

## Tales From the Melbourne Woods

Like many others, I had never heard of the Crabtree phenomenon until a friend thought I might like to attend. I did, and was captivated by Briony Cosgrove's talk, "*Joseph Crabtree: Purveyor of the Daffodil as a Tool of Seduction.*" The combination of wit and historicity was potent and, set against the Victorian background of the Savage Club, was captivating.

Now enjoying the status of Scholar, I returned the following year to hear Bill Claiborne enlighten us with "Crabtree dancing with the fairies and saving America". Bill was an alumnus of the Washington Post, and I began to sense the wealth of talent around us. I was honoured therefore, to be asked to speak the following year of 2013.

Over the succeeding years I have enjoyed the way in which successive orators have not only entertained the company, but in doing so have shared fascinating aspects of their own personalities and professions, all with delightful humour and invention.

In the main course of my musical life I have been best known as a performer on the bassoon. This is quirky enough to start with, but when the layman is acquainted with the Continental names of this instrument (being Fagotto in Italian and Fagott in Germany), he senses a rich vein of humour, or at least, absurdity.

To further learn that the French version is Le Basson, and that there is fierce and bitter rivalry between the German and French instruments, is of no interest to but a handful of eccentric players. Nevertheless, this seemed an apt metaphor for specialists in all walks of life. In the case of Crabtree, I made it an Homeric quest involving Romantic poets, Vatican practices, academic nepotism and Hippy posturing.

There were many excerpts played on my bassoon (of the German variety) and I delivered the address without script (having to reconstruct the narrative for the purposes of this archive).

The succeeding years have been just as intriguing, instructive and amusing.

Paul Williams

2013 Oration: *Joseph Crabtree and the Great Schism of the Fagotti*