



# ***The A.C.W.S. NEWSLETTER***

## 2019 2nd Edition

ACWS Ltd PO Box 270 Washington, Tyne & Wear NE37 9BX



Tatton Park 2009

ACWS is a Member of

**N·A·Re·S**

Issue 192

## A.C.W.S. CONTACTS - Directors & Army Commanders



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# Chairman's Report

Dear Members.

Well here we are at the beginning of another season and a good one it looks with plenty of events coming up.

By the time you read this we will have already have been to Whittington Castle for the training weekend, it was good to see you all again on what was a great site I hope that those of you who attended enjoyed the site and the local pub who were most welcoming to us, there is a chance of us going back there next year in larger numbers. We do have a few small one day events this year at Gainsborough and Spennymoor and I hope as many of you as possible can attend especially at Gainsborough as it's to support our armed forces.



We have again this year been invited by SOSKAN to attend their campaign weekend at Watford and I am told by those who went last year that it is a very good if a little tiring weekend.

We are then into August where we have an event every weekend starting with Spetchley which is always a good weekend then on to Ibstock which is only on the Sunday but we can camp from Friday to Monday and there is a music festival on the Saturday. The following week its Tilston we have been here before and last time it was a good weekend, then the last event of the year (so far) Shackerstone at which we will have the full society Infantry, artillery, cavalry and pyrotechnics. This is a popular show and there is plenty to see including the Battlefield line steam railway and the canal boat festival. At the last board meeting the directors took the decision to make this a free registration weekend for ACWS members only so I hope to see as many of you as possible in attendance.

Stewart (goober) Douglas has been inspired to run a camp/battle field scenario competition this year details of which are further in this edition please give him your support and send in your ideas. Well enough from me I hope to see you on the field and remember it's your society only you can make it a success.

Yours as always,  
Michael Smart

## Confederate Commander's Report



Greetings to all the Southern Forces participants, be it combatant, non-combatant and children.

I must state that as Commander, I was disappointed with the low turn out of Confederates at Whittington Castle training which was a lovely site next to a pub. However, I do understand that it was booked late and regiments had already booked their own training weekends around that time.

I don't know if this will make it in time for the Newsletter but here goes if it does.

The first thing I would like to communicate is to encourage everyone to join for the year as soon as possible. Please do not wait until we are busy in August with events as you may not be able to vote at the AGM. Your membership helps the running costs of the Society.

I know it may look like a lean year and the bulk of events in August will have an effect on attendances, so please plan and let your regimental commanders know when you hope to attend.

Soskan's Watford event has attracted a few ACWS members this year and I hope the Confederates have a decent turn out at Earls Barton in June. It is a good little event and there are a couple of ACWS supported local events for Veterans and the Armed forces so please support these.

With the lack of an official Events Director within the ACWS the board are trying to find suitable weekends away and I appeal to you all, that if there is a possibility of an event, castle or home etc. near to where you live feel free to make contact and pass it on to any Board member.

On a more jovial note I believe the confederate camp with its displays and activities for the public last year and indeed at the training weekend this year have been hugely successful with the public and organisers. We can now boast - Southern Women, Ask a Soldier, Soap making, Martins pictures and talks, kids drill and more individual tent displays and interaction with visitors to the Camp. Please keep up the good work on all aspects of this as we can only improve.

Lets all work together as an Army and with those people (Union) on the other side (sorry Tim) and make the best of this year. Talk to the Board regarding any issues, submit entries

for competitions and become more involved.

I look forward to seeing you all sometime this year and we'll have either a cup of tea/ coffee together or a good drink and banter around the fire on the evening.

Long live the Southern Cause.

You obedient servant

Major Glenn Gibson  
Commanding Officer  
ACWS - Confederate Forces.

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## Secretary's Report

Hi Y'all,

I truly hope this edition of the newsletter finds you all well.

It looks like those who attended Whittington had a fabulous weekend, I must admit I was slightly envious.

2019 our 44th year as a Society! Next year is our "45th Anniversary", Next question is .... How would you like to celebrate? Any suggestions from the membership are always much appreciated.

We have had some lovely pictures sent to us from our junior members for our Easter colouring competition, I am sure there will be some lovely photographs appearing in your next newsletter.

Another one of our lovely memorial trophies was handed to me by our retired secretary Phil Clark.

It is the "John Rushworth Memorial Trophy" for Photography and the last

winner was Alison Brown 43rd NC in 2009.

So, after 10 years the Photography Competition has returned.

If you are a member junior or adult get snappy and get those pictures in to us.

The winner will be announced at the last event of the season which I do believe to be Shackerstone.

No board members will be taking part and that means you too Griff! Huge thanks go to Phil for returning this to us.

We also have the fabulous "Scenario Competition" this year, where members can come up with a scenario to be acted on an event weekend. Fabulous idea from Goober.

New fire points will be introduced this year on camp at Confederate and Federal Headquarters with fire extinguishers and fire blankets.



We are aware that there are a lot of events in August this year, unfortunately it is the peak of the summer holidays and when most clients have community events or shows. Still lacking an Events Director we are as a board trying our very best to obtain events for other months too.

If you would like to know more about the "Events Director" position or would like to give it a try please get

in touch. We would offer all the guidance needed.

Anyhow, enough of my ramblings! I hope you have all been enjoying the lovely weather we have had over the past month or so.... Please don't forget your sunscreen on camp this year as rumour has it.... "Its gonna be a hot one"

Keep your powder dry!

Linda

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## ACWS Scenario Competition 2019

The ACWS Board are proud to present a Scenario Competition for 2019 for the benefit of all the ACWS Membership. All ACWS members are being encouraged to submit either individually, or by regiment if preferable, a scenario to be re-enacted by the ACWS at one of their events to be selected at a future date.

The written submissions must be between 300 and 400 words and submitted at the first stage to the ACWS Board. These submissions must be historically accurate, appertain to the American Civil War (1861-1865) and be able to be realistically and appropriately re-enacted by both the Union and Confederate Armies.

Submissions can include the use of Artillery and Cavalry but must

contain opportunities for both the Union and Confederate Commanding Officers to maintain their overall control of both their troops and regiments.



The scenarios themselves can involve the use of small arena events as well as the much larger battlefield scenarios. In addition, scenarios can also include Living History impressions and Camp Life representations.

The Scenario impressions will be required to be subjected for initial approval by the ACWS Board in the first instance. However, once approved by the ACWS Board, both the Union Commanding Officer, Major Tim Davies and Confederate Commanding Officer, Glenn Gibson will have the final say over which scenarios will be used, how they are used and when they will be used. Any successful and approved Scenarios will be printed in the ACWS Newsletter.



You must be a member of the ACWS to participate in this Scenario Competition and all submissions are to be respected by the rest of the membership. The ACWS has a very wide and varied membership of all ages both male and female so submissions are particularly encouraged regarding every aspect of the Civil War to ensure that everybody has a say and more varied and diverse submissions are received.

Remember that most ACWS battle re-enactments only last 20 -25 minutes so keep them relatively simple, concise and succinct. Of course, Living History and Camp Life impressions can last all weekend.

The Union and Confederate Commanding Officers and all the Officers and NCOS will add all the necessary details and movements when and if required. The more younger members of the ACWS are being particularly encouraged to give it a go!

All Scenarios must be written up and placed in an envelope entitled ACWS Scenario Competition 2019 and either sent to the ACWS PO Box 270, Washington, Tyne and Wear, NE37 9BX or submitted to a member of the ACWS Board.

Get your thinking caps on and stay tuned as more info to follow.



## **ACWS Training Event at Whittington Castle**

The ACWS travelled to Whittington Castle in Oswestry, Shropshire on 30th and 31st March 2019 for their annual pre-season training event. As forecast, the weather was nice and sunny throughout the weekend which made for a lovely weekend for all the re-enactors who attended as well as the public who were there on both days.

There were commendable turnouts from both the Confederate and Union armies. It was particularly pleasing to see a number of recruits from both armies attending and hopefully they will have enjoyed their Civil War experience and come back regularly for more.

Whittington Castle is an excellent venue for a training event as it has both picturesque and magnificent ruins and is steeped in history with tales of bitter border warfare, romance and legend. Both the castle itself and the nearby and very welcoming public house, the White Lion are both reputed to be haunted and subject to regular spiritual occurrences which has attracted a lot of paranormal interest as well as regular ghost tours.

The castle has 12 acres of ground and was initially a Norman home and then a 12th century castle. Significantly, the small rural

community in North Shropshire, England acquired a 99 year lease to maintain the castle that sits in the centre of its village and as such it was the first of its kind to be managed in such a way. In 2007, this local trust re-opened the castle to visitors after a restoration with the assistance of a £950k grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. As such, the castle itself is self-funding and relies totally on the support of the public.

Throughout the weekend there were also stalls, sutlers, trade stands (discounts for re-enactors) as well as a nice tearoom which ensured everything and everyone was catered for. The voluntary staff at the castle were particularly helpful and appreciative.

The ACWS training event always provides an invaluable opportunity for everyone in both blue, grey and green to prepare for the season ahead and get all their licences, safety drills and equipment (particularly firearms) checked and approved. It is also an invaluable opportunity to make all the new recruits welcome and settle into the required military routine.

The Union Army did various regimental drills throughout the weekend which included firing displays for the public and the Union



artillery did a cracking job on renovating and getting their artillery pieces ready for the coming season. They also practised their artillery drill although not actually firing which the public thoroughly enjoyed. The Confederate Army practised their own drills and firing displays on both days. Many thanks to Christian Sprakes for commentating to the public on these displays and enhancing the public's knowledge.

Throughout the weekend, all the re-enactors who attended had their respective Shotgun and Black powder Licences inspected and recorded by the Society and all the regimental commanders in both armies undertook all the necessary Health and Safety emergency guidelines and procedures for firing safely and taking part in battle re-enactments.

Although the event was mainly for both the Confederate and Union Armies to prepare for the coming season, the ACWS was also contracted to put on additional living history demonstrations and displays for the public on both days. This involved the Union putting on their usual superb medical display and the Confederates doing their usual Ask a Soldier quiz and the excellent Soap, Candle and Food display by Gary and Sandy Scott. To the credit of the ACWS, the living history displays were very well received by

the public and the interaction on both camps is to be commended and this was echoed by the event organisers. On the Saturday evening, there was a welcome and busy Blanket sale which allowed everyone to buy and exchange their Civil War gear at an affordable price.

Throughout the weekend, both army's campfires were surrounded by laughter, songs, music and merriment with everyone clearly delighted to be back on camp, renewing acquaintances and starting a new season.

The Chairman of the ACWS, Mike Smart also announced the successful conclusion of Kelham with much thanks to those members of the board who put a lot of hard work in and a scenario competition for all members of the ACWS. This was a cracking and enjoyable training event and, as usual, the camaraderie and banter between both sets of re-enactors who attended was clearly evident.

The next ACWS Event is an invite to the 3 day Soskan Campaign Event in Watford on 25-27/5/2019. The 2019 season ahead has a nice variety of events and it is hoped everyone will now fully support all of these whenever possible and attend as many as they can.

## 14th Brooklyn on holiday

Well on loan actually....

Some time ago very sadly our own 14th Brooklyn had to retire for the second time, and the regimental colour that I had the honour to make had to be rolled up for the last time.

My thoughts were that, would this colour be put away like the 2nd Wisconsin colour and never fly again. Always very sad to see any unit retire, long or short service in ACWS.

Well it got me thinking... how cool it would be to have one of our flags flying in the states! So I got

searching and researching for 14th Brooklyn units across the water and found a perfect 14th Brooklyn in Florida USA, who's unit commander is capt Bill Pangrass.

Well after long chats with Bill and permission to have the ACWS involved a 2 year lease contract was made and signed by all parties. So then the regimental was sent over to do what all the hours of work were for, to fly with the 14th Brooklyn and better still, for me, in the states.

I Would like thank the ACWS, Tim Davies and of course Bill Pangrass



**The 14th Brooklyn presentation of colour**



**14th firing from boats near FT Zachary Taylor, Key West**



**14th in FT Zachary Taylor**



**Colour on the Colour line in camp, near Oklawaha river raid**

## **Owl, Bat, Deer and Stag (went to sea!)**

Don't worry, this is not a new rendition of an Edward Lear nonsense poem about a menagerie of animals going to sea in a green pea boat but an article about the last days of the Confederacy and the desperate measures taken to try and supply the hard pressed Southern armies in the field during late 1864 and early 1865. Despite the increasing effectiveness of the Union naval blockade as the Civil War progressed, the Confederacy turned to a special design of steamer that had high speed, a large cargo capacity, a shallow draft and a low silhouette on the horizon.

Owl, Bat, Deer and Stag were the last of these Confederate blockade runners. As such, this is the amazing story of the "Last of the Gray Phantoms" and their desperate measures to get into Southern ports with their precious cargos of supplies and invaluable munitions.

Despite the fact that by late 1863, the Union naval blockade had become increasingly effective, more and more steamers were in fact plying their trade between the last few remaining Confederate ports and Nassau, St George and Havana. In 1863, there were 199 successful runs into Confederate ports. However, in 1864 this increased to 244 and in 1865 this

rose to 270. To achieve this outstanding record, the Confederates not only relied on these newly designed steamers but also brave and imaginative commanders.

Owl was one of this new class of blockade runners that emerged at the end of the Civil War. She was constructed in Liverpool, UK under the watchful eye of Commander James D. Bulloch, the Confederate Navy's agent in Europe and launched on 21 June 1864. She was a 771 ton side wheeler with a very low moulded steel hull. She was 230 feet long, 25 feet abeam and drew only 10 feet of water.

Her twin watt engines could reach speeds of 16 knots. Her hold could carry 800 bales of cotton and her over sized coal bunkers gave an extra long cruising capacity. Owl left Liverpool on July 29 1864 and significantly Commander Bulloch had personally selected her cargo which he elaborated on in a letter to Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen R Mallory. He stated that he had selected the goods for both the Confederate Navy and the Confederate Ordinance Department. These included a consignment of wire and a magnetic exploder with 100 fuses for electric torpedoes. These were specifically designed

after earlier successful experiments by Confederate Commander Matthew Fontaine Maury.

Owl successfully reached Wilmington, North Carolina in September 1864 and delivered her precious cargo despite US Consul Mortimer Jackson informing the US Government that Owl had left the UK "with a large and valuable cargo". She escaped back through the Union blockade on 3rd October 1864 with a cargo of cotton although her captain and several crewmen were wounded. Owl was now commanded by Confederate Commander John Newland Marfitt aka "The Prince of Privateers" and the importance of his role, vessel and mission was spelled out to him in a letter from Confederate Navy Secretary Stephen Mallory "It is of the utmost importance that our steamers should not fall into the enemies hands.

Apart from the specific loss sustained by the country in the capture of blockaded runners, these vessels, lightly armed, now constitute the fleetest and most efficient part of his blockading force off Wilmington. As commanding officer of the Owl you will please devise and adopt thorough and efficient means for saving all hands and destroying the vessel and cargo whenever these measures may become necessary to avoid capture". He was to take no

passengers as a rule and he would be paid "£5,000 in sterling bills before sailing" from the Confederate Assistant Paymaster.

Owl reached Bermuda on 24th October 1864 with her valuable cargo of 780 bales of cotton. Her next mission was to pick up the crew of the CSS Florida from Bermuda and drop them off on the Florida coastline which she would appear to have done successfully.

On her next trip in May 1865 with the Confederacy collapsing and very few Confederate ports remaining, Owl first tried Wilmington but was very nearly captured before trying Galveston. It was here that she was grounded at the entrance on Bird Island Shoals at the mercy of 16 Union cruisers. However, a small Confederate tug called CSS Diana came to her rescue and pulled her off just in time.

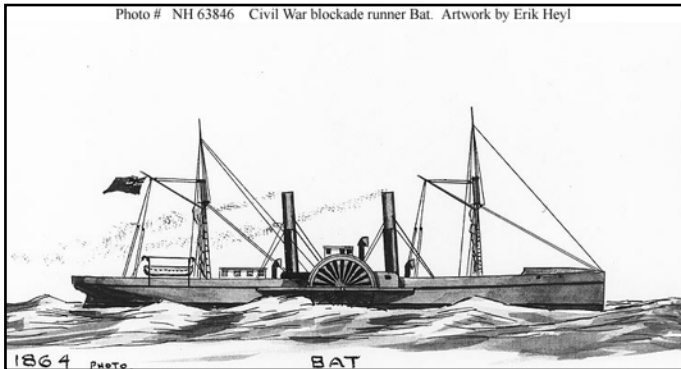
Owl went on to make 2 more successful runs under the new name of Foam. At the end of the War, Commander Marfitt sailed the Owl to Liverpool rather than surrender to Union forces and reached Liverpool without incident on the River Mersey on July 14th 1865. On the quarter deck, he addressed the crew for the last time ..... "This is the last time we meet as sailors of the Confederate States Navy. The Confederacy is dead. Our Country



is in the hands of the enemy and we must accept the verdict. I am grateful to you for your loyalty to me and the South". He then paid off the men, spliced the main brace for the last time and to resounding cheers from the crew slowly lowered the Confederate flag. Owl's gallant little war was finally over.

Madick, who had been captain of the fore-castle of the CCS Alabama during her battle with the USS Kearsage. Bat was forced to surrender and despite the medical assistance of the US surgeon from the USS Montgomery, Match Madick died. Bat was then converted into a gunboat and commissioned USS

Bat and served the rest of the Civil War patrolling the Atlantic coast and the Potomac river. After many years as a commercial trader, she was eventually scrapped in Canada in 1902.



Bat was laid down in Liverpool, UK in 1864 and would appear to have had a significantly shorter lived career than her sister ship Owl. On her maiden voyage on 8th October 1864, she headed for Wilmington, North Carolina and managed to reach the Cape Fear River entrance but was turned back by Union blockaders. She was loaded with valuable shoe machinery for supplying the foot weary troops of the Army of Northern Virginia and 200 tons of coal. On 10th October 1864, she tried again but was hit by the USS Montgomery.

The 30 pound shot amputated the leg of a seaman called Match

blockade runners procured by Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Commander James D. Bulloch from the UK shipyards. However, very significantly, rare clandestine records/letters that have survived the Civil War would indicate Deer, like her sister ship Owl, carried a particularly sensitive and top secret cargo on her maiden voyage from the UK in early November 1864. Again, these items were specifically designed for the Confederate Navy and the Confederate Torpedo Service (Secret Service).

They included "goods almost exclusively designed for submarine defence" consigned to the

respective Confederate Commanders namely Commander Hunter Davidson as well as an "Ebonite machine" for Commander Matthew F. Maury. These 2 individuals had already perfected the "electric torpedo" (a contact naval mine) as well as developed cables and wires through which electricity could flow whilst under water.

All the goods on the Deer were directly related to the development of these innovations. After the War in 1865, the Secretary of the US Navy stated that these Confederate electric torpedoes raised havoc with Northern shipping and "cost the Union more vessels than all the other causes combined".

Deer successfully completed her maiden voyage with these invaluable goods but was not so lucky with her 2nd trip. On 18th February 1865, she was running into Charleston, South Carolina with an invaluable cargo of copper and arms when her lookout failed to spot a trio of ironclad monitors wallowing across the channel entrance. The fast Deer was forced to submit to the ultimate humiliation of surrendering to 3 ponderously slow "cheese boxes on rafts" namely the USS Canonicus, Catskill and Monadnock.

Stag was the last remaining fast, modern steel paddle steamer built for the Confederate Navy at

Liverpool. She sailed from Liverpool on her maiden voyage in August 1864 and arrived in Nassau in September 1864. She then made a number of successful runs into both Charleston and Wilmington before she fell into Union hands in January 1865 as she tried to enter Wilmington. She was taken just after the capture of Fort Fisher and thereby trapped along with another CSS runner namely the Charlotte.

Article by Stewart "Goober" Douglas, 43rd North Carolina Volunteers.

Sources : Wikipedia, Various Internet Sources, Carlisle Cavern of Carnage, Last of the Gray Phantoms by R. Thomas Campbell.



# **Weird Weapons of the War (Pt 1)**

In my last article, I wrote about some of the most lethal weapons of the American Civil War. These mainly included pistols, muskets, early machine guns and cannons. In this next article (in 2 Parts), I will write about some of the more unusual and unconventional weapons used by both the Union and Confederate armies as it was also a time of considerable innovation and experimentation. These came in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and these weapons were the forerunners of some often strange and gruesome combat technology. Part 1 will focus on Rockets and Grenades including the Confederate attempt to fire a ballistic missile on Washington as well as the use of various hand grenades by both sides during close quarter fighting in the trenches of various sieges. Part 2 will focus on Floodlights, Hot air balloons including the first US Aircraft carrier, Land/Underwater Mines and the Winans Steam Gun.

## **Part One**

### **Civil War Rockets**

Rockets and Rocket launchers might seem like a 20th century innovation but in fact they appeared on American Civil War battlefields. Both sides well remembered the success of the rocket from the Mexican War

some 2 decades earlier but they had declined in military importance due to the development of rifled barrels and breech loading. The Confederates first experimented with Congreve rockets which had been developed and used by British forces during the war of 1812. These weapons resembled large bottle rockets but proved so inaccurate that the Confederates never used them extensively.

Nevertheless, official records indicate that Confederate General JEB Stuart used rockets on 3rd July 1862 when he fired on Union troops during the Battle of Harrison's Landing. During this engagement, Union Colonel James T. Kirk of the 10th Pennsylvania (not of the USS Enterprise!) reported that one of his men was wounded by a projectile carried on a rocket fired "from a sort of gun carriage". Confederate rocket batteries were also used in campaigns in Texas in both 1863 and 1864.

These rockets and their launches were first manufactured in Galveston and then Houston, Texas. However, the most interesting information I came across was that the Confederates did in fact launch a ballistic missile at Washington from just outside Richmond, Virginia. According to a story contained in the

Southern press at the time, the Confederate Secret Service talked renowned physicist Lord Kelvin into producing liquid oxygen (before it was actually invented!) and Ernest Mach into building a turbine and gyroscope. The parts were taken to Richmond and assembled in a shed on the banks of the James River. The launch pad was created by digging a hole in the riverbank and a tube was made of naval gun barrels.

The rocket was made at the Tredegar Iron works and was fired in March 1865 by an electric impulse igniting guncotton. President Jefferson Davis and other high ranking Confederate Officials were present. Overall, the missile was 3.7 meters (12 foot) in length carrying a 4.5 kilogram (10 pound) gunpowder warhead in a brass case engraved with the letters CSA.

After its successful ignition and lift off, it rapidly headed towards Washington which was 120 miles away but nothing was ever heard of it again. A recent episode of a US programme called "Mythbusters" recreated and fired this actual Confederate missile with mixed success. Not surprisingly, many of the actual components and technology which were available at the time had to be kept secret to prevent any viewers attempting to make one themselves!

Union forces also used rockets and employed the Hale patent rocket launcher. This was a metal tube that fired 7 inch and 10 inch spin stabilized rockets up to 2,000 yards.

The design was made by Englishman William Hale and he was the first rocket designer to take hold of the principle that when rockets are made to spin, they travel much further and are far more accurate but only over relatively short distances. They were far more advanced than the Confederate Congreve rockets.

The New York Rocket Battalion was the 1st Union force to be issued such rockets. It was organised by the British Officer Thomas Lion and had up to 160 men. The rockets ranged in size from 12 to 20 inches long and 2 to 3 inches wide. They were launched from light carriages carrying 4 wrought iron tubes. They were designed to deliver flammable compounds but could carry musket balls placed in a hollow shell and then exploded by a timed fuse.

They could fly over 3 miles but were extremely erratic and rarely used in combat. However, they were used by Union forces against Confederate forces defending Richmond and Yorktown during the Peninsula campaign in 1862. It was reported that many of these rockets skittered erratically along the ground, passed

between the legs of numerous mules with one actually detonating under a mule which lifted it several feet off the ground thereby precipitating its immediate desertion to the Confederate forces opposite. The only other recorded Union use was at Charleston in 1864 when Union General A. Schimmellennig found the rockets "especially practical in driving off Confederate picket boats especially at night". Whilst a vast improvement on the Confederate Congreve rocket, these Union projectiles were quite unwieldy and were only generally used by the Union Navy.

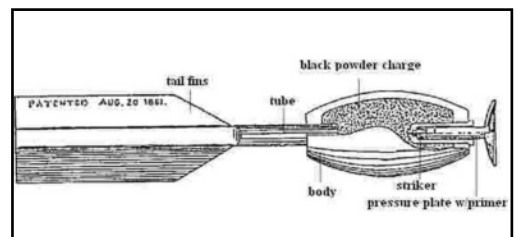
## Hand Grenades

American Civil War soldiers were known to make jury rigged explosives using assortments of fuses and gunpowder but the War also saw the development and advances of the design and manufacture of the hand grenade.

The most popular was the Union issued Ketchum grenade which was a projectile explosive that was thrown like a dart. The grenade was a 3 piece weapon consisting of the plunger, casing and tailpiece. The grenades had the appearance of a cast iron ball having fins of cardboard to stabilise their flight. This ensured landing on the nose which would set off the explosive. These grenades came in 3 different

sizes namely 1, 3 and 5 pound models all including their stabiliser fins and a nose mounted plunger. Upon impact, the plunger would detonate a percussion cap which would ignite the deadly supply of gunpowder inside. Trajectory had to be an arc in order for the plunger to detonate. Whilst this was regarded as a novel idea, they did not always work as intended.

Hand grenades were used extensively at the sieges of Port Hudson, Vicksburg and Petersburg. One of the most famous incidents occurred during the siege at Port Hudson, Louisiana on 14th July 1863 when the Union assaulted the Confederate works at the "Priest Cap". The New York troops involved in the assault had armed themselves with Ketchum grenades and threw them into the Confederate entrenchments.



However, the defending Confederates quickly worked out that if the plunger did not strike at the right angle it would fail to explode. From a Confederate perspective, Confederate Lt Howard C. Wright wrote "The enemy had



come this time prepared with hand grenades to throw into our works from the outside. When these novel missiles commenced falling among the Arkansas troops they did not know what to make of them, and the first few which they caught not having burst, they threw back upon the enemy in the ditch. This time many of them exploded and their character was at once revealed to our men. Always equal to any emergency, they quickly devised scheme ..... spreading blankets behind the parapet, the grenades fell harmlessly into them, whereupon our boys would pick them up and hurling them back with much greater force down the moat they would almost invariably explode".

From a Union perspective, it was reported by a Union officer that when the 75th New York troops, all individually armed with grenades, reached the Confederate works, he stated "the portion of the 75th that succeeded in reaching the ditch the hand grenades could accomplish but little.

In fact, although they made many desperate but gallant attempts to be of service, they rather damaged than benefited our chances of success, for, as they threw their grenades over the rebel breastworks, the rebels actually caught them and hurled them back upon us". It is interesting to note that when the Port

Hudson battlefield was later excavated, over 100 Ketchum grenades were recovered fully intact but not one grenade fragment was found. Another reference occurred at the siege of Vicksburg in June 25th 1863 where a Union Officer reported that his troops from the 45th Illinois were stuck in a crater and that the Confederates were using hand grenades which "render it difficult for our working parties to remain in the crater at all. The wounds inflicted by those missiles are frightful".

It would appear that the grenades used by the Confederates at Vicksburg were 6 or 12 pound artillery rounds with short fuses which were rolled or lobbed onto the attackers. Colonel Ashboll Smith of the 2nd Texas reported "to clear the outside ditch, spherical case were used as hand grenades". Interestingly, one source reported that the Confederates also used glass bottle grenades like those employed by the Russians in the Crimean War.

The Confederates also had other grenades (apart from the ones they threw back!) and the most common was the Raines Grenade. It was even less effective than its Union counterpart.

Although the body was the same, it had a long cloth streamer instead of

bins and the plunger was a contact explosive. On occasions, they also used small iron balls with short fuses attached as grenades but these were very dangerous as they had to be lit before being thrown.

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

Sources: Wikipedia; Various Internet Sources; Unusual Civil War Weapons at history.com; Civil War Talk.

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## **43rd North Carolina Regimental Training Event**

The 43rd North Carolina Regiment travelled to the Jock Neish Scouting Centre near Forfar, Scotland on the weekend of 23rd and 24th March 2019 for their pre-season training event. Fortunately, despite the cold wind at times, the rain managed to keep off (apart from when packing up the tents!) thereby ensuring a really pleasant weekend for everyone who attended.

The Jock Neish Scouting Centre is a superb location for re-enacting as it is based in a 7.5 acre field community site with all the security and amenities necessary for a regimental American Civil War Event and next to the A90 thereby ensuring easy travelling access.

The site itself included ample soft ground for camping, showers, toilets, copious wood supplies, shelters for cooking and sitting around with excellent fire places, parking and dormitory blocks if necessary. It is located in a superb woodland setting and next to the

South Esk river so plenty of opportunities for interesting and leisurely walks which the 43rd took full advantage of.

Overall, the weekend was busy and began with a guided walk around the country estate in which the centre is located as well as a walk along the South Esk river. Everyone was then involved in an air rifle shooting competition from the prone, kneeling and standing positions at various targets placed throughout the wooded area.

The individual competition was won by 32nd Virginia guest, Andy Farnsworth and the team competition was won by Scotland versus England with the respective scores of 205 to 195. During the evenings, there was an opportunity to relax and socialise with an excellent and testing Confederate Quiz which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. It is always particularly pleasing to see and meet potential new Confederate recruits coming to

such training events and those that attended thoroughly enjoyed the weekend and close camaraderie as well as had an opportunity to become familiarised with all the equipment, firearms training and drill that is required.

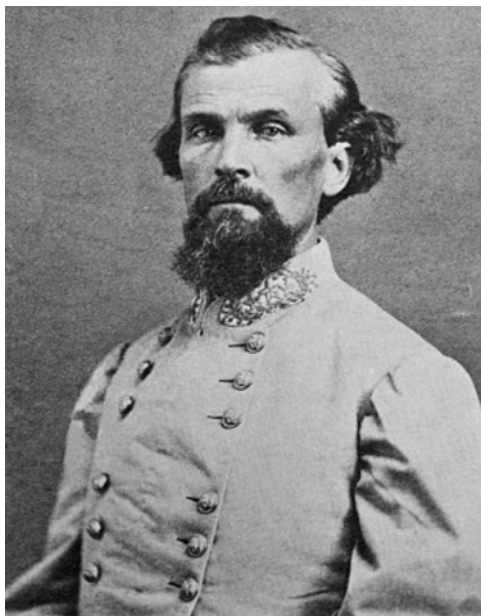
Hopefully, they will continue to come away to events and enjoy our superb hobby. Special thanks must go to 43rd North Carolina Corporal Mark

Moody who organised the event and put lots of work in to ensure everyone had a cracking weekend and well done to everyone who attended.

It is vital the ACWS creates opportunities to attend events in Scotland and the North particularly as there is no Culzean Castle or Sedgefield multi period events this year.

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## **Iconic Military History Event made at Battle of Johnsonville (Nov 4-5 1864)**



On November 4th 1864, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest attacked a massive and heavily fortified Union supply base at Johnsonville, Tennessee. He had earlier reached the west

bank of the Tennessee river on October 28th 1864 with some 3,500 cavalry and infantry.

Although he had already captured a Union gunboat and a transport as a diversion, he secretly positioned his 10 artillery pieces across the river from Johnsonville.

As he opened up on the 3 gunboats, 11 transports and 18 barges which were all full of Federal supplies, the commanding Union Officers Lieutenant E.M. King and Colonel C.R Thompson ordered all the vessels to be burned to prevent their capture. They had assumed that General Forrest had more than 13,000 troops and were desperate to ensure their supplies did not fall into rebel hands. The subsequent fire quickly spread to the docks and warehouses of Johnsonville and all

the Federal guns positioned above the depot could not eliminate the well-entrenched Confederate guns across the river. The blazing docks, boats and warehouses so illuminated the river that General Forrest was able to evacuate his position at nightfall and move his Confederate forces safely 6 miles to the South.

As a result of the engagement, the Confederates reported 2 dead, 9 wounded and 150 Union troops captured. The Union reported 8 killed or wounded. However, the estimate of the value of the vessels and the equipment destroyed was estimated to be in the region of \$6.7 million. In addition, his very movements caused the Federal high command to move large amounts of troops to defend the area. Although it was a Confederate victory, the raid itself failed to either impede Union General Shermans March to the Sea or prevent the destruction of Confederate General Hood`s forces at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville.

However, there is 1 particularly amazing and unique military aspect of this battle that is very rarely mentioned in the numerous Civil War historical accounts of the battle. That amazing fact is that 3 Confederate Generals namely Nathan Bedford Forrest, Abraham

Buford and Tyree Bell all actually manned an artillery piece alone.

This included loading, firing and repositioning their artillery piece after recoils whilst directly under fire from Union artillery batteries situated across the river and above the Union depot itself.

The actual artillery crew itself was reported to have stood back watching in awe and both laughed and shouted encouragement as the 3 Confederate General artillery crew continually pounded the Union positions. The watching Confederate artillery crews were particularly enamoured by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest himself shouting in erroneous terms, "Elevate the breach a little lower boys - elevate the breach a little lower" !

Reportedly, due to their accuracy and success, General Forrest shouted at the real artillery Captain John Morgan who was standing nearby "We`d wipe old Sherman off the map John if they gave me enough men and you enough guns!"

Never before or since in any active military conflict situation has a single artillery piece been solely manned by an all Brigadier General Officer group. Without question, this would appear to be the highest ranking artillery crew in all of military history!

# The Confederate Whitworth Rifle



The Whitworth Rifle, made in the United Kingdom, was predominantly used by Confederate Sharpshooters, known as Whitworth Sharpshooters, throughout the American Civil War. Although not large in number, they had made a fascinating contribution in many aspects to the Civil War so this is the brief story of the Whitworth Rifle.

The Whitworth Rifle was a single shot muzzle loaded rifle used in the latter half of the 19th century. When used with a scope, it became the worlds first sniper rifle. It was designed by Sir Joseph Whitworth who was a prominent British engineer and entrepreneur. He had initially experimented with artillery pieces using hexagonal rifling which meant that the projectile did not have to bite into the grooves like conventional rifling and thereby could travel much further.

Sir Joseph Whitworth believed that the same concept could be applied to the Enfield 1853 Pattern which had shown some weaknesses during the recent Crimean War. As a result, trials were held in 1857

between the Enfield and the Whitworth and the Whitworth outperformed the Enfield at a rate of 3-1 in terms of both accuracy and range. Most significantly, the Whitworth was able to accurately hit a target at 2,000 yards whereas the Enfield could only hit the same target at 1,400 yards.

Although a success, the British Government ultimately rejected the Whitworth in favour of the Enfield due to the fact that the Whitworth barrel was much more prone to fouling and was 4 times as expensive to manufacture as the Enfield. However, with the outbreak of the Civil War, the Whitworth Company based in Manchester, UK was able to sell the weapon to the Confederacy.

During wartime, the price rose considerably from \$100 to \$1,000. In addition, there was a need to produce more hexagonal bullets as the initial supplies ran out, so moulds were also sent to Confederate arsenals from the UK to ensure a regular supply was available.



Although the barrel was innovative, the Whitworth Rifle itself was very similar to the Enfield in terms of being single shot muzzle loading and using a percussion lock firing mechanism. However, it used a longer, slender and more harder alloy bullet than was common at the time which resulted in a .451 calibre. This made it far more stable in flight with a much flatter and longer range trajectory. The Whitworth used 2 types of bullet namely a hexagonal one and a cylindrical one. A hexagonal bullet did not need to properly grip the barrel and could be made of a harder lead alloy. A cylindrical bullet had a small hollow base which could expand and grip the barrel which required a much softer alloy. The Whitworth Rifle itself weighed 9 pounds and when used by Sharpshooters was usually rested on a tree or a forked rest to further increase its accuracy. Although very advanced for the time, the Davidson (4 x magnification) telescopic sights on the Whitworth varied but they had a reputation for leaving the user with a black eye due to the substantial recoil.

During the American Civil War, the Confederate Sharpshooter usually accompanied regular troops and were specifically employed to particularly eliminate Union artillery gun crews, cavalry scouts, exposed Union officers and enemy

sharpshooters. In addition, the Whitworth bullet could easily penetrate a sandbag or wooden/log embrasures and kill a soldier standing behind it.

In tests, the Whitworth bullet could penetrate 32 half inch wooden planks whereas the Enfield bullet could only penetrate 12.

As a result, the Confederate Whitworth did leave its mark on the Civil War in a number of incidents. According to popular accounts, on May 9 1864, during the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse, Union General John Sedgwick was chiding Union soldiers for lying down and trying to avoid Confederate bullets at a range of 800 to 1,000 yards. The Union soldiers were understandably ducking for cover as they could easily identify the shrill whistling sound made by the hexagonal bullets as they whizzed overhead. Union General John Sedgwick berated the Union soldiers "What? Men dodging this way for single bullets?. What will you do when they open fire along the whole line?

I am ashamed of you. They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance". Although deeply ashamed, the Union soldiers still crouched down and flinched. He again repeated " I'm ashamed of you, dodging that way. They couldn't hit an elephant at this

distance". Seconds later, a Whitworth bullet struck him just below the left eye. 5 Confederates soldiers would later claim to have been the responsible firer.

In other high ranking deaths, on September 19 1863, Union General William Lytle was killed by an unnamed Confederate Whitworth Sharpshooter whilst leading a charge at the Battle of Chickamauga. In addition, whilst historians still continue to argue to this day, it is very widely believed that Union General John Reynolds was killed on July 1st 1863 at the Battle of Gettysburg by a Confederate Whitworth Sharpshooter hidden in a tree or a barn due to both the high and downward trajectory of the wound sustained and the shot distance required.

A shot by a Confederate Whitworth Sharpshooter during the American Civil War is still currently listed by Wikipedia as being the 14th longest recorded sniper kill in history. This is longer than any confirmed sniper kill during World War 1 and World War 2. This shot occurred on December 5th 1864, when an unnamed Confederate Whitworth Sharpshooter on Fort Sumter, South Carolina killed a Union soldier patrolling Battery Gregg on a nearby island over 1390 yards away.

Finally, one more thought, on 12th July 1864 during Confederate General Jubal Early's 2nd Corps March on Washington, a Confederate Whitworth Sharpshooter carefully lined his prized Whitworth through the cross hairs of his Davidson scope towards Fort Stevens, Washington when he suddenly saw a tall bearded man with a large stovepipe hat appear and immediately knew it was the US President. Just before shooting, the President was quickly dragged away by a Federal Officer. Soon after, another Federal Officer was killed just a few feet away by another Confederate Sharpshooter and several spent Whitworth bullets have recently been discovered close by in the vicinity of Fort Stevens where this incident occurred.

Sir Joseph Whitworth's obsession with precision also led to the creation of an extremely accurate breech loading 12 pound rifled cannon. In effect, a "cannon - sized" version of his Whitworth rifle. This artillery piece was also shipped to the Confederacy and it proved much more accurate than the Napoleon 12 pounder Howitzer which was more commonly used. It made it a deadly counter battery weapon being able to fire over 6 miles but its relatively small shell prevented it from being effective against Infantry. In addition, like the Whitworth Rifle, the

Whitworth cannon was very prone to quickly fouling and thereby jamming the breech mechanism.

The Confederate Whitworth rifle and Confederate Whitworth cannon were some of the most feared arms of the American Civil War but in reality they both had a minimal overall impact due to the short number actually imported. It is estimated only 200 rifles and 50 cannon made it through the Union blockade of Confederate ports. Nevertheless, the future implications of their use in warfare were profound. Namely, the ability

to kill with impunity from long distances.

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

Goobers Notes: The Whitworth rifle and cannon were not exclusive to the Confederacy. The Union had a battery of Whitworth cannon and the Whitworth rifle was widely advertised through the Northern States throughout the Civil War.

Sources: Wikipedia, Americas Civil War (Nov 2017) Article - Sure Shot by D. Wickland and M. Williams.

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## Notices

Unfortunately membership can no longer be carried forward from one year to the next. If someone joined the society at the last battle of the year, their membership was carried forward to the following year.

If you are a member your membership ends every year on the 31st January.

Many Regards  
Linda Reed (Company Secretary)

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors

Info for the Armed Forces and Community Event in Gainsborough Artillery Regimental and all other regiments are welcome.

Camping from noon on 28th to 30th Living History and firing display on the Saturday.

Act of remembrance at 3pm  
Bar and food vendors on site.  
Small amount of wood available.  
Raised fire pit.

Toilets and showers on site. Water available. Portable loos near camp. On site parking behind camp.

# Blast from the Past

## Newton Le Willows 2004







## EVENTS CALENDAR 2019

**May 25-27 - WATFORD**, HERTS, WD4 8RS Full Society event as guests of SoSkAn at Great Westwood Equestrian Park, Old House Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8RS.

**June 22-23 - EARLS BARTON**, Full Society event at the multi-period event at Whites Nurseries, Clay Lane, Earls Barton, Northampton, NN6 0EP

**June 29 - GAINSBOROUGH**, DN21 1TY. Small One-Day (SATURDAY) Regimental Event hosted by U.S. Artillery open to all ACWS members

**July 21 SPENNYMOOR**, DL16 7HJ. Small One-Day (SUNDAY) Event. North East Veteran's Charity Show, Misty Blue Farm, Rock Lane, Kirk Merrington, Spennymoor, Co Durham,

**August 10-11 - SPETCHLEY**, WORCS, WR5 1RS  
Full society event at M5 Multi-period event at Spetchley Park Gardens

**August 18 - IBSTOCK**, LEICS, LE67 6LN  
Full Society one day event at Ibstock Country Show, Ibstock Show

**August 24-25 - TILSTON**, CHESHIRE, SY14 7HB  
Full Society event at Tilston Wakes Country Fair The Playing Field, Church Road, Tilston, Malpass, Cheshire, SY14 7HB  
Note the event is only on SATURDAY & SUNDAY of this Bank Holiday.

**Aug 31 - Sep 1 - SHACKERSTONE**, LEICS, CV13 6NB  
Full Society event at the Shackerstone Family Festival, Barton Lane, Shackerstone, Leics, CV13 6NE.

### **December 7<sup>th</sup> ACWS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The 2019 ACWS Annual General Meeting is to be held at a venue To Be Advised