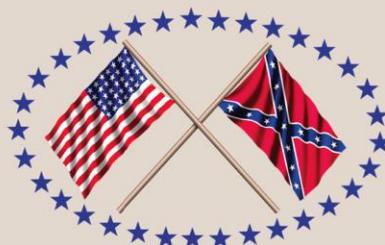


Sumter to Appomattox



American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)

www.americancivilwar.asn.au

Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr

President's Message

Dear Round Table members,
So, our year is drawing to a close with a bang. Tom Keneally will be joining us as Speaker for the last 2022 meeting. He has written several books on the Civil War years and is clearly a notable scholar and writer in the field. Please welcome him to our gathering. I am on a promise to limit the AGM to 20 minutes! Be warned!

I have agreed to give a talk on the Petersburg Campaign at the February meeting of the Military History Society of NSW. If you have any suggestions for the presentation, a version of which I gave at the last meeting, please speak up.

The Committee has been talking about the program for next year and we would appreciate any volunteers making themselves known to us, either for a 30 – 40-minute presentation or for a short presentation (up to 10 minutes). I have been impressed by the quality of presentations given by our members, augmented by occasional external speakers, while I have been President. You do not need to be a practised speaker to give an interesting presentation. Do not leave it to the usual suspects. They will get a turn as well!

Suggestions for external speakers and topics for others to present are also welcome.

I look forward with anticipation to our next gathering.

Ian McIntyre

Number 115 Nov. – Dec. 2022

Our Next Meeting

Monday, November 28th at 6.15

Roseville Club, Pacific Hwy

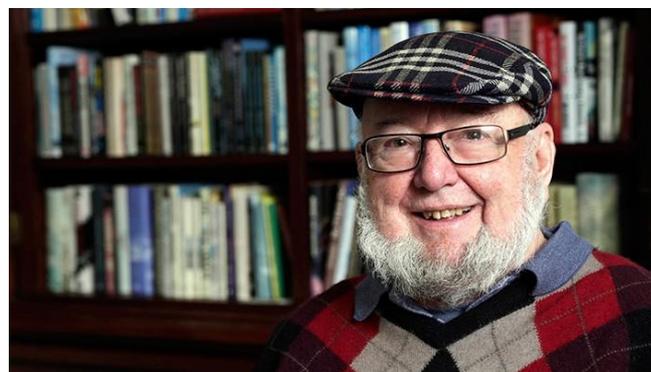
AGM with legendary guest speaker, the celebrated author Tom Keneally AO on

“Australian Convict Families in the American Civil War”

Guests welcome

Great value at \$50 per head

Bookings required to our Treasurer with EFT payment* by COB Thursday 24 November – with names of you and your guests – by email to treasurer@americancivilwar.asn.au



Tom will draw on his extensive knowledge of the Civil War and his recently published book *'Fanatic Heart'* based on the extraordinary life of Irishman John Mitchel.

* ACWRT, BSB 082 445 Account 413569756

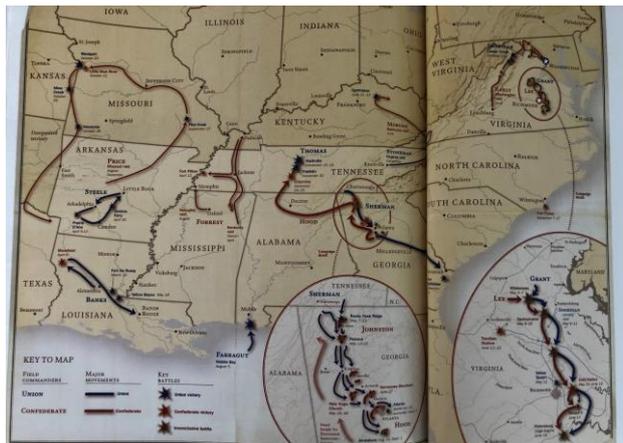
Our Last Meeting

The Siege of Petersburg

15 June 1864 – 2 April 1865

Ian McIntyre

This meeting's presentation was given by our President Ian McIntyre, who began by discussing why he was interested in this battle. It was a very long battle and he had learnt about its relevance at the Australian War Memorial Guide's course, which showed how what happened there was a portent of things to come in terms of warfare.



As shown in the map, at the start of the Petersburg campaign, there was a great deal happening elsewhere. At the same time, as events in Virginia were unfolding, Sherman was attacking Atlanta. The importance of this Campaign was that it led directly to the surrender of Lee at Appomattox.

The Overland Campaign and Petersburg

- May 5-7 Wilderness
- May 8-20 Spotsylvania
- May 11 Yellow Tavern
- May 31-June 12 Cold Harbour
- June 13 Riddell's
- June 15- April 2 Petersburg



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The Overland Campaign, which involved a number of battles, was precipitated by the transfer of General Grant from the West. He lost most of these battles in the Overland Campaign but responded by moving South each time and moving to outflank Lee. He actually crossed the James River using a pontoon bridge and attached Petersburg (at the start of what is known as the Petersburg Siege). Petersburg was meant to have been taken already by General Benjamin Butler because he and his troops had actually arrived before Lee's

Army, but Butler hadn't realized his advantage so let it go.

This Campaign had Grant (transferred from the Western Campaign in March) and Lee as opponents.

Ian then showed photos of the Petersburg battle site, which he visited in 2016, and the site as it was at the time of the campaign. The photos of that time were not like contemporary action shots because they needed long exposure times, which meant photos were static.

The site now



Petersburg National Battlefield Park
National Park Service

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The following photos show the heavy entrenchments built up at the time. Of great importance was the fact that Petersburg was at the junction of three railways, which was the means by which supplies were getting to Richmond.

Petersburg then



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Petersburg then



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The following photo shows a camp, which has the appearance of being permanent.

Camp at Petersburg



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Large numbers of troops were gathered at the sites. There were an estimated 150,000 Union troops, including the 70,000 (the size of Napoleon's army) who turned up with Grant. Lee's army was 67,000-68,000 strong. These large numbers would, of course, have required a great deal of feeding, support and supplies. Therefore, the presence of the railways meant that this location was logistically important.

The following slide shows the opening Union action in the first two days of the battle and, with it, through lack of intelligence, the squandering of the opportunity to have a greater impact. If the Federal troops had continued, they would have been able to take Petersburg.

Petersburg 15 June 1864

- 14 June 1864 Federal troops began crossing a 2,100 ft (640m) pontoon bridge over James River
- 15 June 1864 Federal troops attacked entrenched fortifications at Petersburg, hesitantly
 - 10 miles (16 km) of 20 ft (6m) thick breastworks, trenches, 15 ft (4.5m) deep ditches, 55 artillery redans with many cannon.
 - Initially only lightly held (less than 3,000 men under Beauregard), not known to Federals.
 - Attack near sundown captured a mile (1.7 km) of line and 16 guns, without much opposition, and stopped!
 - MISSED OPPORTUNITY

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A contemporaneous artist sketching for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*, created the following scene of the Eighteenth Army Corps attacking a Confederate Fort in front of Petersburg on June 15th, 1864. At this point Ian spoke of the multitude of artists working for various publications and, under trying and dangerous conditions, capturing the scenes of action as they unfolded.



In the following days, 16th – 17th June, there were further missed opportunities and on 18 June, 70,000 Federals attacked empty trenches at dawn after they had been vacated during the night.

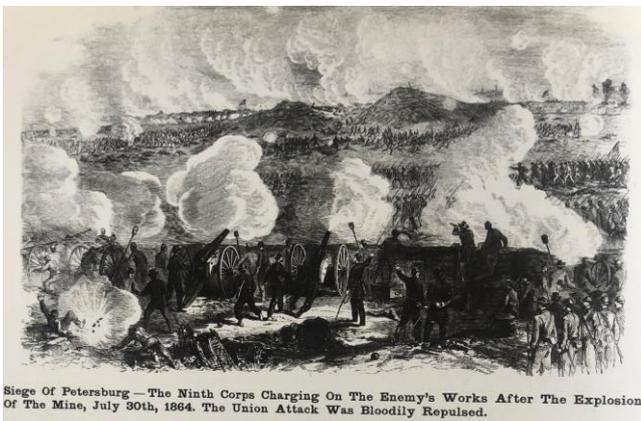
The most famous part of this battle, which began on 30th July 1864, relates to The Crater, and, before it was created, the 156m. tunnel built, not by engineers, but by coal miners in infantry regiments. Ventilation was well-managed through the use of fires and draughts so fresh air was plentiful. The following slide identifies the main events related to The Crater.

The Crater

- 30 July 1864
- A tunnel under the confederate lines blown up.
- Coal Miner troops suggested a tunnel. Started on 24 June 1864.
- Used a fire to crate lowered air pressure and wooden plume to supply fresh air. Tunnel was 511 ft (156m) with two 40 ft (12m) transverse galleries under Confederate position. 4 Tons gunpowder placed in galleries.
- Confederate line demolished to become a 170 x 60 x 30 ft (52 x 18 x 9m) Crater. Southern troops within 200 yds (180m) surprised and fled.
- Union troops ran into crater instead of around it. TRAP!
- Confederates recovered and shot into crater.
- Slaughter. Disaster. 4,000 Union casualties. Confederate casualties less than 2,000
- MISSED OPPORTUNITY!

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The tunnel was commenced 24th June and was blown up on 30th June. One of the reasons that this event was a portent of future wars was that the same action took place in WW1 in an action known as Hill 60 and Messines Ridge, which involved Australian miners.



The Crater

Unfortunately, the blowing up of the tunnel did not end well. A number of Confederate soldiers were killed in the detonation and the remainder ran away, leaving a 450m. gap in the line. Union troops followed but, instead of going around the Crater, they ran into it and were trapped. The Confederates regrouped and were able to pick off those trapped below them. The Union lost 4,000 men including a large number from General Ferrero's Fourth (Coloured) Division while the Confederates lost less than 2,000. It was a missed opportunity.



In the period following the Crater, a number of important events took place between August 1864 and April 1865, which ultimately led to Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, events which are summarized as follows:

Petersburg August 1864 to April 1865

- Throughout August 1864 to March 1865, Union forces continually moved south and west of Petersburg with aim of cutting railway supply lines.
- August 18, Union cut one of the two railway lines supplying Richmond and Petersburg. Confederate counterattacks were successful and prevented capture of Southside Railroad.
- February 1865, Grant moved to west. Confederate lines stretched. Over 35 miles (56 km) from east of Richmond to southwest of Petersburg.
- 2 April 1865, Grant attacked Petersburg. Successfully.
- 3 April 1865, Petersburg and Richmond in Union possession.
- Lee surrendered a week later at Appomattox Courthouse.

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Ian also spoke about the importance of logistics, especially in relation to the railroad system between Richmond and Petersburg. The Union Army was supplied via City Point, which had railways.

Logistics

- Good railroad between Richmond and Petersburg.
- Confederates had Southside and Weldon Railways west and south of Petersburg, protected by well entrenched veteran troops.
- Important for supply of Confederate troops.
- Union army brought supplies in via City Point, an expanded port.
- Union army had railway along front behind lines to supply troops.
- City Point was Union (Grant) headquarters.

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18

Ian concluded with a short discussion of the importance of the Battle of Five Forks, which was the key to the breakthrough which led to the South's retreat and the subsequent fall of Richmond and to Lee's surrender.

This was an informative presentation and was followed by a lively discussion of issues around this Campaign.

Civil War Profiles

Civil War Illustrators

Jannette Greenwood

In his presentation, Ian referred to the number of Civil War illustrators present at battlefields who conveyed, for an avid audience, the immediacy of the action with their contemporaneous sketches. In a period when photography was static, sketches were the only way, besides words, to convey the action.

And who were these illustrators, who put themselves in harm's way as they attempted to convey the confusing, noisy and dangerous actions occurring in front of them? And how did the process work? How did these sketches get so quickly into the magazines and newspapers of the period?

These 'noble army of artists', according to a *Harper's Weekly* editor, recorded their impressions in pencil often "in the fading twilight with freezing or fevered fingers, making their sketches in ambulances, in trenches and on decks over which shells crashed and whined". They also shared the soldier's daily life and accompanied them on marches.

ALFRED R. WAUD

The most prolific of these artists was Alfred R. WAUD (pronounced 'Wode'), whose detailed and lively sketches captured the war's dramatic intensity. He has been described as the greatest of the Civil War combat artists who covered the war with sketch pad and pencil throughout the years 1861 to 1865 – from Bull Run to Appomattox.



Waud aged 25

Born in London in 1828, he arrived in New York in 1850 after having trained at the Government School of Design and then working as a painter of theatrical scenery and also as an illustrator for various periodicals in the US before the outbreak of war.



Waud working in the field

In 1860, he began work as a 'special artist' with the *New York Illustrated News* and, in 1861, was assigned to cover the Army of the Potomac. He transferred to *Harper's Weekly* at the end of 1861, continuing to cover the war. In 1864, his brother William joined him, and they worked together on the Petersburg Campaign. Alfred Waud was the only illustrator who covered the whole war from start to finish.

After the war, he continued as a prolific illustrator for prominent magazines, becoming more famous than he was in the war. Ironically, he died in Marietta, Georgia, while touring the Southern battlefields in 1891.

A colourful description of Waud was provided by George Augustus Sala, a correspondent for the London *Daily Telegraph*, who visited the Army of the Potomac in 1864:

"There had galloped furiously by us, backward and forward during our journey, a tall man, mounted on a taller horse. Blue-eyed, fair-bearded, strapping and stalwart, full of loud cheery laughs and comic songs, armed to the teeth, jackbooted, gauntleted, slouch-hatted, yet clad in the shooting-jacket of a civilian, I had puzzled many times throughout the afternoon and evening to know what manner of man this might inwardly be. He didn't look American; he was too well-dressed to be a guerilla.

"I found him at last. The fair-bearded man was the 'war artist' of *Harper's Weekly*. He had been sketching with the Army of the Potomac since its first organisation. He had been in every advance, in every retreat, in every battle, and almost every reconnaissance. He probably knew more about the several campaigns ... than the generals. But he was a prudent man who could keep his own counsel and keep on sketching. Hence, he had become a universal favourite. Commanding officers were glad to welcome in their tents the genial companion who could sing and tell stories and imitate all the trumpet and bugle calls. He had been offered, time after time, a staff appointment but preferred his own calling."

In another dispatch, Sala gives the following description:

"As a 'special war artist', he faced danger on occasions. Often, he had ventured beyond the picket lines and been chased by guerillas, but the speed and mettle of his big brown steed enabled him to show the gentry a clean pair of heels.

"He was continually vaulting on his huge brown horse and galloping at full split like a Wild Horseman of the Prairie. But he was indeed an Englishman – English to the bone – and kept his Foreign Office passport in a secure side pocket."

Waud's sketches were renowned for the detail he was able to achieve while working at speed. The following sketch is of an event – the Review of the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac. The second is a detail from this sketch.



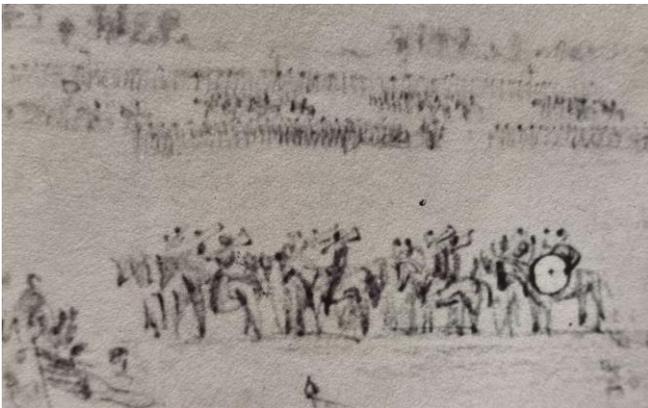
Review of the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, April 9th 1863.

Inscribed by Waud: "Review by the President of the Army of the Potomac. General Bedford's division of regulars passing by the general galloping at the head of the column". The review was attended by President and Mrs. Lincoln. A New York Herald correspondent wrote of the event: "Everything was in the finest style, and our Chief Magistrate could not but have felt a thrill of pride as he looked over the sea of bayonets, the blue coats and the determined faces".



"Sharpshooters in Front of Petersburg, July 1864

Attached note by Waud: "On some portion of the lines picket firing was soon discontinued. Genl. Warren considered it unnecessary to the safety of the 5th Corps front and put a stop to it. The enemy did likewise. But where the practice was in vogue it was very dangerous to be exposed. A common plan of protection was that shown in the sketch, by a wooden tube widening outwards like a miniature embrasure buried in the crest of the rifle pit and protected by sandbags."

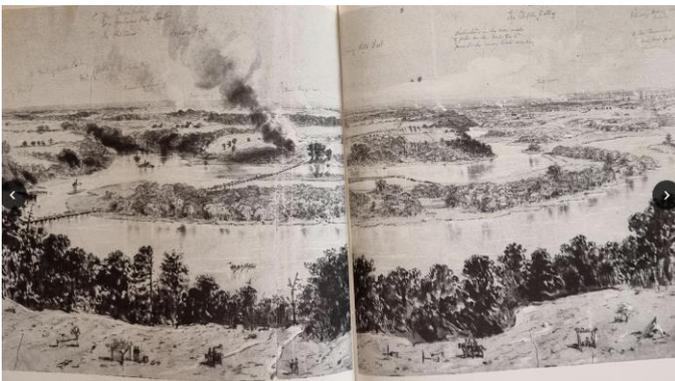


Detail from the above sketch of the cavalry musicians (top of sketch just right of centre) shows Waud's ability to portray meticulous detail.

The following photos are of sketches drawn at Petersburg and dispatched to *Harper's*.



On the front line of ops. 18th Corps with mantelets protecting the gunners. The drawing clearly shows how the gunners were shielded by mantelets made of woven ropes.



Harper's reported: "A panoramic view of the country as well as the military situation around Petersburg. The view is from WEITZEL'S Look-out and Signal Tower at Bermuda Hundred looking southward. Petersburg is on the extreme right. City Point is not included in the view, but the pontoon-bridge is disclosed by which the army communicates with Bermuda Hundred."



The Advance into the Crater July 30th 1864
Inscribed "Scene of the explosion, Saturday July 30th. The exaggerated sole of the shoe on the soldier of the 4th Colored Division (bottom left) was to show the structure of the hobnails.

THE WHOLE PROCESS

During the War, all images for a publication had to be hand-drawn and engraved by skilled artists known as “Specials”. Although photography existed, it could not convey movement and it was still not possible to transfer a photo to a printing plate.

The three main publications of the period which made extensive use of sketches were *Harper's Weekly*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and the *New York Illustrated News*. They all used the same process in the preparation and publishing of illustrations.

Artists in the field created detailed sketches of an action and these were then rushed to the main office by courier or mail. A staff of engravers used the sketches to meticulously create engravings, by carving out the white bits on blocks of Turkish boxwood, leaving the black sketch marks in relief. Boxwood was ideal to work with because the smooth, hard grain of the boxwood blocks enabled the rapid cutting of illustrations with exquisite detail.

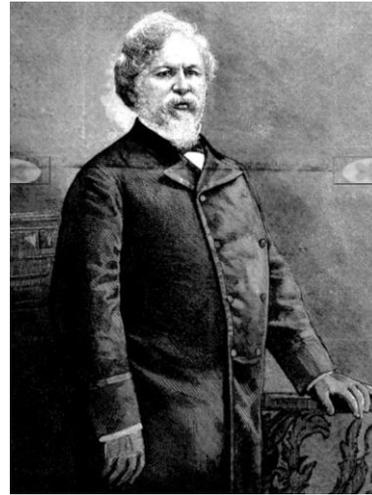
The blocks were 2” or 4” square, depending on the size of the sketch, and, when engraved, had to be composited together with screws to make one large illustration. The wood engraving was the master to print the image onto every issue of the paper. However, unfortunately, they did not always have the detail or freshness of the original sketch.



Instructions to engravers provided by an artist (at top)

During the war, each issue of *Harper's Weekly* used about 40 engravings. Each full-spread engraving could require a full day's work by several individuals. These blocks were kept for reprinted editions or thrown away.

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER



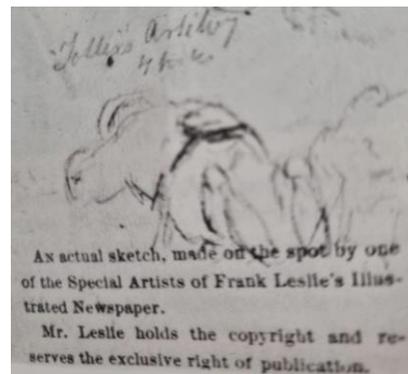
Frank Leslie

Frank Leslie, an Englishman like Waud, had developed the skills needed to create his famous illustrated newspaper before arriving in New York in 1848.

He was born Henry Carter in 1821, into a family of a well-to-do glovemaker who wished him to continue in the family tradition. Instead, he trained to become an illustrator and then a wood block engraver. He sold drawings to the *Illustrated London News* under the name Frank Leslie and then gained employment with the *News* as an illustrator and then the superintendent of the engraving department.

With these skills, he arrived in the USA with his new name and with a desire to start his own newspaper using the new process of light-on-shade engraving. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, founded in 1855, was one of several newspapers he founded.

The drama of the Civil War ensured the success of *Leslie's Newspaper* with sketches submitted by many freelance artists and then processed and then published. The resulting prints appearing in the newspapers were collected and pinned up on barn walls and over mantelpieces of homes all over the country as thousands of readers avidly followed events.



Leslie's gave sketch pads to its combat artists with the copyright already stamped on them

A Leslie's freelancer, James R. O'Neill, is thought to have been the only Civil War correspondent killed in action in the Civil War.

After Leslie's death in 1880, his widow continued the newspaper in his name although, after 1902, it had no connection to the Leslie family.

Surviving copies attract large prices as collectors' items.

With thanks to Len Traynor for access to his very extensive library

Newspaper Extracts



A page from the *Chicago Tribune* 1862 showing a typical page without illustrations.

Font is tiny – 7.5 - 8pts and printed in a serif font (like this).

Our New slot

DID YOU KNOW?

After With thanks to member Wayne Morrison

The Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, the Confederate army was in full retreat. The Union Army and the citizens were left with the task of cleaning up the battlefield. It is estimated that between 27,000 and 37,000 rifles were recovered. Of these weapons, it is estimated that up to 24,000 were loaded. The figures are first mentioned in a West Point Textbook titled *A Course of Instruction on Ordinance and Gunnery for Cadets of the United States Military Academy (1867)*. There is some doubt as to the accuracy of the figures as no one has

discovered original sources. It is understood that the recovered rifles were taken to the Washington Arsenal, but again no original records have been found.

Of the 24,000 rifles that were found to be still loaded, about one half of these contained at least two charges, one fourth contained from 3 to 10 charges and the balance one charge. It is alleged that one rifle had up to 23 charges. There is considerable doubt about this figure as a barrel would probably need to be about five to six feet long to accommodate so many charges.

Despite the doubt about the number of rifles recovered and the number of charges found within the rifles, it does raise considerable questions about the firing and loading of rifles during a battle and the conduct of troops under fire. Loading a civil war rifle such as a Springfield was a complex and time-consuming process. In summary the steps were:

- Place the stock of the rifle on the ground.
- Remove paper cartridge from satchel.
- Tear paper open with teeth.
- Pour the powder down the barrel.
- Place the minie ball (which is in the satchel) into the barrel of the rifle.
- Ensure that the minie ball is placed in the barrel with the bottom of the cone shape ball towards the bottom of the barrel.
- Use the ramrod on bottom of rifle to push the minie ball down the rifle.
- Remove the ramrod and place back in its holder.
- Place the percussion cap on the nipple of the gun. The nipple of the gun is the place the hammer strikes when it falls.
- Cock the hammer back.
- Pull the trigger. This will cause the hammer to fall, causing the percussion cap to spark. This spark travels down the barrel igniting the powder. The powder forces the minie ball to expand and forces it out. The rifled grooves spin the minie ball, making it more accurate as it leaves the barrel.



Given the number of steps, it is not surprising that infantry forget certain steps. Ramrods were often shot out of a barrel as they had not been removed. The hammer would not be drawn fully back leading to a rifle going off "half cocked".

The Gettysburg discovery about the number of loaded unfired rifles has a number of implications. For some reason, it appears that a large number of soldiers were not discharging their weapons during the battle and continuing to reload anyway. This would allow some soldiers to give the appearance they were participating in volleys when they were not. The thick smoke, mass confusion and sounds of rifle and cannon fire would prevent a neighbour from seeing you fire. One author argues that the discarded, but loaded, weapons at Gettysburg mostly represent soldiers who were physically or psychologically unable or unwilling to fire at the enemy.

This is perhaps a harsh view and other explanations are available. The high rate of misfire in Civil war rifles, combined with the inability of a number of soldiers to reload properly under hectic battle conditions, would render a large number of rifles unusable in a short period of time. Rifles were prone to overheating. Inserting the percussion cap was easy to bungle or forget. This would often lead to a soldier thinking that he had discharged his rifle when he had not. The result was that the soldier would reload the weapon. If the weapon was then fired, there was a high chance that weapon would misfire or even explode, being double loaded, or not fire at all. The result is that a number of soldiers would simply drop the rifle as it would not fire.

The other possibility is that soldiers simply forgot that they had loaded the rifle. The unit is ordered to load, and fire by sections. The command is then given to cease firing and some men do not discharge their weapon. Given the heat of the battle, the enemy rifle fire and casualties falling around them, panicked soldiers could forget that the rifle was loaded. It was difficult to unload a rifle. The easiest way was to fire the rifle. If the unit was preserving its ammunition or even preparing to defend itself from another attack, it was not practical to discharge the rifle.

The other explanation for loaded rifles is that units would load and advance in an attack. For example, during Pickett's Charge, the Confederate army marched slowly towards the Union Lines and only began anything resembling a charge or a "spirited jog" once they had closed to a few hundred yards. By the

time they had reached their volley range targets, cannon fire would have decimated whole sections of a line, leaving behind dead or dying men clutching fully loaded weapons.

Is there a firm conclusion to the loaded weapons found at Gettysburg after the battle? The explanations given above probably account for the loaded rifles. Some infantry did avoid firing their rifles, for whatever reason, and others died before they had the chance to fire. What the findings of the rifles does suggest is that we do not fully understand small arms tactics and what it was really like to stand on a smoky, noisy battlefield.



New members

We are delighted to welcome new members at our Roundtable.

Call for short talks

Our short ten-minute presentations on a particular battle or person have been a great success in revealing the depth of talent within our group.

Remember that we are a group of friends and a friendly audience. I know there are several amongst us who have not yet broken cover but who would be interesting and insightful presenters.

Please do not hesitate to volunteer to myself or John Morrison on a topic of your choice, be it short or long.

Ian McIntyre

This publication is the official newsletter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia (NSW Chapter). All enquiries regarding the newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary of the Chapter by phone on 0411 745 707 or email: secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

On our **Website** you will always find the date of our next meeting. Our Facebook page is also www.americancivilwar.asn.au