that provided a detailed study of the Battle of Chancellorsville. The same web-site:

<http://www.fredericksburg.com>

has an even more detailed study of the Battle of Fredericksburg. To access this, you go to the web-site, click first on "Civil War", then on "Battles" and then on the detail under the heading "Battle of Fredericksburg". This web-site is well worth a look.

Famous Last Words...

"I'll never write my memoirs, I would be trading on the blood of my men"

- *General Robert E Lee*