



**Edition 7**

**March 2014**

**Association of Open University Graduates  
Europe**

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Spring is here again, which I am sure for many of us who have endured a hard Winter, is very welcome.

As you will read below, the Officers have been very busy putting together a “Members Only AOUG Forum.” I know that there are many of us who are not so keen on Twitters etc. but a site which is under supervision and restricted to a limited user base, will be welcome. You will read from Jean’s careful instructions, how to go about registering but if you find any problems, please let the Officers know as it is early days for the Forum.

When I registered I met with a few but got there in the end. I am sure that many of you are experts at this but I hope that my own comments will help.

At **Step 5** where you are asked for your birthday, (day and month are essential, but year is optional) at the moment the site is not accepting just the day and month, it does also require your year of birth. I can assure you that your full details will go no further.

At **Step 7** where you are asked to copy a **Registration code**, this is a series of letters in a coloured box. Be sure to copy them exactly, using upper and lower case as the letters are in the box.

I do hope that you will join up.

Once again I am very grateful to Patrick Noble for another fascinating article, this time, “The American Civil War, the Battle of Cherbourg 19<sup>th</sup> June 1864”. I must admit that when I first saw the title I thought, “Oh dear, our Europe members will think that I only include articles to do with the area where I live.” How wrong could I be, it is not so, but do read on.

**Patricia Cowling**

## **‘Members only’ AOUG Forum on the AOUG Website**

The AOUG website is continuing to develop and last year we introduced a new-style Home Page, an on-line Membership facility and an on-line Trading section. Now we have taken it one step further with a Members Only AOUG Forum. AOUG does not endorse the use of Facebook, or Twitter, or other similar social media sites, in the name of AOUG, as they are impossible for a volunteer organisation to monitor and thus too greater risk to the reputation of AOUG. Obviously what individuals, who also are AOUG members, decide to do, is their own responsibility. However a Members Only Forum is within the Association’s control and this can more easily be monitored and improper items can be removed or prevented. Since we want all members to have the confidence to take part, we are now including a step by step guide to registering and being authorised. We apologise to all of you who are very familiar with these things already. Once authorised the site will give you guidance on using the various features and if you have any problems at all you are very welcome to ask the Officers for help.

**Step one:** Ensure you have internet access on your computer, or equivalent, and log on in the usual way.

**Step two:** Type [www.aoug.org.uk](http://www.aoug.org.uk) into the address line at the top of the page. The AOUG website should now appear with our logo clearly at the top left hand-side.

**Step three:** Click on the word Forum along the bottom of your screen. This will open a new window which you will need to enlarge to fill your screen

**Step four:** You will now be asked for your **Username** and a **Password**. Your user name can be your own name or a shortened version or nickname. Your password can be anything you like but we advise a mixture of numbers and letters about twelve to fifteen characters in length. Now click on the word **Register**

**Step five:** The screen will now show you the **Terms and Conditions**. Take as long as you like to read these but in order to progress you need to click on **Accept** at the bottom of the screen.

**Step six:** You will now be asked to complete a form with Username, e-mail address, password, (these must be the same as you used on the first page) first name and surname (These must be your names as used as a member of AOUG) PI Number (the number you used at the top of all those OU assignments!) your preferred Region or Nation, your gender and your birthday (day and month are essential but year is optional). Finally click on the word **Save**

**Step seven:** You will need to confirm your **password** yet again and copy a **Registration code** (to prove you are human!!!)

**Step eight:** Then you will need to come out of the website and go to your **own e-mail account** where you will see an **e-mail acknowledging** your application for the Forum.

**Step nine:** Wait until you receive a **second e-mail** which will acknowledge you as authorised – (this may be within a few minutes or a few days, depending on if an Officer is currently on line to see your request) and then go back onto the **AOUG website** – click on **Forum** at the bottom of the **Home Page** and the forum will open and allow you to sign in with your **User name** and **Password** and then you can start exploring the instant communications possibilities.

**Step ten:** If you need more help just ask! **Have Fun !!!!**

**Jean Hertzog – Association Treasurer**

# The American Civil War

## The Battle of Cherbourg 19<sup>th</sup> June 1864

### Introduction:

The 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 the Americans (without forgetting the British, Canadian and other national contingents) landed on the beaches of Normandy. By the 21<sup>st</sup> June the American army was engaged in the Battle of Cherbourg and the city was liberated on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Strange as it may seem, for the Americans this was the second time they had been engaged in the “Battle of Cherbourg”, the first time being on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1864, eighty years before almost to the day. To be more precise it might be called the Battle “off” rather than “of” Cherbourg for it was a two ship naval battle between the Confederate States Ship (CSS) *Alabama* and the United States Ship (USS) *Kearsarge*, which took place a few miles offshore just outside French territorial waters. The *Alabama* had been undergoing repairs in Cherbourg and the *Kearsarge*, which had been trying to track her down for two years, waited until she set sail.

### The Background:

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century tension had been mounting in the USA between the northern states, where there was no slavery, and the “Deep South”, where the economy was based essentially on the cotton industry, dependent on slave labour. In 1861 the situation became critical when Abraham Lincoln, a Republican elected President, who’s declared he intended to abolish slavery throughout the United States. In an almost immediate response eleven southern states declared their secession and joined together to form the Confederate States of America or simply the “Confederacy”. The northern states became known as the “Union”. The civil war, which followed lasted until 1865; it involved not only land operations, but also included an important naval element.

### The construction of the C.S.S. *Alabama*:

The Confederate States did not possess any shipyard facilities, so when it came to building ships for their navy they were forced to go abroad. As part of this programme a contract was signed in 1862 for the construction of a warship in Birkenhead, near Liverpool in England. Although this ship was to be eventually baptised *Alabama*, for purposes of secrecy she was simply know as *Hull N° 290*, a necessary precaution for Unionist spies were present in the United Kingdom. At a diplomatic level the tension was mounting between the United Kingdom and the Unionists, for the latter considered that any help given to the Confederates was an unfriendly act possibly leading to war. The ship, two hundred feet long and displacing one thousand and twenty tons, was designed for speed, either under sail rigged as a barque, or under power driven by a steam engine turning a propeller. In the sailing mode, the funnel would be lowered and the screw would be raised.

### Rendezvous in the Azores:

The completed ship was baptized *Enrica*, and classed as an unarmed merchant ship flying the British flag. She set sail, under the protests of the Unionist ambassador in London, for Terceira in the Azores, where she had a rendezvous with two other ships both coming from Great Britain. The first one was the *Bahama*, a steamer carrying the future Confederate officers of the *Alabama* disguised as civilians, led by Captain Raphael Semmes. The second ship was the *Agrippine*, which brought the cannons manufactured in secret in Great Britain, together with munitions, coal and other supplies. Once arrived in Terceira the sailors of the three ships set to work to mount the

cannons on the *Enrica* and fit her out to become a commerce raider of the Confederate Navy. On the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1862, at a formal ceremony, just outside Portuguese territorial waters the British ensign was lowered and the Confederate flag hoisted which meant the *Enrica* took on her true identity as the *Alabama*. A cannon salute was fired and inevitably “Dixie”, the *de facto* anthem of the Confederacy, was sung. Captain Semmes was now in business; he had a warship fully armed and loaded, he had his team of Officers, but he had no crew members, so he made a speech exhorting the sailors of the *Enrica* and *Agrippine* to join the Confederate Navy and accompany him on the *Alabama*. Nobody budged and his invitation was met with silence. Then he said “*I’ll pay you double salary and you will have a share of any prize money*”, to which eighty three men, nearly all British, stepped forward and volunteered. (Money talks! Every man has his price!). The *Agrippine* became his supply ship for food, materials and coal.

### **The Corsair Campaigns of the *Alabama*:**

The *Alabama* set out on her mission of destroying the maximum number of merchant ships flying the Stars and Stripes, and at the same time avoiding US Navy ships which would inevitably be sent to find her and destroy her. She was successful beyond the wildest dreams of her Captain, for in a cruise covering tens of thousands of miles lasting just twenty one months, she would capture sixty Union merchant ships. This had an impact on the Union economy and for the Confederation eased the naval blockade because the Union had to send several ships across the oceans to find and trap the *Alabama*. The tactic used by Captain Semmes was to approach an unsuspecting victim flying the British ensign, then at the last moment change to the Confederate flag. The *Alabama* crew captured the ship, removing any goods that were valuable or useful, then set it on fire and sank it. There was still a modicum of common decency for no violence was directed at the crew or any passengers of the ships captured. They were taken on board the *Alabama* and put ashore at the next landing. On occasions when there were a large number of prisoners on board the *Alabama*, the next captured ship would not be set on fire and sank. Instead all the prisoners would be transferred to it and the ship would be released. In all two thousand prisoners were captured, but not one came to any harm.

The *Alabama* became a phantom ship for she only stayed two or three months in the same zone of the ocean. When news of the ships destroyed reached the ears of the Unionist government they sent a warship, but when the latter arrived, the *Alabama* had left, only to restart its work of destruction somewhere else thousands of miles away. *Alabama’s* campaign started well in the vicinity of the Azores, where she intercepted and destroyed twenty Union ships, twelve of them being whalers. She then took up a new station offshore from Newfoundland, to capture Union ships carrying grain to Europe. Then the *Alabama* went South to enter the Gulf of Mexico. The USS *Hatteras* was sent to intercept her, but this ship engaged in battle with the *Alabama*, was severely damaged and was sunk.

From there the *Alabama* went to the South Atlantic, where she sank a further twenty nine ships. She spared one ship, the *Conrad*, which was re-baptised *Tuscaloosa* and used with the *Agrippine* as a supply ship. The non-stop odyssey was to take the *Alabama* to the Indian Ocean and even in to the South China Sea, but with almost two years at sea, the ship and the crew were becoming tired. So they were looking for a port where the ship could be refitted and the sailors given a rest.

### **The *Alabama* docks in Cherbourg:**

Back once again in the North Atlantic, on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1864 Captain Semmes took his ship into Cherbourg to be dry docked. However the Unionist authorities soon learnt of the presence of the *Alabama* and sent the USS *Kearsarge* to arrive the 14<sup>th</sup> June in international waters off

Cherbourg. This Unionist ship commanded by Captain John Winslow had been looking for the *Alabama* for many months.

### **The Battle of (off) Cherbourg:**

Knowing that he was cornered, Captain Semmes decided that rather than stay in the safety of Cherbourg, he would take the *Alabama* out to face and do battle with the *Kearsarge*. So he cancelled the dry docking and simply asked the French for his ship to be coaled. Once this operation was completed, the *Alabama* put out to sea on the 19<sup>th</sup> June to meet her destiny. This dramatic situation had for the last few days created quite a sensation amongst the citizens of Cherbourg, so a large crowd was there to watch the departure and witness the battle.

Both ships manoeuvred with the *Alabama* firing first. They finally closed to a range of a thousand yards. The *Alabama* discovered that some of her munitions were defective, in particular a shell that hit the *Kearsarge's* steering gear and thus could have been fatal, did not explode. After almost two years at sea perhaps the powder had become damp. Several shots hit the *Alabama* including one below the waterline; she began to sink by the stern. Captain Semmes hoisted a white flag and the firing stopped. The *Kearsarge* then set about saving the crew of the *Alabama* and asked a passing British steam yacht, the *Deerhound* to assist. The latter saved forty seven men including the Captain and most of the Officers, but instead of delivering them to the *Kearsarge*, the *Deerhound* left the scene of the battle at full speed and landed the Confederate sailors in England. This action was not at all appreciated by the Unionists.

### **Diplomatic turbulence USA/ UK:**

After the end of the American Civil War, the US government claimed compensation for the damage done by the *Alabama*, on the basis that the British Government was fully aware of what was happening, allowed the construction of a warship and did not prevent her setting sail. After many years of negotiation an agreement was reached and the British Government paid an important sum of money to the Americans.

### **The wreck today:**

The wreck of the *Alabama* laid on the bottom in sixty metres of water forgotten during one hundred and twenty years until in 1984 the French Navy minesweeper, the *Circe*, located her by means of sonar. The remains of the *Alabama* are the property on the United States, but Franco-American teams of divers have regularly visited the wreck, which has become an archeological site. A number of artifacts have been recovered.

**Patrick Noble**