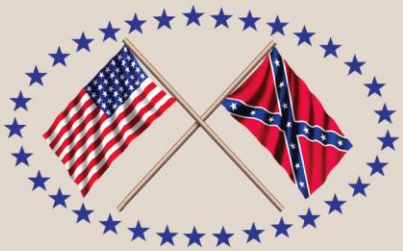
# Sumter to Appomattox



American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)
www.americancivilwar.asn.au Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr

*Number 134 - Dec – Jan 2026*

## *President's Message*

Our AGM on 1 December 2025 was over quickly (as I was instructed to achieve)! The committee was re-elected and we changed the by by-laws to accommodate two additional people on the committee. This was suggested to guard against the committee accidentally becoming too habitual and to draw some new blood and new ideas into the committee. That has resulted in Andres Forero-Guzman and John Verhoeven joining the committee. I must say that we had hoped that we would have other people from the membership nominating for election to the committee. Well, maybe next AGM. It is actually quite a fun group.

Congratulations to Peter Zacharatos for winning the Len Traynor award, presented by Len Traynor himself, for his contribution to the newsletter by way of his magnificent presentation on the Battle of Chancellorsville.

And thank you to our Patron, Bob Carr, for his excellent presentation on the Gettysburg address.

I have recently been musing about my travels in the USA, which are considerable. When I was in my third decade, my wife and I actually lived in California for almost a year. Since then I have visited at least 23 states either on holiday, business or in search of Civil War sites with Round Table colleagues and with several repeats. And then in 2023, I drove in thirteen days from Dallas in Texas down to Houston then East across Louisiana and Alabama to Atlanta in Georgia and then North-East along the Appalachian Mountains through North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia to Washington DC. *(cont. p.2)*.

## *Our Next Meeting*

**Monday, 16th February from 6pm**
**Gettysburg – Personal reflections**
The Chatswood Club
11 Help Street, Chatswood
Cost: $35 for an excellent buffet dinner including wine on the table

Booking required –
https://www.trybooking.com/DJLRQ

### Program

In 1861, President Lincoln stated that the Civil War would be "a people's war". It is all too easy to forget that for everyone involved in the war there are stories – deep, meaningful, and personal.

At our next meeting we will hear from two of our members – Mike Bosch and Bernie Walker about the human side and their family connections to the war and especially the Battle of Gettysburg.

As President Lincoln also said, it was a people's war – brother against brother.

## *President's Message (cont.)*

After all this, sadly, my overwhelming impression, is that the United States of America is anything but united and that this seems to have been the case since before the Civil War. Recent events have only served to reinforce this impression.
But, the American Civil War is still worthy of study and discussion as a significant, if not apocalyptic, event in the history of a nation and its people. At some time in the future, I think we should also talk about the aftermath and its effect, which is still playing out.
Do not forget a $5 and a $10 note for the door raffles.
See you on 16 February.

*Ian McIntyre*

## *Club Parking*

The club offers free parking, with ample space for up to 50 vehicles. The parking lot provides direct access to the club.

**How to Access the Parking:**
The entrance to the parking lot is located at the back of the club, accessible via McIntosh Street.
For GPS directions, enter '12 McIntosh Street, Chatswood'. This will guide you to the general area. Upon arrival, look for the parking complex with signage that reads 'Club Parking' in black lettering. The following image should assist you:


12 Mcintosh St

IMPORTANT: You may need to phone the number on the post outside to get the gate opened. There are internal stairs up to the Club (there's a door on the landing on. The right on the top level, just down from the gate) or you can catch the lift to G, then exit the glass doors and enter through the adjoining glass doors.

## *Our Last Meeting*

Our last meeting was the AGM. As well, *the Leonard Traynor Award for Contribution to the Newsletter* was presented by Len to Peter Zacharatos for his brilliant presentation at a previous meeting titled "Lee's Finest Hour – the Battle of Chancellorsville".

Peter Zacharatos receives The Leonard Traynor Award from Len

One of our special guest presenters invited to this meeting, Tom Keneally, was unfortunately unable to attend to give the Gettysburg Address.

In his place, John Morrison spoke about this great Address as well as referring to other great speeches. The following is in his own words. After this presentation, he then went on to give the Address.

### The Gettysburg Address
### *269 Words That Changed America*
*John Morrison*

I read that the number one fear of the average person is public speaking … Number two was death. To me, that means that, to the average person, if you were going to be at a funeral, you would rather be in the casket than doing the eulogy."

This classic observational joke from Jerry Seinfeld sums up most people's attitude to speaking in public. Speaking to a live audience is one of the most difficult and challenging things in the world! It is a challenge for everyone since public speaking encapsulates the two critical skills for success in almost everything: i) the ability to sell yourself, or ii) the ability to sell an idea.

But what is it that makes a great speaker? Is it what they say, or how they say it? Or is it the context or circumstances? The main features of a good presentation include how to "make a case" or "present an argument".

So, you need i) an introduction or preamble, ii) the main body, iii) the conclusion or wrap-up of the argument, and iv) the peroration (the “take-home” message to the audience). As in Alice in Wonderland, when Alice asks the Queen of Hearts “But how shall I go on?”, the Queen responds, “Start at the beginning, proceed in an orderly fashion, and when you reach the end…stop!”

There are a number of great public speeches in history, including:

1. “The Gettysburg Address” - Abraham Lincoln (1863)
2. “We Shall Fight Them on the Beaches” - Winston Churchill (1940).
3. “I Have a Dream!” - Martin Luther King (1963).
4. “Tear down this wall!” - Ronald Regan (1987)
5. “The Redfern Park Speech” - Paul Keating (1992)
6. “How Dare the Taliban Take Away My Basic Right to Education?” - Malala Yousafzai (2020)

The Gettysburg Address occurred at the dedication of the US National Cemetery after the battle of Gettysburg (1-3 July 1863), in which 150,000 soldiers fought; 50,000 killed, wounded or missing.

The featured speaker at the dedication was the noted orator Edward Everett, who spoke for more than two hours (as was customary at the time). President Lincoln followed with “a few appropriate remarks” - but he spoke only 269 words; the speech lasted barely 2 minutes. At the time there were a number of people critical and dismissive of the address, but there were many who saw its brilliance, including Everett, who wrote to Lincoln "I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes". Lincoln replied that he was glad to know the speech was not a "total failure"!

There are a number of factors that make the Gettysburg Address such a great speech -

1. It is brief and concise.
2. It is well structured (beginning, middle, end/peroration)
3. The message flows logically.
4. The language is elegant.
5. It addresses the issue.
6. It is “fit to purpose”.
7. It is memorable.

One of the keys to effective Public Speaking and speech delivery is to remember that there is a difference between rhetoric and oratory, and effective public speaking. A gifted and effective public speaker need not be another Churchill, King, or Obama. So it is with the Gettysburg Address.

## *The Gettysburg Address*

*Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

*Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

*But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate - we can not consecrate - we can not hallow - this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -*

*That from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*

*Abraham Lincoln (Nov. 1863)*

\- -

John’s address was followed by our special presenter, our esteemed Patron, Prof the honourable Bob Carr, who broke down the Gettysburg Address into sections and analysed it. Because it was so thoughtful, informative and insightful, it has been decided to reproduce it in full.

Below is Bob’s speech in his own words.

## The Words that Remade America

*The Prof Hon. Bob Carr*

Various news organisations didn't praise the Address if they commented at all. The Springfield Massachusetts Republicans said Lincoln's address was "a perfect gem – deep in feeling and compact in thought and expression". The long speech by Edward Everett, preceding Lincoln's, was funeral oratory, with its roots in the Ancient Greeks. It was expected. It is one of the case studies in how America in the Civil War approached the subject of death. One historian has written a whole book on death as seen through the eyes of the Civil War generation. There was no surprise in Lincoln speaking so briefly in what's described variously as 269, 270, 271 or 272 words. The official program said, 'Major Address, Edward Everett (a professional orator); Musical Interlude; Remarks: President Abraham Lincoln'. So it was equivalent to ribbon cutting.

There could be a debate as to whether this is his greatest speech. I refer to Gary Wills' book 'Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America' and a contrasting one by James McPherson in his one-volume book 'The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era' and another of his: 'Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution'. This book upholds the Second Inaugural as the greatest speech. Then there's the First Inaugural.

You'll remember the story. William Seward provided a draft of the closing of the First Inaugural to Lincoln and Lincoln deftly went through those words and transformed them into the words that we find so magical today – "the better angels of our nature". Seward made the draft, but it was the President's touch, shaped by his knowledge of the King James Bible and his love of Shakespeare and of frontier oratory, that is remembered.

It has been said that Lincoln was narrowly but deeply read.

The above phrase has been referred to as "the parenthetic enriching of the first phrase". Going back to an earlier speech, his first recorded speech as a young man in 1838, we have: "Theirs was the task (and nobly they performed it) to possess themselves, and through themselves us, of this goodly land".

This was before he got elected to his single two-year term in Congress.

So here he was as a young man demonstrating a love of the language, and, in particular, a reliance on the contrast or opposites he deployed. The sentence above beginning, "Theirs was the task …" is actually a pre-echo of the more familiar wording "The world will little note (nor long remember)" or "Fondly do we hope (fervently do we pray) that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." You're struck looking at his oratory by the claims that can be made for about half a dozen of his major speeches as being distinguished.

Look at this one from his Second Inaugural: "Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the War came".

And the 1862 message to Congress: "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free, honourable alike, in what we give and what we preserve".

Then there's "We shall nobly say or meanly lose the last best hope of earth."

So, the great speech we comment on tonight stands with half a dozen that would have a simple claim to be his best and some provide pre-echoes of the wording and the thought structure and the meaning of the speech we comment on tonight.

Gary Wills in his book homes in on the great meaning in the Gettysburg Address. This was a revolutionary speech in that it upheld The Declaration of Independence. It elevated it above the Constitution. So, we have two great documents, founding documents in America, but they're at odds. Lincoln boldly and, say his critics, improperly elevated the Declaration of Independence above the Constitution.

The Constitution, which is the superior document and spells out the law of the land, didn't say "All men are created equal". It tolerated slavery. It regulated the slave trade by saying when it would

close, but in doing so, it declined the opportunity to say that the slave trade within America would end on the same date. It didn't do that. It also recognised, before it was taken out after the Civil War, the power of the Fugitive Slave Act. The Constitution had to be shaped to reject the notion of abolition of slavery. The only people advocating that, at the time the Constitution was being drafted, were the Quakers. They were the only organised voice saying, "This document should rule out slavery". But the Constitution of America tolerated slavery. It was only the three big amendments after the Civil War that turned it into a fundamentally different document on this front.

But Lincoln elevated above the Constitution the Declaration of Independence and its wording, "All men are created equal". The Constitution of America did not say that. In doing that, he introduced a second American Revolution – the notion that America would stand for the survival of the Republican Government and the abolition, within its borders, of slavery. A revolutionary document. "All men are created equal". That wasn't in the Constitution; it was in the Declaration. Lincoln chose to elevate that thought, that notion which was not reflected in the Constitution.

Robert Bork, the conservative scholar, said in the '80s: "Equality as a national commitment has been sneaked into the Constitution". There can be little doubt about the principal culprit – Lincoln's use of the Declaration's phrase about all being equal as "an attempt to wrench from it a single proposition and make that our supreme commitment". One commentator said, 'We should not allow Lincoln, not at least without some probing inquiry, to steal the gain'", that is, to accept his interpretation of the Declaration as having this place in history and its reasoning being true, correct and binding.

"The professors, the textbooks" – this is Gary Wills' writing – "the politicians, the press, have overwhelmingly accepted Lincoln's vision." "The Gettysburg Address has become an authoritative expression of the American spirit, as authoritative as the Declaration of Self and perhaps even more influential since it determines how we read the Declaration. For most people now, the Declaration means what Lincoln told us it means, as a way of correcting the Constitution itself without overthrowing it. It is the correction of the spirit, this intellectual revolution, that makes attempts to go back beyond Lincoln to some earlier version so feckless.

"The proponents of states' rights may have arguments, but they have lost their force in Courts as well as in the popular mind. By accepting the Gettysburg Address – its concept of a single people dedicated to a proposition – we have been changed. Because of it, we live in a different America."

So that's a writer with an understanding of the profundity of these issues, and familiarity with the expectations of Americans, about the revolutionary nature of Lincoln and his daring to stamp on America's primary documents a fresh interpretation, elevating one over the other.

Who's read Gore Vidal's 'Lincoln'? You've got to read that! In every argument with an historian, Vidal has won. It's painstakingly accurate and its interpretations are wonderful. It fits into the Spielberg movie.

I had the idea that Gore Vidal was really writing what would have to have been a two-volume novel. He foreshortened it to squeeze everything in. The earliest stages of the Civil War are covered in immense detail, beginning with Lincoln arriving in his hotel in Washington and being escorted there by Elihu B. Washburn, one of his supporters in the Congress. It's got a good account of the Gettysburg speech, and I'll just read you some paragraphs from it because he dares to imagine how it might have sounded and what the atmosphere was:

Lincoln was getting sick at the time; he'd been sleeping on the train, he looked terribly ill according to John Hay, his secretary, and Lincoln captures Hay's thoughts. He thought his boss, whom he nicknamed 'the tycoon', was "like some huge effigy sitting on a horse that was too small for him" and Vidal has Hay imagining that the biggest man in the country should also be among the physically biggest, or at least tallest, of men. Seward, by contrast, looked "sublimely sloppy" at Lincoln's side – trousers pulled up to reveal thick wrinkled grey stockings – blithely indifferent to how he or anyone else looked." (All quoted from Gore?)

Earlier that morning, Nicolay – the other secretary – had gone to the house where the President spent the night and had stayed alone with him for an hour and noted that he was very sick, that he complained he felt weak. Then, of course, the speech of Everett – Gore Vidal said that as the beautiful voice of Everett went on and on, Lincoln looked over the battlefield. Trees had been smashed into matchwood by crossfire; artillery shells had ploughed up the muddy ground; here and there dead horses lay unburied as they were not yet turned to neat bones; the smell of decomposing flesh intermingled with the odour of the crowd mildly sickening.

Now, in the noonday sun of an airless sort of day, Hay began to sweat. When Everett sat down, Lincoln pulled out his sheet of paper and put on his glasses but there was a musical interval to be endured and so he put away the paper. The Baltimore Glee Club intoned a hymn especially written for the occasion and a warm breeze started up and the American flag began to snap like a whip cracking. Opposite the speaker's platform a photographer had built a small platform so his camera could be trained straight on the President as he spoke. The photographer was constantly fiddling with his paraphernalia, raising and lowering the cloth at the back and dusting the glass plates. The joke was that Lincoln's speech was over so quickly that he never got to take his photo. There was therefore no photo of the occasion.

Finally, there was silence and then they announced: "The President of the United States". Lincoln rose, paper in hand, glasses perched on his nose. He was, Hay noted, a "ghastly colour" but the hand that held the paper did not tremble, always the orator's fear.

There was a moment of warm – slightly exhausted by Everett – applause. Then the "trumpet voice sounded across the field of Gettysburg". He was, like the two Roosevelts in the next century, not a baritone but a tenor, and a high tenor, so came across as slightly high-pitched, but it had the advantage of being heard – better than Everett's voice had been heard.

Gore Vidal says it was "a trumpet voice". Lincoln's voice was "like the sound that accompanies a sudden crack of summer lightning" while Everett's had been "like some rich, deep cello".

"Four score and seven years ago" – he plunged straight into his subject and Vidal has Hay, the President's secretary, thinking, "That will please the radical Republicans who are always pressing Lincoln to go further and to abolish slavery and to move faster". And then he notices two odd things: first, the Tycoon – the President did not consult the paper in his hand, and he seemed, impossibly, to have memorised the text that had been put into its final form only an hour or so earlier; and second, he was speaking with unusual slowness. He seemed to be firing each word across the battlefield – a rifle salute to the dead.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure". Seated just to the right of Lincoln, Seward, Secretary of State, a man who thought he should have been President at the start but had been put in his place by Lincoln, began actually to start to listen. He'd heard so many thousand speeches in his life, and he himself had given so many thousands, he could seldom actually listen to any speech including his own. He also noted Lincoln's deliberateness. It was as if the President was trying to justify to the nation, and to history, and – thought Seward – to God, what he had done.

"We are met on a great battlefield of that war. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this". Lincoln was now staring out over the heads of the crowd to a hill on which a row of wooden crosses had been newly set. For an instant, the hand that held the speech dropped to his side. Then he recalled himself and glanced at the text.

"But in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract." He paused, there was a patter of applause, and then – to Seward's amazement – a shooshing sound. The audience did not want to break into the music until it was done. Seward studied the President with new, if entirely technical interest. How had he accompanied this bit of magic with his singularly unmellifluous voice and harsh mid-Western accent?

Lincoln was now staring off again dreamily, this time at the sky. The photographer was under his hood ready to take the picture. "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here". The hand with the text again fell to his side.

Hay knew that the Tycoon's eyes had turned inward. He was reading now from that marble tablet in his head. He was reading a text written in nothing less than blood. "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus so far nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave …", and at this point Hay was aware that the trumpet voice had choked and the grey eyes were suddenly aswim with uncharacteristic tears.

But the Tycoon quickly recovered himself, "… the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve…" – the voice here was now that of a cavalry bugle calling for a charge – "that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation shall…" – he paused a moment and then said, "under God…". (Seward nodded, his advice had been taken, and he whispered to Hay, "He's just added that, it's not in the text") "… shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth".

Lincoln stood a moment, looking thoughtfully at the crowd, which stared back at him, then he sat down. There was some applause. There was also laughter at the photographer, who was loudly cursing that he'd failed to get any picture at all.

Lincoln turned to Seward and murmured, "Well, that fell on them like a wet blanket!" and then he goes on to the journey home in the rail cars, with politicians crowding the car, each eager to get the President's attention, and like a man in a dream, Lincoln had gone through a lunch with Governor Curtin, followed by a reception, followed by a sermon at the Presbyterian church.

He boarded the 6.30 evening cars to Washington. My friends, that's from Gore Vidal's novel, 'Lincoln', a re-creation of the day of the speech. Earlier, I was quoting heavily from "Lincoln at Gettysburg" by Gary Wills about the weighty significance of it all.

Someone said, and it's quoted in one of the Lincoln books, "No one was ever converted from a sermon after the first 20 minutes" and there's a whole set of precedents of Lincoln loving simple language and the sleuths have charted that. Simple language deeply appealed to him, getting to the nub of the matter, but being able to pick a word that elevated himself, his words, beyond any hint of cliché.

There's a freshness about the words. As Orwell said in 'Politics and the English language', "If you think two words must be used together, you're wrong to rely on them because that's a cliché". 'Agonising reappraisal', for example, is a shocking cliché. The two words are linked together and that's a sign that it's wrong. There's no hint of cliché, of well-worn tropes, in Lincoln's language. It's fresh – 'the better angels of our nature', for example. Beat that!

So, I think we're honoured here to be able once again to recognise his distinction among political leadership. His assassination was appalling in the eyes, in the conscience and in the imaginations of everyone who believes in democracy. It's a terrible loss. "I shall let the South down softly" he said a few days before and then, without him, Reconstruction appeared to be doomed, although, even under Lincoln, that would have been a very challenging political task.

I was talking to Len about Peter's boarding house, Ford's theatre – the environment of Lincoln's murder in Washington – that's still there to be explored today. No one can walk around that without being terribly, terribly sad by the thought of this long man stretched out, his legs jutting over the end of the bed and the people around him being aware that this was a shocking tragedy, and the whole nation being gripped by panic and grief and his little son running up the street from the theatre where he'd been watching 'Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp'. He was running up the street into the White House and saying to the black attendant on duty, "They've shot my papa dead, they've shot my papa dead", because his theatre had been closed down and the audience told what had happened in Ford's theatre.

So, it's just painful to go through this and think of the aspirations of the speech which we extol

tonight. My fondness for America and its history has faded deeply and this is the only time I have returned to this history in recent years because it's devalued by this by America of today. America itself doesn't care for this. They have abandoned their history.

We're gathered here today, however, because we value those words. There is a President of the United States today who views these words with sheer contempt. He has a contempt, indeed a hatred, for the most noble parts of his country's own history. We see them as being as meaningful to us as our own nation's losses on Kokoda, on Gallipoli and on the Western Front. We know their significance for all of mankind.

The President and Vice-President of the United States today do not. They'd regard this as sloppy mush. They're trying to rewrite it, in fact, in their own muddled and vengeful way. The vengefulness of Trump! A criminal act by one Afghan means that Afghans who worked with America fighting the Taliban are going to be denied the opportunity to immigrate – just a mean-minded vengefulness that overtakes his nature and you couldn't get a more shocking contrast with the behaviour of the sixteenth President.

You're reminded of the shock that a country can devalue its own ideals, its founding notions, the greatness of its concepts and the most important of its conventions and do so with such alacrity and lack of regret. Thank you.

John then called on esteemed Life Member Len Traynor to give a vote of thanks. In it, Len referred to Bob's speech as being "absolutely brilliant". He joked that the speech was so close to the original that Bob should "avoid theatres and venues of entertainment". He spoke of the privilege of being in the audience and, on behalf of everyone, thanked Bob for a "superb" presentation.

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

---

This newsletter may include copyrighted material under the fair dealing provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*. It is a non-commercial, not-for-profit publication created for the enjoyment of our members. Content is used fairly for the purposes of criticism, review, and news reporting including historical commentary and periodical updates on past and upcoming meetings. Our aim is to educate and inform, without causing harm to rights

**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

Any members wishing to contribute should contact John Morrison on johnhmorrison@bigpond.com or 0411 197 935

## Book Raffle

**Next meeting**

**Win specialized books!**

**Bring folding money for our raffle!**