

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 note, our new website www.americancivilwar.asn.au is now up and running

A Message from the Chairman –

As publicised in the adjoining column the highlight of our year is to be the full-day conference, which this year focuses on the end of War, Lincoln's assassination and aspects of the Reconstruction Period. Your Committee has assembled a number of outstanding speakers including some high profile Civil War scholars to make the conference something that should not be missed.

The United States Consul General has agreed to open the conference and the former Premier of NSW, the Hon Bob Carr, has indicated he will be attending the conference and has indicated he wishes to join the Chapter. Whilst he will not be delivering one of the conference papers, we are hoping that Mr Carr will provide some formal input to the conference in the form of some concluding remarks.

The program for the conference has now been finalised and is enclosed with this Newsletter. Also enclosed, is the Conference Registration Form, which I encourage you to complete and send with your cheque to Brendan O'Connell ASAP. The registration fee for the conference is \$50 for ACWRTA members (any State) and \$60 for non-members. Any non-member who wishes to join our Chapter of the Round Table, however, will be entitled to membership to the Chapter until June 2007 at no extra cost. A real bargain!

Our February meeting involved a North "invasion" of the South (again!!) with the meeting being held at a restaurant in Dulwich Hill. Whilst the rations were not to expectations, but what can you expect when you have to forage for food in enemy territory, the company was good and the "booty" from our raffle, at least for the winners, was of the highest order. In this regard, I would wish to acknowledge the generosity of Jennifer Kirkby and her parents for the donation of the Dymocks' \$50 book voucher. Thanks Jen and we wish you well in the coming months as you recover from your broken leg.

I look forward to seeing you all at our April conference

Paul Kensey

Our Next Meeting

The next meeting for 2006 is our full-day conference to be held at **Gordon Club, 4th Level, Mandarin Centre Chatswood** on **Saturday, April 8**, from **9am to 5pm**. The theme of the conference is:

Appomattox and Beyond

The group of outstanding speakers, including university academics and interstate Civil War scholars, has been assembled to address our conference and you may be assured of a most informative, inspiring and exceptionally challenging set of presentations.

The cost of registration for this conference is \$50 for ACWRTA members and \$60 for non-members, although any non-member who wishes to join our Chapter of the ACWRTA will be given membership for this financial year and copies of our Newsletter for this year.

The registration fee will cover all costs associated with the conference, including a bistro lunch, tea/coffee or OJ on arrival, morning and afternoon teas and a bound copy of the conference papers.

A Registration Form is enclosed with this Newsletter and additional forms are available from our Secretary/Treasurer or Program Director. These should be completed and returned to our Secretary as soon as possible but no later than March 31.

Vale: Trevor Keighley

It is with great sadness that we report the tragic death of Trevor Keighley, one of the Chapter's newer members, who was involved in an accident in January. To Trevor's family and, his wife, Leonie, in particular, we would wish to extend our most sincere sympathy for their loss.

It Happened in March

Hatches and Dispatches

March 6, 1831 - Philip H Sheridan is born in Albany, New York;

March 22, 1817 – Braxton Bragg (CSA) is born in Warrenton, North Carolina;

March 28, 1818 – Wade Hampton (CSA) is born in Charleston South Carolina.

Command Changes

March 5, 1862 – Pierre G T Beauregard assumes command of the Confederate Army of Mississippi;

March 9, 1864 – Ulysses S Grant is named General-in-Chief of the Army of the United States;

March 11, 1862, - Lincoln removes McClellan from his command as General-in-Chief of the Union armies;

March 17, 1864 – Lieutenant General U S Grant formally assumes command of the armies of the United States.

Battles / Military Actions

March 2, 1865 - Battle of Waynesborough – the last campaign in the Shenandoah Valley;

March 7, 1862 – Battle of Pea Ridge (Elkhorn Tavern), the biggest battle west of the Mississippi;

March 9, 1862 – Ironclads *CSS Virginia* and *USS Monitor* engage at Hampton Roads, Virginia;

March 12, 1864 – Red River campaign begins under command of Nathaniel Banks (USA)

March 16, 1865 – Battle of Averasborough, N.C.

March 19, 1865 – Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina;

March 21, 1865 – Last major effort by the Confederates to Stop Sherman's march south of Bentonville, N.C.

March 23, 1862 – Jackson and Shields Clash at the Battle of Kernstown, VA;

March 25, 1865 – Grant defeats Lee at Fort Stedman, Virginia.

March 25, 1865 – Union troops begin the siege of Mobile, Alabama

March 29, 1865 – The beginning of the final Appomattox campaign;

March 30, 1864 – Confederates attack Snyder's Bluff, Mississippi.

Other Significant Events

March 4, 1861 – Lincoln is inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States;

March 4, 1861 – The “Stars and Bars” is designated as the official Confederate flag;

March 4, 1865 – Lincoln is inaugurated for a second term as President;

March 13, 1863 – Explosion at the Confederate Ordnance Laboratory in Richmond kills or injures 69 people;

March 14, 1863 – Farragut leads his Union flotilla up the Mississippi past Port Hudson, La;

March 21, 1861 – Louisiana ratifies the Confederate Constitution;

March 26, 1863 – West Virginia voters approve the gradual emancipation of slaves;

March 27, 1865 – President Lincoln meets with Grant, Sherman and Porter aboard the *River Queen* at City point, Virginia;

March 28, 1865 – Lincoln offers terms of surrender;

The Confederacy's Crippling Trio

The breakdown in relations between Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Generals Joseph E Johnston and P G T Beauregard has become legendary and some historians see in it the makings of the doom of the Confederacy. There can be no question that these commanders and their Commander-in-Chief were at such cross-purposes that it compromised their best efforts for the cause.

The problem lay not so much in events but in the personalities of the men themselves.- Beauregard the egotist; Johnston, suffering the deadly sin of pride whilst constantly fearful of taking responsibility; Davis, unable to accept any questioning or challenge to his ideas. Despite the best efforts of colleagues and friends, the three could not be “harnessed to the same wagon without thinking he ought to be the lead horse.” Interestingly, of the three, only Davis was able to rise above the pettiness and bickering, but then only occasionally.

Their problems with each other may not have doomed the cause, but it certainly crippled the hard luck Army of Tennessee, and many historians would argue that it was this Army that lost the “shooting war” for the Confederacy.

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 on 9449 3720 or at PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to bpoconn@bigpond.com

The Origin of *Taps*

Of all military bugle calls none is so easily recognised or more apt to render emotion as our *Last Post*, signifying originally to troops to 'lights out' and since 1885 is played at all military funerals to farewell to a fallen comrade. Americans have an even more haunting tune, '*Taps*,' played at all their military funerals, wreath layings and memorial services as a tribute to their fallen. Both tunes give us a lump in our throats and sometimes tears in our eyes. The story behind the tune that we now know as "*Taps*" is both interesting and clouded in controversy.

Version 1 – The Myth

The following somewhat romantic story is one that is presently circulating on the internet. It is a good story but has no basis in fact. Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia facing Confederate forces on the other side of a narrow strip of land.

During the night, Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded in "no-mans-land" between the opposing forces. Not knowing if it were a Union or Confederate soldier, Captain Ellicombe decided at the risk of his own life, to bring the stricken man back to the Union lines for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, Ellicombe reached the wounded soldier and began pulling him back towards the Union lines.

When he finally reached the Union encampment, Ellicombe discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier he had sought to save, but the soldier was dead. Captain Ellicombe lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath, his whole body numb with shock. In the dim light he saw the face of the dead soldier – it was his own son! The boy had been studying music in the South when war broke out and without telling his father, the boy had enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The next morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted. Ellicombe had asked if he could have a group of Army band members to play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. This request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. Out of respect for the father, however, they did approve his having one musician only. Ellicombe chose a bugler and asked him to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This request was granted and the haunting melody we now know as "*Taps*" that is used in all military funerals was born.

Whilst a moving story, accurate with respect to time of composition and place of origin of the bugle call, it is simply not true! Indeed, a search of the Union muster rolls finds no record of a Captain Ellicombe whatsoever. It's a pity, because it made a great story but, unfortunately, it's just a myth.

Version 2 – The Facts

The true story is that in July 1862 following the Seven Days Battles at Harrison's Landing, the wounded commander of the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division of the V Corps of the Army of the Potomac, the then Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield, collaborated with his bugler, Oliver Wilcox Norton, to re-work another bugle called the "Scott Tattoo" to create "*Taps*".

Up until the Civil War the infantry call for 'Lights Out' was set out in Silas Casey's (1801-82) Tactics having being borrowed from the French. Versions of the bugle call, Tattoo, were included in at least three military manuals authored respectively by Winfield Scott (1786-1866), Samuel Cooper (1798-1876) and William Gilham (1819?-1872) and were used by both the Union and Confederate sides of the War.

Originally, 'Tattoo' was sounded to notify soldiers to cease their evening's drinking and return to their lines and was sounded one hour before the final call of the day to extinguish all lights and fires. During the early part of the Civil War versions of 'Tattoo' were played at the conclusion of each day. Butterfield believed this regular call for 'Lights Out' was too formal to signal day's end and with the aid of his bugler (see next page) adapted the "Scott Tattoo" to create '*Taps*'. The new call was sounded that night in July 1862 for Butterfield's brigade, soon spreading to other units and formations of the Union Army and was even used by the Confederates. *Taps* was finally confirmed in orders as the official bugle call for 'Lights Out' after the War in 1867.

The 24 notes that comprise this haunting tune are:



General Butterfield, in "composing" this call and directing that it be used for "*Taps*" in his brigade, could not have foreseen its popularity and the use for another purpose into which it would grow.

There are no official words to '*Taps*' although there are many versions that have been written, some more popular than others. In the next edition of this Newsletter some of the more popular verses to the tune will be presented.

Today, whenever a man is buried with military honours anywhere in the United States, the ceremony is concluded by firing three volleys of musketry over the grave, and sounding with the trumpet or bugle "Put out the lights. Go to sleep"...There is something singularly beautiful and appropriate in the music of this wonderful call. Its strains are melancholy, yet full of rest and peace. Its echoes linger in the heart long after its tones have ceased to vibrate in the air."

Taps - Out of the Horses' Mouths:

The interesting account of how Butterfield composed the call surfaced in 1898 following a magazine article written that summer. The August, 1898, issue of *Century Magazine* contained an article called *The Trumpet in Camp and Battle*, by Gustav Kobbe, a music historian and critic. He was writing about the origin of bugle calls in the Civil War and in reference to Taps, wrote:

"In speaking of our trumpet calls I purposely omitted one with which it seemed most appropriate to close this article, for it is the call which closes the soldier's day ... Lights Out. I have not been able to trace this call to any other service. If it seems probable, it was original with Major Seymour, he has given our army the most beautiful of all trumpet-calls."

Kobbe was using as an authority the Army Drill Manual on Infantry Tactics prepared by Major General Emory Upton in 1867 (and revised in 1874). The bugle calls in this manual were compiled by Major (later General) Truman Seymour of the 5th U.S. Artillery. 'Taps' was called 'Extinguish Lights' in these manuals since it was to replace the 'Lights Out' call disliked by Butterfield. The title of the call was not changed until later, although other manuals started calling it 'Taps' because most soldiers knew it by that name. Since Seymour was responsible for the music in the Army manual, Kobbe assumed, albeit incorrectly, that he had written the call.

Kobbe's inability to find the origin of 'Extinguish Lights' (Taps) prompted a letter from Oliver W. Norton in Chicago who claimed he knew how the call came about and that he was the first to perform it.

"Chicago, August 8, 1898

I was much interested in reading the article by Mr. Gustav Kobbe, on the Trumpet and Bugle Calls, in the August Century. Mr. Kobbe says that he has been unable to trace the origin of the call now used for Taps, or the Go to sleep, as it is generally called by the soldiers. As I am unable to give the origin of this call, I think the following statement may be of interest to Mr. Kobbe and your readers. During the early part of the Civil War I was bugler at the Headquarters of Butterfield's Brigade, Morell's Division, Fitz-John Porter's Corps, Army of the Potomac. Up to July, 1862, the Infantry call for Taps was that set down in Casey's Tactics, which Mr. Kobbe says was borrowed from the French. One day, soon after the seven days battles on the Peninsular, when the Army of the Potomac was lying in camp at Harrison's Landing, General Daniel Butterfield, then commanding our Brigade, sent for me, and showing me some notes on a staff written in pencil on the back of an envelope, asked me to sound them on my bugle. I did this several times, playing the music as written. He changed it somewhat, lengthening some notes and shortening others, but retaining the melody as he first gave it to me. After getting it to his satisfaction, he directed me to sound that call for Taps thereafter in place of the regulation call.

The music was beautiful on that still summer night, and was heard far beyond the limits of our Brigade. The next day I was visited by several buglers from neighboring (sic) Brigades, asking for copies of the music which I gladly furnished. I think no general order was issued from army headquarters authorizing the substitution of this for the regulation call, but as each brigade commander exercised his own discretion in such minor matters, the call was gradually taken up through the Army of the Potomac. I have been told that it was carried to the Western Armies by the 11th and 12th Corps, when they went to Chattanooga in the fall of 1863, and rapidly made its way through those armies. I did not presume to question General Butterfield at the time, but from the manner in which the call was given to me, I have no doubt he composed it in his tent at Harrison's Landing. I think General Butterfield is living at Cold Spring, New York. If you think the matter of sufficient interest, and care to write him on the subject, I have no doubt he will confirm my statement. - Oliver W. Norton"

The editor did write to Butterfield as suggested by Norton. In answer to the inquiry from the editor of the *Century*, General Butterfield writing from Gragside, Cold Spring, under the date of August 31, 1898, wrote:

"I recall, in my dim memory, the substantial truth of the statement made by Norton, of the 83rd Pa., about bugle calls. His letter gives the impression that I personally wrote the notes for the call. The facts are, that at the time I could sound calls on the bugle as a necessary part of military knowledge and instruction for an officer commanding a regiment or brigade. I had acquired this as a regimental commander. I had composed a call for my brigade, to precede any calls, indicating that such were calls, or orders, for my brigade alone. This was of very great use and effect on the march and in battle. It enabled me to cause my whole command, at times, in march, covering over a mile on the road, all to halt instantly, and lie down, and all arise and start at the same moment; to forward in line of battle, simultaneously, in action and charge etc. It saves fatigue. The men rather liked their call, and began to sing my name to it. It was three notes and a catch. I can not write a note of music, but have gotten my wife to write it from my whistling it to her, and enclose it. The men would sing, Dan, Dan, Dan, Butterfield, Butterfield to the notes when a call came. Later, in battle, or in some trying circumstances or an advance of difficulties, they sometimes sang, Damn, Damn, Damn, Butterfield, Butterfield.

The call of Taps did not seem to be as smooth, melodious and musical as it should be, and I called in some one who could write music, and practiced a change in the call of Taps until I had it suit my ear, and then, as Norton writes, got it to my taste without being able to write music or knowing the technical name of any note, but, simply by ear, arranged it as Norton describes. I did not recall him in connection with it, but his story is substantially correct. Will you do me the favor (sic) to send Norton a copy of this letter by your typewriter? I have none. - Daniel Butterfield"