

Donation of \$1.00 gratefully accepted to help with the publication of this newsletter.

# Historical Happenings

Volume 3  
Issue 8

September  
2007

Casterton and District Historical Society Inc.

## Current Happenings

We welcome to the helm of the Society Mr. Bob Astbury as President. Bob is a local man and has a vast knowledge of the town of Casterton and the district. His contribution to the society will be great. I hand the reins over with pleasure and my support.

The new financial year has started off with a boom! The Society has been successful in applications for the following grants:

**The Victorian Veteran Fund** has awarded \$3,000.00 for a Photographic Exhibition about Major Norman McDonald to take place on Anzac Day 2008. This will be a joint project with Casterton Primary School, the Casterton sub-branch of the R.S.L. and Vern McCallum. The Grade 5 students will undertake research of Major McDonald's life and research his photographs which were taken whilst on active service in WWI. The R.S.L. will assist the school. Vern McCallum will prepare the photographs for the exhibition. This project is very exciting, and preparations are underway for this tribute to a former great man of our district.

**Glenelg Shire Tourism Grant** - The Society applied for \$3,000.00 on behalf of the Friends of the Old Cemetery for development of a cemetery walk through heritage signs and a brochure. We were successful and this on-going project of developing the Old Cemetery will continue into the future. Congratulations to Lyn Tait and all of her helpers with the project.

**Glenelg Shire Community Grant** - \$500.00 - This grant will enable the society to purchase software so that we can create a database and organise our records and information better.

**Heritage Victoria, Preservation Survey.** The Society has been invited to participate in a preservation survey of the Museum. We have been applying for funding for this for 4 years and although we won't see the cash, conservators from

Melbourne will come to the Museum, make an assessment and give us a written report. The cost would be have been in the vicinity of \$3,000.00. The preservation survey is a requirement to be undergone to take us a step closer to Accreditation.

The Casterton New Cemetery has received a grant of \$1,000.00 towards the preservation of the cemetery maps. I have been working on this project for almost 4 years and finally have achieved some funding for it to occur. This is very exciting news! Congratulations to the Friends of the New Cemetery on their success.



As you may have read last month, the Glenelg Shire Engineer has asked the Society to research the history of the **Sandford Bridge** so that a sign can be

be placed at the new bridge, which is currently under construction, when it is opened in November this year. If anyone has a picture of the bridge prior to its demise, we would appreciate a copy. Please contact me on 5581 - 2743.



*Sandford Suspension Bridge 1940*

The Museum has re-opened and is open Sundays between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm except on those days that we have a field trip. The calendar of events for 2008 is being prepared and will be published in the newsletter as soon as it is available.

The re-lease of the Railway Station precinct by the Shire from Vic Track remains in limbo. Almost twelve months down the track, (excuse the pun) we still await a response from Vic Track as to their intentions regarding the restoration of the goods shed. Patience is a virtue they say!

That's it for this month!

*Jan, Secretary / Archivist*

## Vern McCallum Update

The Vern McCallum Historic Photographs Exhibition at Digby on the weekend of 25th / 26th August was a great success with many people in attendance.



Members of the Historical Society attended on both days to assist at the door and to give Vern a hand.

The Historical Society and the Casterton P & A Society have got together this year for the annual show. A reminder that Vern will be in attendance at the Casterton Pastoral and Agricultural Society Annual Show on Saturday 10th November 2007. The photographic exhibition will be housed in the football club rooms at Island park. Entry to the exhibition will be free but a donations box will be available.

Below is an extract from the P & A Show Schedule:

### VERN MCCALLUM PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

Casterton P. & A. Society Inc. is proud to present Vern McCallum's Photographic Exhibition. The exhibition will be housed in the Football Club Rooms at Island Park. This is a real must see. Donations accepted.

Please bring your old photographs for scanning to add to the collection. Your photos can be printed in a size to suit you. Charges Apply. All photographs in the exhibition can be purchased. Printed photographs are mounted on board and are laminated for protection.

#### Sponsored by:

**Casterton P&A Society - Jan Lier  
Rebecca McClellan - Alistair Boyle**

Daryl Povey and the Casterton and District Historical Society will also be in attendance to assist with Family Research.

It just so happens that your newsletter compiler also designs the P & A Show schedule so we have been able to get good coverage of the joint involvement of the two societies.

As the historical society has got a good plug in the P & A Schedule, there is a copy of the front copy of the schedule on the next page of the newsletter for your information. Please support the P & A Society by attending the show and / or submitting something for judging. There is a new photographic section in the schedule this year sponsored by the Historical Society. Vern McCallum will be the judge for this new section. For full details of the show, please see the schedule which is dotted around town or phone Bec McClellan on 03 5581 2378 if you would like a copy of the schedule sent to you.

It is good to see the various societies in town getting together and supporting each other. There will be further involvement of the Historical Society with the town show in 2008.

*Alistair Boyle.*

# Casterton



## 139th Annual Show

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2007  
Island Park

VERN MCCALLUM

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

*& Daryl Povey and Casterton and District Historical Society Family Research*

**GUM BOOT THROW**

**Coxon's Car Pull**

**spit the dummy competition**

**GRAND PARADE - 3.00 p.m.**

**ADMISSION:** Adult: \$10.00 - Children up to 16 years: Free

**MEMBERSHIP:** \$15.00 (admits two adults) \$8.00 (one adult)

## News and Views

At the executive meeting of the society on Sunday 9th September we discussed various ways forward for the society and its meetings. Various views were put forward and a proposed outline was decided upon. This will of course be put to a general meeting for discussion.

It was agreed that there was no need to stick to the present format just because that is what we have always done. We are striving towards making things

easier for members and to increase the entertainment factor. We looked at times and days and took into account the weather, people's ages, and their occupations. Another factor is the time that many members also give to other organisations in the town and around.

The purpose of the executive committee is to attend to the sometimes rather boring aspects of running any society so that things such as the treasurer's report and correspondence can be left out from the general meeting and hence leave more time for some history, guest speakers and the social element of the society. Note should be made that any issues that need to go to general meetings will do so and that any member can attend the executive meeting should they so wish.

As a result of all this discussion, an outline has been drawn up. A proposed calendar of events appears on page 7 of this issue. It must be stressed that this doesn't have to be the final outcome.

The thoughts behind the proposal are: June and July are rather cold months in which to expect people to turn out to meetings - even in the middle of the day - so our annual two

two month break can be taken in winter. This would mean that the A.G.M would need to be in August. This complies with the rules as they stand.

September to November meetings would be for an activity or guest speaker, much as they are now.

With the two month break taken in winter, it was thought that the end of year dinner could be moved to December (currently a "closed" month for the society) and in order to keep costs down this could be a BBQ. With lower costs, members would perhaps be better placed to invite friends and non-members who have been of assistance to the society as a "thank you".

Many people have commitments in January and the weather can be rather hot so it has been proposed that January remain a “closed” month.

February, March and April will hopefully also have an activity or a guest speaker to keep us entertained.

The May meeting has traditionally been a dinner meeting and a bit of a fund raiser. The committee felt that this format should be retained but as with everything else, it is open to discussion.

The subject of whether or not meetings should be held in the evenings or in the daytime was also discussed. With the close down in June and July it was felt that evening meeting for the rest of the year would suit the majority of members.

We also looked at the day on which meetings were held. For now, it appears that our current choice of the third Wednesday of the month, whilst not perfect, seems to clash with the smallest number of other commitments of the members.

Needless to say, if anyone has any ideas, they are always welcome.

*Alistair Boyle.*

## News about the News

The newsletter has been produced since March 2005. From fairly humble beginnings and from being fairly hastily thrown together - and until July 2006 produced in England and sent here by email - I hope you will agree that it has turned into a fairly respectable looking little production. Whilst still in England I was in full time employment and still found plenty of time to produce the newsletter. I had thought - wrongly obviously! - that when I got to Australia to live and was in semi-retirement, I would have even more spare time to devote to the news and the society in general. The best laid plans etc.....

Casterton is such a wonderful place that it is difficult not to become involved in all manner of things. I have been given so much help by the community since I arrived here that I feel it only fitting that I should give some back. As a result I am involved with the Casterton P. & A. Society and the R.S.L as well as the Historical Society. All of these activities are useful, interesting and fun.

I am also now gainfully employed, albeit for only 3 days a week and even in this, the people of Casterton have shown their seemingly never ending loyalty.

Most important of all though is the fact that I am now

part of a family. The first responsibility of a family member is to put food on the table and deal with all the other things that come along. You don't need me to tell you what those are - but involvement with school life is just one of them, the annual school production is another! After that, one can spend time on hobbies and interests.

So, all in all, as I have heard many others say, since I became (semi) retired, I have never been busier! How did I ever find time to go to work?!

With all this in mind, and with other proposed changes to the society's timetable I think now is a good time to consider the format and issue frequency of the newsletter. I would like to continue putting the news together and would most like its quality to remain and for the number of pages to remain the same. I have occasionally thought that there is not much society news in what is supposed to be a newsletter, albeit there has been plenty else. Currently there are ten issues per year. I would like to reduce this to five issues per year. This will give me more time to do a good job on those issues and also mean more news coverage. As it transpires, five issues a year would tailor in fairly nicely with our proposed new calendar: An issue to coincide with the A.G.M in August after the winter break. An issue in October and a Christmas issue (currently put out mid November) more appropriately put out in December. An issue in February to bring us up to date after the proposed January break. An issue in May to coincide with the Annual Dinner meeting, to bring us up to date and to round off before the winter break.

I have come to this decision somewhat reluctantly but I think this is preferable to the alternative; the possibility of the news not getting published at all.

I will attempt to get October's issue printed as normal for this year and I will take the opportunity to move November's issue this year to December (we should have some news on November activities and November is a busy month for me with the P. & A. show) which will bring us into line for 2008.

Another issue which has to be taken into account is that of the ever increasing costs related to the printing of the newsletter. Fewer issues per year will help to keep these costs in check.

Many thanks to those of you who continue to support the newsletter by donation or subscription or indeed just by reading it. It is much appreciated.



*Alistair Boyle.*

## Enquiry Section

Not so much an enquiry, more of a result.....

An enquiry from a Mr. Barry Hill of Newtown about the Debutante Ball in 1949 produced further correspondence from him on 4th September 2007 which included the following:

“Dear Jan,

Thank you for your email of 1st September 2007 regarding the Debutante Ball - 1949. I replied to same today but problems with my computer.....I am enclosing my cheque for \$36.50 for the supply of the article by snail mail. I would be delighted to receive the “Memoirs of the Ball” by one of your members.

My parents Syd and Bid Hill, my sisters Marie and Nell, brother John and myself lived in Casterton from 1943 to 1949 whilst our father C.R. (Syd) Hill was Shire Engineer of the Shire of Glenelg. We moved to Geelong in 1949 and our father passed away in 1968, followed by our mother in 1988.

The four of us married, producing 17 children in total. Marie and Nell and their families live in the Myrtleford area and John and I still live in Geelong. I am the youngest of the four at 70 years of age. My wife and I had 7 children and 18 grandchildren and I retired from work in 1991. Since then I have had a very happy retirement.

We often recall the great times we had in Casterton and the occasions we have been back, we enjoy visiting our youthful haunts.

Congratulations to you all on your wonderful work.

Your sincerely.”

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Jan has been researching the newspapers for 1957 and 1958 with a view to us being able to record some 50th Anniversaries in the newsletter. It is said by some that there is no such thing as coincidence. Lo and behold she found the following article on page one of the Casterton news from 4th July 1958. True, it is not quite 50 years yet but we are including the article here for reasons which will become clear as you read on.

### ***Casterton News 4th July 1958***

***“He's given 44 years service to Vic (and Glenelg) public.***

A former Glenelg Shire Engineer, Mr Cyril Roy McEwan Hill, who is city engineer of Geelong West, has a background of 44 years of service to rate payers in municipalities in various parts of the

State.

Mr. Hill entered the engineering and surveying profession at the age of 15 years and his first municipal appointment was at Rutherglen in North East Victoria at which centre he received his education at the higher elementary school.

After three years at Rutherglen, he served eight years with a Melbourne firm of surveyors, engineers and architects and later gained experience for two years with the State Electricity Commission Head Office Melbourne.

Then followed 11 years as Assistant Engineer to the City of Brunswick.

In a desire to move and gain a wider knowledge of engineering applied to civic affairs, Mr. Hill in turn became engineer to Yackandandah, Chiltern and Rutherglen shires, after which he moved to Western Victoria to serve for six years as engineer to the Glenelg Shire.

Eight years ago Mr. Hill accepted the appointment of engineer to the city of Geelong West and in recent years he has coupled with the office a similar part time position with the Borough of Queenscliff.

Mr. Hill has taken a keen interest in the development of Rippleside Beach and planned the improvements which made the Geelong West oval and cycling track one of the best in the State.

Since his appointment as part time engineer to Queenscliff Borough, Mr. Hill has seen the completion of two important projects - Rip View at Queenscliff and Ocean View at Point Lonsdale.

During his sojourn in Geelong Mr. Hill has identified himself with many outside interests and to his credit most of these have been associated with bodies aimed at social service.

He is a charter member of Casterton and Geelong West Rotary Clubs and played a notable part last year in initiating "Operation Firewood". As Chairman of the Community Service Committee of the Club, Mr. Hill last year was the driving force behind those who provided free firewood for aged pensioners in Geelong West. Today "Operation Firewood" has been expanded to ensure that all aged in need in Greater Geelong will have fires in the coming winter. Mr. Hill is wholeheartedly behind the wider project and on Saturday last spent the greater part of the day at Bellvue loading trucks which conveyed 70 tons to the Geelong depot.

His hobbies are bowls and a little golf, plus sketching. He is a competent caricaturist in black and white and a dabbler in water colours. Among other interests he is a keen photographer in

colour movies. He is also a collector of tropical fish, and at his home these "denizens of the deep" provide interest for his family and many friends.

He married Miss Bridget Maloney of Myrtleford. They have a family of two sons and two daughters. One of the latter, Marie is a junior teacher at Karingal and Captain of St. Johns Ambulance Girls Sections. One son, Barry, is engaged in municipal work.

Quiet of disposition Syd Hill as he is more widely known to his many friends, has made a rich contribution to social service activities, many of them unrecognised, which are for the betterment and progress of the city in which he lives."

## Fifty Years Ago

Fifty and a bit years ago to be honest but who's counting?

***Casterton News 8th February 1957 page 4.  
"Wando Vale P.O. Closure ends family - P.M.G. link***

One family has been in charge of Wando Vale Post Office for almost 57 years, from the day it was opened in July, 1900 until it closed last week.

When Wando Vale settlement was opened, the first closer settlement in Victoria, Mr. T. C. Tomkins, a settler, was the first postmaster. After his death in a harvesting accident in 1908, his widow, Mrs. Christine Tomkins, took over and with the assistance of her daughters carried on until her death in 1937. She was succeeded by her daughter, Grace, Mrs. T Doyle, who was followed in 1944 by Mrs. E. B. Tomkins; in charge until the office was closed. Mrs. E. B. Tomkins is the widow of Mr. T. C. Tomkins' only son Peter.

The original Post Office and Mrs. Christine Tomkins' home were destroyed by fire in March 1909, three months after the death of her husband.

It was jokingly said that any girl who assisted at the post office was sure to get married and facts bear this out. Mrs. Christine Tomkins was assisted first by her daughter Margaret, who was married to Mr. B. Storie, son of one of the original settlers. Next assistant was Miss Janet Tomkins, who was married to Mr. T. Davidson, also of Wando Vale. A third daughter, Grace, then took over and she was married to a son of one of the original settlers Mr. T. Dole, now of Casterton.

Mail was delivered twice a week for the 66 families

when the office was opened. Contractors were Heard and Lane, who left Casterton at 7.00 am on Tuesdays and Fridays, with a coach and two horses, on the trip to Harrow, returning next day. Later contractors to use horse and coach were Jim Hortle, Bill Heard, Nat Collins, Percy Heard, Frank Coxon, Bill Lyall and Bill Hooley. In 1915, following the big drought, horse feed was so scarce that contractor Percy Heard disposed of his horses and replaced them with a Model "T" Ford. Fodder was so scarce that hay, of inferior quality and high price, was imported from California. When feed became plentiful again, Heard returned to horses which were used until 1925, when Bill Hooley changed over to a one ton "T" Model and the days of the horse were over. The service became three times a week about 1914 and had become a daily service by the time that the office was closed. Mail is now delivered daily through Casterton.

In the early days as many as a dozen horses at a time would be seen hitched to the office fence while their owners talked as the mail was sorted.

The family owned a buggy with a fast pair of horses and in a friendly capacity, did much of the district shopping when they visited Casterton; the buggy returning piled with parcels.

In 1918 the telephone exchange was opened with a 10 line manual board. This was increased as the district grew, and slightly more than a year ago an automatic exchange on which there are 42 subscribers was installed."

## November Meeting

As mentioned earlier, one proposal has been for the end of year dinner to become a BBQ. As time is getting short, this has already been arranged for this year. As members will see on the flyer attached to the minutes for the September meeting, the venue will be at the Casterton Bowls Club and the BBQ will take place on our scheduled meeting date of Wednesday, 21st November at 7.00 pm. This event is in part to celebrate the 35 years of the museum and also as a thank you to those who have helped through the year.



The BBQ will be free. Members are asked to bring a salad or sweet (or both!)

Please R.S.V.P. by 12th November, 2007.

Contact Bob Astbury on (03) 5581 1519 or Jan Lier on (03) 5581 2743.

## To the Editor

*Casterton News February 8th 1957, Page 4.*

"Sir - Although it is claimed Willis and Swanston were the first owners of "Koolomurt" also the other places which have since become separate properties, I state my grandfather Thos. Bilston and his partner Thos. Norris were the first to take up this large estate. They built the original homestead at Moree near the Glenelg River. They were established there from four to five years before Willis and Swanston taking over. The Bilston-Norris party left Melbourne, at that time known as The Village, in the year 1838 with sheep, cattle and horse. They arrived at the Chetwynd District the same year. At Lake Bolac, the party was attacked by blacks, the women sheltering under the drays while the men fought off the attack. None was seriously injured.

Bilston and Norris took up what are now the following places, though many of them have since greatly diminished in area - "Wood Farm" and "Sheepbank", Chetwynd, Talengower, Caupaul, Kadnook, Koolomurt, Nareen, Moree, Longlands a part of "Cluni" and a portion at "Kongbool" among others. When Captain Fyans, an officer from the Lands Department, Sydney, visited the district about three years later, he made them leave out the following places: "Wood Farm", and "Sheep Bank", "Cluni" and "Longlands" also a portion of the "Kongbool". With those properties separated from it, Koolomurt was still very large estate.

When owned by Willis and Swanston in the 1850's from 60,000 to 70,000 sheep were run. After a time when their flocks and herds had increased in numbers, Bilston and Norris had shepherds quarters, also sheep and cattle yards erected at Chetwynd. They also built another homestead where the Bilston family resided for some time. Mr. and Mrs. Bilston's daughter, Mary Ann, was born at the homestead Moree in September, 1840. Their second son, Thos. E. Bilston, was born near Pigeon Ponds in December 1842. That district was also a part of the "Koolomurt" estate.

Their eldest son George Yarra Bilston was one year old when they came to this district. He was born at Arthur's Creek, a branch of the Yarra River somewhere near the present site of Heidelberg on August 10, 1837. His father had taken up a grazing property there, shortly after coming from Tasmania with his wife and eldest daughter in 1836, one year after John Batman had selected the "site for the village".

Bilston and Norris found there were a great number of blacks on the Glenelg River and that they were

## Calendar of Events

**September**, 23rd - Field trip to Henty, Wurt Wurt Koort, Merino Downs, Glenorchy and Merino - Identification of former State School sites project.

**October**, 21st - Field trip to Grassdale, Paschendale and Tahara - Identification of former State School sites project.

**November** - Saturday 10th - Casterton Pastoral and Agricultural Society. Vern McCallum Photographic Exhibition and "Best Photograph of an Historic Building in Casterton and District" entry in the indoor section of the P&A schedule.

**November**, 21st - End of year BBQ at the Casterton Bowls Club at 7.00 pm. Please see article on page 6 or the flyer for details.

## Proposals for 2008

**March**, Sunday 16th - Field trip to state school site.

**April**, Friday 25th - Anzac Day Photographic Exhibition at the Town Hall.

**May** - Annual Dinner, venue and speaker to be arranged.

**August** - Vern McCallum Photographic Exhibition weekend at Digby

**September**, Sunday 21st - Field trip to state school site.

**October**, Sunday 19th - Field trip to state school site.

**November**, Saturday 15th - Casterton Pastoral and Agricultural Society Annual Show. Please note that in 2008 the show falls on the third Saturday of the month, not the second Saturday.

**December**, End of year BBQ. Time, date and venue to be arranged.

'very treacherous'.

Mr. Alec Turley who passed away in 1950 aged 88 years, in a letter to the Casterton News two years before his death, stated his grandfather fought at the battle of Waterloo. The grandfather was a shepherd who with his five sons came to the Glenelg River with the Bilston family. He was hit with a blackfellow's spear and died of blood poisoning. He is buried on Chetwynd Station near the old cattle yards. Mr. Alex Turley's father, John Turley, was one of the sons. He died at "Roseneath" station and is buried there. Another son was killed by the blacks at Calandale Station, SA."

Tom Bilston, Wando Vale, 6/2/1957

***Society Meeting Times and Dates.***  
***Please note that details for 2008***  
***are liable to change***

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Meetings held at the R.S.L. Rooms  
Henty Street, Casterton.  
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Wednesday 19th September at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 17th October at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 21st November at 7.00 pm - End of  
Year BBQ at the Casterton Bowls Club

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December 2007 - No Meeting  
January 2008 - No Meeting  
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Wednesday 20th February 2008 at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 19th March 2008 at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 16th April 2008 at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 21st May 2008 at 7.00 pm

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June 2008 no meeting  
July 2008 no meeting  
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Wednesday 20th August 2008 - **A.G.M**  
Wednesday 17th September 2008 at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 15th October 2008 at 7.00 pm  
Wednesday 19th November 2008 at 7.00 pm  
December 2008 - End of Year BBQ

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January 2009 no meeting  
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**President:** Bob Astbury  
**Publicity Officer:** Jan Lier  
**Secretary:** Jan Lier  
**Treasurer:** Roly Cooper

**Contacts:**

Any correspondence via:  
P.O. Box 48, Casterton, Victoria, 3311.

**Newsletter Layout:** Alistair Boyle  
P.O. Box 186, Casterton, Victoria, 3311.

Any material for inclusion can be left at  
P.O. Box 48 or passed to or Jan Lier.  
Any ideas or comments always welcome  
at P.O. Box 186  
You can email Jan  
via the Ballarat Genealogy Web site.

## **Publications for Sale**

Casterton Historical Street Walk  
"From Flour Mill to Glenelg Inn - \$10.00

Extracts from the Casterton and District Historical  
Society Inc. 1966-1996 - \$10.00

Corndale State School Honour Board Booklet \$7.00

Casterton Cenotaph WWI soldiers - \$20.00

Casterton Cenotaph WWII soldiers - \$10.00

Major Norman McDonald  
Photograph Album CD - \$20.00

History in the Depths – Gallipoli – DVD - \$20.00

Vern McCallum Photographs CDs  
Casterton High School - \$20.00

Vintage Tools of Trade - \$10.00

Newsletters of the Casterton and District Historical  
Society 2005 Booklet – Indexed \$10.00

Extracts from Gleanings – \$1.00

Contact Jan (03) 5581 - 2743 (note change of  
number)

### **Please Note**

The Casterton and District Historical Society Inc.  
newsletter is first and foremost intended to be a  
thing of entertainment and to keep the society  
members informed of events.

Articles published in the newsletter should not be  
assumed to contain historical facts. Whilst care is  
taken to verify information and to be accurate,  
accounts differ depending on the source. Even  
"facts" vary in the telling.

We in the society, in the publication of this  
newsletter, make efforts to avoid publishing  
opinions. However, some articles, if published in  
full, may necessarily contain the opinion(s) of the  
author or source. These opinions are not necessarily  
the opinions of the newsletter compiler or any  
member of the society.

Any reader, member of the public or member of the  
society who wishes to comment or respond to  
anything published in the newsletter may do so by  
submitting a response which *will* be published as  
long as it is accompanied by a name. Anonymous  
articles will not be published.

If anything that appears here is in question, please  
feel free to contact us to discuss.