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The A.C.W.S. NEWSLETTER

2018 1st Edition



Stratford Armouries

ACWS is a Member of NAReS

N·A·Re·S

Issue 188

A.C.W.S. CONTACTS

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Mr Ian Morris, Treasurer

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Miss Claire Morris, Membership

Mr Martin Cross, Health & Safety

Mrs Val Holt, Communications

Mr Mike Bussey, Webmaster

Mr Tim Davies, Federal Commander

Mr Glenn Gibson, Confederate Commander

Mrs Viv Corbishley, Without Portfolio

Chairman's Report

Dear Members,

I must start this newsletter with an apology, some thank you's and an appeal.

First my apology for being absent from the society during the last year which was for reasons we don't need to go into here. It was a great comfort to receive so many words of support at that time.

Second thank you to Major Tim Davies who stepped up to the mark and took over the running of the society during the last year, you did a great job Tim thank you.

Thanks to Linda who finally talked me round to coming back and thanks to you and to the members who voted me back.

Now for the appeals.....

You may well have heard by now that your events director Pete Holt and communication Director Val Holt are to stand down from these positions at the end of the year I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for all their hard work and dedication to the society over the years.

This will of course leave us with two vacant posts on the board.

If you think you would like to take on either of these positions please let your secretary Linda Reed know asap so you can be put forward at the AGM.

My second appeal is for an additional commentator to help out Christian at events. Christian does a fantastic job but it would be nice for him to have an assistant to help out and share the load, so if you feel you would like to have a go please contact Christian.

As you have probably heard the board of directors took the decision not to attend Kelham Hall this year and your secretary will explain the reason behind this decision further in her report, but on the plus side we have had two invites from SOSKAN and I hope you can attend one or both of these events and help to build a happy and helpful relationship between the two societies.

There are plenty of events this year both large and small so hopefully you can get along to some of them, I know your events team are working hard to secure events for next year and for this I thank them. Well that's enough of my ramblings for now I hope to see you all soon on the field.

And remember it's your society only you can make it a success.

Mick

Chairman

Canadian Fisherman's Strange Catch

Whilst a Canadian trawler was deep out in the freezing Atlantic fishing for the elusive and endangered cod in 2012, the net came up with a slightly rarer catch namely an old wooden crate containing heavily encrusted contents which were all solidly concreted into one totally unrecognisable mass. The trawler delivered the crate back to Canada where the Fisheries handed it over to the Archaeology Department of the Memorial University at St Johns Newfoundland to work on and discover its content and possible history. What has just emerged several years later in December 2017 is that the crate contained 20 Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifled muskets destined for the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. This article is about the amazing discovery of both this cache of arms and 2 other similar caches of arms destined for the Confederate Army from the United Kingdom and lost during their respective shipments. These caches are the only 3 remaining examples left in the world so all 3 are being painstakingly preserved due to their historical significance. With regards the most recent find, the future of this crate of rifled muskets that have spent over 150 years at the bottom of the Atlantic now looks much brighter after specialist conservation work by the Archaeology Department of the Memorial University in St Johns Newfoundland. The crate and rifles were brought to the surface by the Newfoundland Lynx, a 222 foot stern trawler, operating on the infamous Grand Banks fishing grounds. Once the heavily sea encrusted crate was brought ashore, the fishing authorities initially passed the crate onto the Provincial Museum in St Johns but the task of actually saving the crate and its contents exposed to the air for the first time proved far too daunting and it was then that the Memorial Museum of Newfoundland became involved. The archaeologists explained that the process to stabilise both the crate and the rifles would take many years of specialist treatment in a purpose designed tank as the wood of the crate had totally fused with the components of the rifles. The chemical solution in the tank included both a bulking agent and a corrosion inhibitor and the process involved raising and lowering

the crate and rifles with a chain and hoist several times every year. Overall, the heavily concreted and silt filled crate of rifles was about 5 feet long and weighed approximately 600 pounds. Following this long drawn out conservation and the removal of over 300 pounds of silt, what has just been revealed is a remarkably intact case of P53 Enfields. Although the seawater has taken its toll on the Enfields, all the brass furniture, brass butt plates and the wooden walnut stocks are in remarkably good condition. This is vitally important as the archaeologists can now work out the actual serial numbers, when they were actually made as well as the intended destination. In addition, it would appear that the crate itself was lined with lead or a lead alloy which may have been for used for making musket balls. Regardless of the progress made, the soaking process still has a long way to go. Civil War historians believe that the cargo found by the Canadian fishermen was most likely dumped by a Confederate blockade runner just before being boarded by the Union Navy. This is not the only cache of arms that has been recovered from the sea. In the 1980's, a similar crate of 20 P53 Enfields was pulled up off Georgia by an archaeological diver from the Confederate blockade runner, the CSS Stono. These rifles have been undergoing conservation since then and are currently on view at Sweetwater Creek State Park. The CSS Stono ran aground in 1863 on a sandbar off Fort Moultrie as she attempted to evade Federal ships. Most of the contents and arms were recovered by the Confederates but the crate of Enfield muskets could not be salvaged as they were below the waterline. In 1865, the stuck CSS Stono was burnt by the Confederates to prevent it falling into Federal hands. After over 150 years, the crate of Enfields was eventually recovered and are now in the hands of conservators and archaeologists. They are currently in a large aquarium of filtered freshwater that is drawing off the salt and other contaminants. Although the iron rifle barrels, locks and bayonets are heavily deteriorated, the walnut stocks, brass components, butt plates, trigger guards and nose caps are in superb condition. Researchers have also recently discovered a bullet mold, tools, tampions, and cork/brass plugs in the muzzles to ward off

moisture. At least one of the weapons bears the mark "T. Turner", a reference to a well known English Gun Maker Thomas Turner who turned out quality weapons in the mid 19th century. Researchers have discovered that these weapons were extremely well made and well protected. The crate would appear to have a metal lining to seal the cargo from salt air and ensure they were not tampered with. Inside, the weapons were placed in an alternating butt to muzzle pattern and wooden blocks were used to prevent them from shifting or moving during transit. Another cache of Enfields was salvaged from the Confederate blockade runner Modern Greece which ran aground near Fort Fisher outside Wilmington, North Carolina. In this crate, the P53 Enfields were packed 8 across and 3 deep numbering 24 muskets per crate. In this crate only the leather slings with rectangle buckles were present. The crates were lined with either lead or zinc/tin sheets for added protection. Interestingly, the crate from the Modern Greece still has markings from the Confederate Forwarding Agents which was common practice at the time. Additional items of interest were also discovered from both the Modern Greece and the Stono. These included Percussion Cap Wooden Cases which would appear to have contained caps in semi circular clusters and they would appear to have been packed around saw dust. Each wooden packing case held about 60,000 – 75,000 caps each. In addition, there were Enfield Lead Bullet Cases. These wooden containers held approximately 100 bullets and they were packed tightly from nose to end with wooden base plugs. They were not packed as cartridges as has long been believed. The Confederates were heavily dependent on imported weapons and goods during the Civil War. These P53 Enfields which were made for the British Army were an important technological advance from the smoothbore to the rifled musket. The Enfield P53 was the standard long arm of the British Army for 2 decades seeing service in the Crimean War, the New Zealand Land Wars and the Sepoy Mutinies. Firing a . 577 caliber ball or bullet from a 29 inch long .58 caliber barrel, it could make aimed shots out to 500 yards in the hands of a skilled marksman. The barrel was held to the wooden stock by 3 metal bands which led to the rifle

being described as a “ 3 band Enfield”. These P53 Enfields were very popular with the Confederate troops and it is estimated that over 900,000 were imported to the CSA from the UK and they saw action in every major battle from Shiloh in 1862 to the end of the Civil War in 1865. Overall, the preservation of these 3 crates will continue to provide vital and invaluable information to historians and archaeologists about the importation and transportation of these arms to the Confederate armies from the UK throughout the Civil War.

Sources: Civil War Talk, Wikipedia, various Internet Sources, Sons of Confederate Veterans, South Carolina Division, British Militaria Forums.

Article by Stewart “Goober” Douglas, 43rd NCV.

Secretary’s Report

Hi y’all,

Well, here we are in 2018 and looking forward to another cracking re-enacting season. I hope you all had the most wonderful Christmas and New Year with your families and friends.

It is that time of year to drag your kit out of the unknown and dust it off ready for the upcoming season! I know some have already, what with the many regimentals that have been held so far this year. I also believe that some infantrymen will have to perform your FSPC’s again as the three years is up!

As you will probably already know the communications broke down with Kelham Hall.

The Board of Directors all work tirelessly behind the scenes and always put the society and its membership first. It was with this in mind why we cancelled any forthcoming events with Kelham.

What with the enforcement of excessive parking charges for any of us to attend (up to £12 for the weekend) we had to make a very difficult decision.

The good news is the relationship we now have with SoSkAn is brilliant. With ourselves being invited to some of their events and vice versa. If you would like to attend any of the SoSkAn events please do not forget to register (the forms are on the ACWS events page).

I would like to congratulate and thank Roger Willison-Gray who has kindly offered to become our "Data Protection Officer". This is a non director role but will help us tremendously with new laws that come into effect in May 2018.

We also had some sad news that Val and Pete Holt will be retiring from the Board at the end of the year, they have both done a brilliant job for many years and for this I have personally thanked them both.

So the hunt is on for the positions of Events and Communications..... Interested? I am always available for a confidential chat if needs be.

Take care now y'all

Linda Reed



EVENTS REPORT

June 16-17 SEDGEFIELD, CO DURHAM Full Society Event

Full society event at Frontline Sedgefield held at Hardwick Hall East Park, Sedgefield, Co Durham, TS21 2DN. Members camping from Thursday to Monday morning, shared Family Camp. Infantry only. Living History and small Infantry skirmish on SATURDAY & SUNDAY.

June 23-24 BLOXHAM, OXFORDSHIRE Full Society Event

Full Society event at 50th Anniversary Banbury Steam Fair, held at Smiths Field, Milton Road, Bloxham, Banbury Oxfordshire,

OX15 4HD. Members camping from Friday afternoon to Monday morning shared Family Camp Infantry, Artillery & (self-funding) Cavalry Living History plus infantry and artillery skirmish on SATURDAY & SUNDAY. The ACWS Directors have decided to make this a "No Registration Fee Event", but members must still register for insurance purposes, and note this is still a Full Society Event.

June 30 GAINSBOROUGH, LINCS Armed Forces Day Small Society Event

Small society event at Gainsborough Armed Forces Day at Middlefield Lane, Gainsborough, Lincs DN21 1UU

A fun day for all the family with the opportunity to meet serving personnel and veterans. There will be military charities, military vehicles and displays, Cadet forces, and numerous other attractions

Final details to be arranged.

August 11-12 SPETCHLEY Full Society Event

M5 Multi-period event at Spetchley Park Gardens, Spetchley, Worcester, WR5 1RS, organised by the Worcester Re-enactors. Members camping from Friday afternoon to Monday morning, shared family camp. Full society event. Unfortunately, there are NO DOGS ALLOWED at this event. Living History, Infantry, Artillery & (self-funding) Cavalry. SoSkAn have been invited to join us. Living History and Skirmish on SATURDAY & SUNDAY.

August 18-19 LINCOLN CASTLE

Small Society Event American themed event at Lincoln Castle, Castle Hill, Lincoln, LN1 3AA, based on Buffalo Bill's visit to Lincoln.

ACWS will be providing Living History, firing demonstrations and kid's drill on SATURDAY & SUNDAY.

Members authentic camping in the castle grounds from Friday 5pm to Sunday. There is no car parking space within the castle, members will need to enter the castle, drop off and set up, then move their cars. Car parking is at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life which is less than two minutes walk from the castle. It has CCTV and there will be someone on site to help with the parking. Further details will be supplied plus map showing where to enter the castle and where the car parking is.

Unfortunately, there is NO space for non-authentic camping. Living History, Kid's Drill, Firing Display and short skirmish on SATURDAY & SUNDAY.

December 1st ACWS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2018 ACWS Annual General Meeting is to be held at The Rubery & Rednal Royal British Legion Club, 64 New Road, Rubery, Birmingham, B45 9HY.

ACWS Events Calendar 2019

August 24-25 TILSTON, CHESHIRE Full Society Event

Full Society event at Tilston Wakes Country Fair The Playing Field, Church Road, Tilston, Malpass, Cheshire, SY14 7HB.

Members camping from Friday afternoon to Monday morning.

On SATURDAY, a parade followed by a firing display of infantry and artillery on the event field & Living History.

On SUNDAY, the show will open with a cannon round, during the afternoon a firing display, kids drill finishing with a short skirmish in the arena.

Note the event is only on SATURDAY & SUNDAY of this Bank Holiday.

ACWS at Stratford Armouries

On the hottest ever recorded Early May Bank Holiday weekend of 5th, 6th and 7th May 2018, the ACWS travelled to Stratford Armouries, Warwickshire for a joint Civil War event with Soskan. Stratford Armouries is a beautiful location set in 86 acres of rolling Warwickshire countryside. As such, there was plenty of space for camping and battling. Stratford Armouries itself is a fascinating building and a truly unique museum and well worth a long look around. It comprises of 4 main galleries and a conference space. These galleries include a number of world class exhibits including 2 life size Armoured Horses, the worlds oldest Breech Loading cannon, Leonardo Di Vinci's Giant Crossbow, Lawrence of Arabia's Jade Dagger and many beautiful artefacts from Shakespeare's birth place. In fact, Shakespeare's birthplace and the centre of Stratford were just 3 miles away which a number of re-enactors decided to visit in their spare time. In addition, there was some interesting memorabilia from 16th and 17th century, the English Civil War, the 1st and 2nd World Wars and a wide selection of various firearms from throughout the ages. More recently, the Museum has become the new home to the Wellington Aviation Collection as well as the National Collection of the British Model Soldier Society. As well as all these exhibits, there was an adjoining restaurant serving excellent hot and cold food.

The scenario for the weekend was the Battle of Malvern Hill, also known as the Battle of Poindexter's Farm, which was fought on 1st July 1862 between the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia commanded by General Robert E Lee and the Union Army of the Potomac under Major General George B McCellan. It was the final battle of the Seven Days battles and took place on an 130 foot elevation of land known as Malvern Hill near the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. More than 50,000 troops from both sides took part in this sanguinary encounter as well as more than 200 pieces of artillery and 3 warships. The encounter began when the Union 5th Corps under Brigadier General Fitz John Porter took up a defensive position on the ridge on June 30th 1862 as the Union army retreated

to the James river. It was a superb defensive location as the gentle slant meant that any assailing army would not have any cover and any artillery placed on the hill would have an open and clear field of fire. As the Confederates approached, they were severely hampered by poor guides and faulty maps. Confederate Generals John Magruder was too late, Benjamin Huger was too cautious and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson had problems collecting his artillery. The battle had 3 phases namely an initial artillery exchange, a minor Confederate assault by Confederate General Lewis Armistead and finally 3 massive and successive waves of Confederate infantry assaults which were easily repulsed at great cost by the well positioned Union artillery and infantry.

When Union General Fitz John Porter took control of Malvern Hill on 30th June 1862, he had the invaluable assistance of the skilled Union chief of Artillery, Colonel Henry Hunt who immediately placed 171 guns on the hill itself and 91 more in immediate reserve to the south. These included field artillery, heavy artillery, Rodman guns and Parrott rifles. The artillery was supported by nearly 20,000 Union troops who filed into the battle line as soon as they arrived. Overall Union commander, General George B. McCellan left this line in place before travelling downstream aboard the USS Galena to inspect his armies future retreating resting place at Harrisons Landing. As such, it was General Fitz John Porter who became the de facto leader of the Union forces at Malvern Hill.

With around 55,000 soldiers, the Army of Northern Virginia was about evenly matched with the Federal Army but with Confederate General Robert E Lee at the helm it was considerably more aggressive. He wanted a final and decisive assault to effectively smash and scatter the Union forces. He had already seen for himself the hundreds of Union deserters and stragglers as well as discarded and abandoned commissary stores, wagons and arms to conclude that the Army of the Potomac was a spent and demoralised force.

On the morning of battle namely July 1st 1862, General Lee met with his Confederate Generals namely James Longstreet, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, A.P Hill, D.H Hill and John Magruder.

Stratford Armouries



Stratford Armouries



Stratford Armouries



Morley



After reconnaissance, D.H Hill initially opposed any assault stating "If General McCellan is there in strength, we had better leave him alone". James Longstreet laughed off his objections by stating "Don't get so scared now that we've got him (McCellan) whipped!". As such, General Lee chose the commands of D.H Hill, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and John Magruder to lead the Confederate offensive. Both James Longstreet's and A.P Hills divisions were held in reserve due to their heavy losses at the previous Battle of Glendale.

As a precursor to the massive Confederate assault, Lee and Longstreet planned to rake and weaken the Federal line by organising a converging artillery crossfire barrage from both the left and right hand sides of Malvern Hill. In essence, this Confederate artillery barrage was a total failure due to a lack of co-ordination and far more effective counter artillery barrages by the Union artillery. This exchange lasted for about an hour before Confederate Brigadier General Lewis Armistead launched an initial assault against encroaching Union skirmishers. Due to further miscommunication, this was followed up by Confederate General John Magruder attacking with his whole force of 5,000 troops. This was effectively repulsed before Confederate General D.H Hill attacked with his 5 brigades of 8,500 men and although they nearly made it to the Union artillery line "were mown down in their fifties". Finally, Confederate John Magruder, not deterred by his previous failures, hurled more units piecemeal into the assault. These included divisional reinforcements from Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson but again these were repulsed amidst great slaughter. The following day, the Union army retreated and the Peninsula Campaign was over. The cost was enormous at Malvern Hill. The Federals suffered 3,000 casualties and the Confederates suffered 5,650 casualties. Both Washington and Richmond set up new hospitals to cater for the overwhelming number of casualties. Graves could not be dug quick enough.

The Battle of Malvern Hill was a resounding Union tactical victory mainly due to the chief Union artillerist, Colonel Henry Hunt and the lack of co-ordination and planning in the Confederate assaults. Paradoxically, Confederate General Robert E Lee was lionized as a

national hero whilst Union General George McCellan's reputation was tarnished as a result of the failure and eventual retreat of the Union army during the Peninsula Campaign.

As such, with this historical background in mind, the main scenario for the Bank Holiday weekend was the 3 main assaults by the Confederate troops on the Union artillery on Malvern Hill. The long gradual gradient of the field at Stratford Armouries made it a perfect representation of the actual ground at Malvern Hill itself. To everyone's credit, the commendable numbers of both Union and Confederate re-enactors who attended the event made it possible to launch these successive waves with 3 full companies and thereby made it possible to attack in both a full battle line as well as columns which replicated some of the actual assaults made. Due to the eagerness of all the re-enactors present, the weekend began with a small skirmish on the Saturday. This involved 2 Confederate regiments namely the Confederate Greys and the Louisiana Tigers making a surprise attack on a Union cannon which was well guarded by Union troops. Despite the initial success and taking out the Union cannon crew, the Confederates were eventually pushed back but this was a well enjoyed prelude to the 2 main battles on the Sunday and Monday. On the Sunday, from the bottom of the long field, the Confederates made 4 determined assaults on the long line of Union cannon situated at the crest. The first assault was made by a long single line made up of 3 Confederate regiments including the Louisiana Tigers, a Georgia regiment and the Confederate Greys. After being repulsed, the second assault involved the 3 regiments attacking head on in columns. Again, it was repulsed with heavy losses. The third assault involved the 3 regiments attacking via the flanks. Finally, the last assault involved attacking again in columns but the 1st and 2nd columns being totally wiped out and the 3rd column namely the Louisiana Tigers running over all their dead Confederate comrades and just about reaching the barrels of the Union cannon with their bowie knives drawn before all being slaughtered. All these attacks were made with sustained Confederate losses and full credit must go to the Confederates who played their part well as well as the Union artillery pieces which were clearly all well crewed and fired repeatedly throughout. On the Monday, but with slightly fewer

numbers, the Confederates still repeated these scenarios but this was counter balanced with lots more movement by the 3 Confederate regiments across the whole field as well as a Union regiment attacking from the flank rather than the front which had occurred on the Sunday. Both these re-enactments were really well planned and executed and were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who took part and all the public who witnessed them. I do not mention names but special credit must go those Federals who galvanised as a Confederate Georgia regiment. They were superb throughout and I loved the southern drawl of their officer giving orders before entering the fray. In addition, further special credit must go to all those Federal re-enactors who trained up to man the 6/7 cannon used. They were also superb and the sight of all those cannon firing in action was awesome. These scenarios took place on one of the hottest weekends of the year so again credit to everyone who took part, kept safe and made it such a special and memorable re-enactment.

Partly due to the excellent weather and as well as a cracking turnout, there was always go to be excellent social highlights and both the Confederate and Union camps had fine night time parties with lots of singing, comradeship and partying. It was particularly pleasing to see everyone renewing the friendships made after the Alamo and International Events of 2017. Long may this continue and develop.

Other interesting displays were the Union and Confederate Surgeons/Medical displays and there was also a blanket sale which included a very diverse collection of Civil War buttons for sale at very cheap prices.

The ACWS next travel to the Moira Canal Festival on the 19th and 20th May 2018 and the following week are participating at the 3 day Soskan Campaign Event at Watford on 26th, 27th and 28th May 2018.

Article by Stewart "Goober" Douglas, 43rd North Carolina Troops

The “Great Beefsteak Raid” – 14th – 17th September, 1864.

The “Great Beefsteak Raid” was a Confederate cavalry raid that took place in Prince George County, Virginia between 14th and 17th September 1864 as part of the siege of Petersburg during the American Civil War. Confederate Major General Wade Hampton led a force of 4,500 Confederate troopers on what was to become a 100 mile ride to acquire cattle that were intended for consumption by the Union Army which was lying siege to both Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia at the time. This is the amazing story of one of the greatest cavalry raids of the American Civil War.

By September 1864, the Union siege of Petersburg was entering its third month. Always lacking in supplies, the Confederate forces defending both Petersburg as well as Richmond, Virginia in 1864 were beginning to run out of food. A report by Confederate General Robert E Lee on 22nd August 1864 stated that the corn necessary to feed his starving troops was fully exhausted. In addition, the Union Army of the Potomac was tightening the noose around the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia by cutting all the road and rail supply lines from the South. Nevertheless, south of Petersburg and away from the main battle lines, the country was the setting for ugly guerrilla warfare. Confederate cavalry ranged deep behind the lines regularly raiding isolated Federal outposts and rebel scouts and spies roamed the land gaining invaluable information and looking for weaknesses. It was during this time that one of these sources of information, a Confederate scout called Sergeant George D. Shadburne of the Jeff Davis Legion submitted a very detailed and thorough report on the Union defences east of Petersburg as far as Coggins Point on the James river on September 5th 1864. He also informed the recipient of his report, Confederate General Wade Hampton that there were 3,000 lightly defended cattle behind Union lines at fire eater Edmund Ruffins plantation on Coggins Point, only 5 miles away from Union General Ulysses S Grants Headquarters. He also stated that the

cattle were in a corral and only protected by 120 Union soldiers and 30 unarmed civilians. However, in reality, there were more but the herd was still poorly protected by about 250 men of the 1st District of Columbia Cavalry and a small detachment of about 150 men from the 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Confederate General Wade Hampton had only recently taken over full control of the Confederate cavalry after Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart's death at Yellow Tavern in May 1864. The latter's fondness for riding behind and around Union lines would appear to have rubbed off on Hampton as he immediately started making plans to relieve the Union of their numerous unguarded cattle.

Therefore, following a consultation with Confederate General Robert E. Lee and gaining his tacit approval, Confederate General Wade Hampton organised an overall force of over 4,500 Confederate troopers for the expedition. The force consisted of a 2 brigade cavalry division led by Major General H.F. "Rooney" Lee. This included Barringer's brigade of North Carolinians and Lucius Davis brigade of Virginians. In addition, there were 2 independent cavalry brigades led by Rosser and Dearing and 100 hand-picked cavalry troopers from Youngs and Dunovants brigades led by Lt Col Miller of the 6th South Carolina Cavalry. This force also purposefully included "several certified Texas cattle thieves". The dates of 14th -17th September 1864 were specifically chosen by the Confederates as it was well known that US General Ulysses Grant was visiting General Sheridan who still had control of most of the US cavalry in the Shenandoah Valley at that time. On September 14th 1864, the Confederates headed to the south of Petersburg and the Union trenches in order to eventually turn north behind the Union lines. On this first day, they travelled along the Boydton Plank Road and bivouacked at Wilkinson's Bridge on Rowanty Creek. Leaving early on the morning of September 15th, Confederate General Wade Hampton chose to cross the Blackwater River at Cooke's Bridge. This was key to the success of the operation as this had been previously destroyed by Union forces and would therefore be a totally unexpected crossing point. He had earlier sent some hand-picked Confederate "mounted

engineers" to reconstruct the bridge for the crossing and as it was being repaired, his Confederate troopers rested and watered their mounts. On the very early morning of September 16th, Hampton succeeded in arriving 10 miles off Coggins Point totally undetected and immediately divided his command into 3 separate parts for the attack. The smallest part namely Dearing's brigade would take up a blocking position to the East to guard against any Yankee interference from that direction. The largest part namely WH Rooneys division would scatter the Yankees around nearby Prince Georges Court House and guard against any Yankee interference from the West as this was the nearest to the main Union lines at Petersburg. Finally, the last column namely Rossers brigade and the 100 hundred hand picked troops would strike in the centre directly north, overrun the 1st District Of Columbia cavalry and capture the whole herd. By 5.00am on September 16th, all the 3 Confederate columns were in position and the attack commenced. Rosser hit first and after a spirited defence drove off the Union cavalry guards and liberated the cattle. Both Rooney Lee's division on the left and Dearing's brigade on the right took their blocking positions successfully thereby also ensuring the cattle were successfully hemmed in. After 3 hours, all 3 columns broke off their attacks and left with 2,486 cattle, 11 supply wagons and 304 Union prisoners. All the cattle were quickly rounded by the additional use of a large number of shepherd dogs that had been brought along by the Confederates to help with the herding. Hampton returned back to Cookes Bridge on the Blackwater river and successfully re-crossed. A Federal force of 2,100 troopers under Brigadier General Henry Davies Junior lay ahead but were easily held off by Rossers Confederate brigade that had been immediately sent northward after the raid to scout ahead. The Federals were then dispersed before Hampton arrived with all the 2, 486 cattle, wagons and prisoners to the Confederate lines the next day on 17th September. The total losses for the Confederates were 10 killed, 47 wounded and 4 missing. In his after action report, Hampton wrote " the command returned to their old quarters after an absence of 3 days, during which they

had marched upward of 100 miles, defeating the enemy in 2 fights, and bringing from his lines in safety a large amount of captured property, together with 304 prisoners. Of the 2,486 cattle captured 2,468 have been brought in, and I hope to get the few remaining ones. 3 guidons were taken and 11 wagons brought in safely, several others having been destroyed. 3 camps of the enemy were burned, after securing from them some very valuable stores, including quite a number of blankets. My loss was 10 killed, 47 wounded and 4 missing".

Despite the raids success, its strategic impact was not as great as the sheer amount of cattle taken would indicate. For whereas the Union could easily replace the cattle, the Confederates lacked the corn and grain to actually sustain and feed them. As a result, the majority were quickly slaughtered and eaten by the starving Confederate troops in the trenches. For many days afterwards, the Confederates would taunt the Union soldiers opposite thanking them for their dinner and inviting them to come on over to share their spoils. There was so much fresh beef available that even unauthorised exchanges were made with Union soldiers for luxury items the Confederates were unable to acquire. Eventually, as the beef was consumed or became spoiled, the Confederates were forced to return to their meagre and dire food situation.

Union President Abraham Lincoln called the Great Beefsteak Raid "the slickest piece of cattle stealing" he ever heard of. Confederate General Robert E Lee's adjutant, Lt Col. Walter Taylor, said the raid made up for the disruption of Confederate supply lines caused by the recent loss of the vital Weldon Railroad to Union forces. Union General Ulysses Grant was more circumspect. On being asked a few days later by a press reporter when he thought he would actually take Petersburg, he brusquely replied "Never, if our armies continue to supply him with beef cattle!" The "Great Beefsteak Raid" was undoubtedly one of the greatest cavalry raids of the Civil War. At a cost of 60 men, Hampton had secured nearly 2,500 beef cattle for Lee's nearly starving troops, totally embarrassed the Union high command, captured 100s of Federal troops and secured much needed arms and supplies including 100's of Henry Repeating rifles which had recently been

issued to the 1st District of Columbia Cavalry. The latter were coveted weapons seen as trophies by the victorious Confederates and Hampton himself took possession of one on which he scratched his name on the brass receiver as a memento of his achievement. Although one of the greatest raids of the Civil War, it would also prove to be one of the last hurrahs for the proud Army of Northern Virginia.

Article by Stewart “Goober” Douglas, 43rd North Carolina Volunteers

Goobers Notes:

- 1) The 1966 film Alvarez Kelly starring Richard Widmark portrays a fictionalised depiction of this event.
- 2) The Prince George County Historical Society has commemorated the raid every year with a massive steak dinner each September.

Sources: Wikipedia; The Beefsteak Raid, Petersburg Campaign;

My Apologies

Hi All,

It seems ages since I wrote in the newsletter and I think I owe you all an apology for the lateness of this newsletter.

My time has been taken up with a series of chest infections and other ailments and I have undergone a few tests and scans. Thankfully they have all come back with negative results with the exception of very low Vitamin D deficiency, which the doctor has prescribed a course of tablets. So hopefully things will pick up for me now. Having said that my body has to adjust to having Vitamin D again and I am getting all the side effects, the latest being muscle spasms in my back which has inhibited me from sitting at my computer for long periods of time, hence the lateness of this edition and I hope you will forgive me.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the field very soon.

Val Holt Communications Director

First Shots: Stephen Rowan and the Fall of Fort Sumter

On the 4th April 1861 Commander Stephen C. Rowan received the following orders from Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy. *'Sir: You will proceed immediately with the U.S. Steam sloop Pawnee to the navy yard at Norfolk, for the purpose of receiving a month's supply of provisions. The commandant of the yard there will be directed to have them ready to be put on board immediately on her arrival.'* The instruction was the result of an order from none other than the new President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. Rowan may not have known it at the time, but he was about to bear witness to one of the most momentous events in American history. Stephen Rowan was born in Dublin in 1808, emigrating to the United States with his father a few years later. He joined the navy in 1826 as a Midshipman, and served in the Pacific and Mediterranean prior to the Mexican War, where he commanded one of the naval battalions in California (1). Now, as the Commander of the *Pawnee*, he complied promptly with Gideon Welles' instructions. The following day, 5th April, saw another dispatch to Rowan from the Secretary of the Navy. *'Sir: After the Pawnee has been provisioned at Norfolk you will proceed with her to sea and on the morning of the 11th instant appear off Charleston bar, 10 miles distant from and due east of the light-house, where you will report to Captain Samuel Mercer, of the Powhatan, for special service. Should he not be there, you will await his arrival.'* On 10th April Rowan was able to report to Welles from off Cape Henry, informing the Secretary that he was at sea having been delayed somewhat by an easterly gale. The *Pawnee* was one of a number of ships that was steaming towards a location that was soon to achieve worldwide fame- Fort Sumter, South Carolina. The southern state had been the first to secede from the Union following the election of Lincoln, doing so on the 20th December 1860. Soon afterwards U.S. army Major Robert Anderson withdrew the men he commanded in Charleston to Fort Sumter, as tensions began to intensify with the local populace. The situation degenerated into a siege, and in March Brigadier-General P.G.T.

Beauregard took charge of the Confederate forces opposing the Fort. The risk of war drew ever closer. As food supplies began to run low, Lincoln ordered naval vessels to attempt to resupply the fort. Stephen Rowan and the *Pawnee* was one of these vessels. At 7 o'clock on the morning of 12th April 1861 Rowan and the *Pawnee* arrived at their designated position off Charleston harbor. A small paddle-wheel steamer approached his ship, which proved to be the *Harriet Lane*. A boat from the steamer approached the *Pawnee* and Rowan was handed an order dated 5th April. The order outlined just what was expected of the Irishman and his crew; the seriousness of the situation must have been immediately apparent to all concerned. The order that Rowan read was from Secretary Welles to Captain Mercer, indicating that he was being given command of four steamers, the *Powhatan*, *Pawnee*, *Pocahontas* and *Harriet Lane* with the object of provisioning Fort Sumter. If the Charleston authorities allowed the Fort's resupply the force could do so and withdraw. However, if they prevented it, Mercer and his force were to '*protect the transports or boats of the expedition in the object of their mission, disposing of your force in such manner as to open the way for their ingress, and afford, so far as practicable, security to the men and boats, and repelling by force, if necessary, all obstructions toward provisioning the fort and reinforcing it; for in case of resistance to the peaceable primary object of the expedition a reinforcements of the garrison will also be attempted.*' Next on board Rowan's ship was Captain Fox of the *Baltic*, one of the vessels charged with resupplying the Fort. He indicated that he intended to attempt to reach Sumter in boats, and asked for assistance in doing so. The *Pawnee* had a launch and a cutter armed to aid the *Baltic*. As the minutes passed, the *Harriet Lane* and the *Baltic* stood in towards the bar, but very shortly afterwards the *Baltic* came out again. Captain Fox informed Rowan the forts and batteries were firing on Fort Sumter. The Confederates had started firing on Major Anderson and his men in an attempt to force their surrender before the naval force could resupply them. The American Civil War had begun. Commander Rowan was able to observe that Fort Moultrie, Cumming's Point, , Fort Johnson and the sand and floating batteries were all firing at

the Fort, which was responding with its own artillery. Captain Fox decided he would attempt to resupply the Fort the following morning, the 13th, with protection from Rowan. However, the *Baltic* grounded on Rattlesnake Shoal which further delayed any attempt until the following night. Meanwhile, the Pawnee noted a schooner passing close by, and suspecting it might be a ship belonging to the forces in Charleston Rowan fired three or four shots across her bows to force her to drop anchor. It transpired that it was a vessel from Philadelphia transporting ice, and the Irishman decided to commandeer her for the transfer of men and provisions. Events were destined to overtake Rowan's plans. He describes what happened next: 'This arrangement had scarcely been determined upon before a dense smoke issued from the weather side of Fort Sumter; for some time it was thought to be some floating fire craft dropped down against the walls to annoy and prevent the accuracy of Major Anderson's fire. In two hours flames appeared above the ramparts on the opposite side of the fort from our position. At noon, or a little later, a body of flames curled far above the ramparts. We then became satisfied that the fort was on fire and feared that the gallant major and his little band would suffer severely....At about 2 o'clock the flagstaff on Fort Sumter was shot away, and we witnessed the sad spectacle of the fall of our flag, which we were so impotent to assist. In vain we looked for its reappearance over the fort; instead of this, the firing from Sumter became more and more weak, and at length ceased entirely.'

A boat was taken by Lieutenant Marcy under a flag of truce to the Confederate position at Cumming's Point to determine if the Fort had surrendered. He returned with the news that it had. As part of the surrender terms the garrison of Sumter was allowed to depart with the ships. All that was left for Commander Rowan and the *Pawnee* to do was to assist in their transfer to the *Baltic*, and on 15th April he and the others made for Cape Henry.

References & Further Reading Ayres, Stephen Cooper 1910. *Sketch of the Life and Services of Vice Admiral Stephen c. Rowan, U.S. Navy*



EVENTS CALENDAR 2018

June 16-17 SEDGEFIELD, CO DURHAM Full Society Event

**June 23-24 BLOXHAM, OXFORDSHIRE
Full Society Event**

**June 30 GAINSBOROUGH, LINCS Armed Forces Day
Small Society Event**

**August 11-12 SPETCHLEY
Full Society Event**

**August 18-19 LINCOLN CASTLE
Small Society Event**

**December 1st ACWS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

ACWS Events Calendar 2019

**August 24-25 TILSTON, CHESHIRE
Full Society Event**

Watch this space for future events