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**Next general
meeting of the
Casterton
Historical Society**

**Wednesday,
September 16th**

**at the Visitor
Information
Centre at 2pm**

***Please note change
of venue and time***

Henty Street, Casterton: 1880



Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

The Cinemas of Casterton

by local historian, James Kent

The purpose of this treatise is to give a rundown on the cinemas which once entertained the people of Casterton and district, giving them their weekly dose of relaxation.

My earliest recollection of “movies” was of being a member of a group of people who gathered in Clarke Street opposite the Police residence one evening. We watched a flickering grey/black image move about on a white screen (probably a bed sheet) which hung from the back of a van very similar to the type used by old-time drovers. I was a very small boy then.

The next episode of viewing this type of entertainment was a visit to the old Mechanics Institute in Henty Street (now the Town Hall site) with my older siblings to watch what was referred to as “talkies”, “pictures”, “flicks” and various other sometimes not complimentary names.

Then as I grew older the Saturday night films at the Casterton Theatre (better known as “the bottom”) were an enormous attraction for me, entry to same governed by my expertise at the trapping of rabbits for sale, and the cash proceeds from the collection of empty bottles from the haunts of drinkers, and rubbish tips.

The Mechanics Institute provided the first and only venue for the showing of films. Naturally I don't remember a great deal about being a patron of this establishment. To transgress for a moment, my most

vivid recollection of an entertainment in this venue was being taken by my eldest sister to see a pantomime called Sinbad the Sailor. This sister is now a 90 year old widow.

And so we total up the cinemas which over the years have provided entertainment for the people of Casterton and district. First there was the Mechanics Institute, followed by the Casterton Theatre, then the Town Hall and at a much later date, the Drive-In.

I believe the showing of films at the Mechanics was done by a chap who came over from Hamilton to do so, and on Thursday night the showing was preceded by the Casterton Vice-Regal Band rendering some items of harmony outside the Institute and on Saturday night the band's services were not required.

The Mechanics Institute was demolished in the mid 1930s to make way for the present town hall to be built - that deals with that venue.

Now we head towards the river where nearby stood the Casterton Theatre, its presence coming about from a peculiar set of circumstances. Read on, my dear reader, and I will enlighten you...

In nearby Sandford there were three hotels, with only two being licensed and the Authority which governs these

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Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project



Volunteers assist on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month from 10 am to 12 noon. We will recommence early in September with the return of better weather.

We are now well into mapping the entire cemetery and the Church of England section is the next to be mapped.



licenses deemed it appropriate that there should be only one licensed hotel in Sandford. In a court of law we saw the Commercial Hotel of Sandford versus the Sandford Hotel for the honour of being possessed of this solitary license. The Commercial Hotel won the decision and that spelt *finis* for George Fitzgerald's double-storied brick hotel, this occurring around 1917.

Charles Arthur Anderson was a builder in Casterton at the time and in the 1920s he pulled down this hotel, using the recovered bricks to build the Casterton Theatre which opened for business about 1930 at the eastern end of Henty Street.

Power for the electrics of this theatre was supplied by an enormous stationary engine driving a generator and situated at the rear of this building. My first memory of this theatre was when Charlie Benn ran it. I sat in the same desk at school as his son, also Charlie Benn.

It operated as a picture theatre and was also used as a boxing stadium where boxing contests were decided from time to time. The showing of films continued until its closure in 1955.

This theatre was demolished in the 1990s and the bricks were again sold off for further projects. Of note is the fact that

Jonas Faroe (Stephen's father) became manager in 1938, was later to purchase it, and it remained in the Faroe family until its demolition.

When the Town Hall opened in December 1937, Jonas Faroe was the tenant of this venue where he showed films on the Wednesday and Saturday night, with the Casterton Theatre showings on Monday and Saturday nights. The screening of films finished in the Town Hall in 1968.

The Drive-In was situated off the Casterton-Sandford road. This venture was built and established by Roy Tuohy, an old hand in the film projection industry. Improvements in television for home-orientated sets saw patronage decline at this venue and the Drive-In at Casterton eventually closed, from memory during the 1970s.

I believe we should recall some of the names of the people who worked in this picture-showing industry. A quick rewind of memory brings forward such names as Charlie Benn, the Faroe family, ushers being Doris Milward, Edna Hope, Yvonne Devereaux, and projectionists Reg Fell, Sam Holden, Ted Bull, Merv Ayres, to name a few, Frank (Poddy) Smith the lolly-boy, selling from his neck sling boxed confectionery for John Hooper.

Results of Annual General Meeting

Jan Lier was nominated for position of President for 2009-10 and duly elected. David Coventry was nominated for position of Treasurer and duly elected. Basil Stafford was nominated for Senior Vice President and duly elected. Ros Coventry was nominated for position of Secretary and duly elected.

Junior Vice President was called for nomination. Jan Lier nominated Jim Kent, who was duly elected. Public Officer: Murray Davis was nominated and accepted the position. Archivist: no nominations. Jan will continue if no-one else wishes to take the position but hopes that someone else will step in.

Casterton Community Museum



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Exhibition of craft items for sale at the Visitor Information Centre

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Jan Lier for further information: Ph. 0432 774314 or jlrier3@bigpond.com or contact Ros on roscov@iprimus.com.au or telephone 5581 2875

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:
www.ballaratgenealogy.org/casterton/historicalsociety

Historical Happenings



Jan and David busy with CDHS matters while a visitor looks into family history on the microfilm machine at the Visitor Information Centre earlier this week.

WANTED

DESCENDANTS of German immigrants

300 families migrated from NIEDER-WEISEL in Hessen, Germany, to Victoria during the Gold Rush period.

Including the Family names of

- ADAMI, BANG, BELLOFF, BILL, BODENROEDER**
- BROEK, DERN, DILGES, FETT, GEIBEL**
- GERLACH, GIEHL, HAINTZ, HAUB, HAUSER**
- HEINZ, HILDEBRAND, HINKLEMAN, JUNG**
- KISSLER, KLEIN, KLIPPEL, KLOS, KNIPPER**
- KOCH, KOHLER, KRAUSGRILL, LEICHNER**
- LEMP, LENZ, LOH, MAAS, MARX, MATTHAUS**
- MULLER, PLOUGH, REUSS, REUTER, RICHTER**
- RIEGELHUTH, SCHIMPF, SCHMIDT, SEIP, STUDDT**
- VOLK, VORBACH, WETZEL, WILHELMI**
- WINTER, WORNER, ZEISS, ZIEGLER & ZIMMER.**

For further details OR if you can identify any of the above names, please contact –

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To commemorate this momentous shift of people and their contribution to Australian society, our group is raising funds to erect a memorial plaque in the church-yard at Nieder-Weisel. The plaque will comprise a bronze bas-relief made by Victorian Dr. Ross Bastiaan. We plan to raise the cost by contacting some of the 1000s of Australians who descended from the original families. This token of International goodwill will help to promote two-way tourism and student exchange with Australia and Germany.

Your support will help to make this possible.

*Nieder-Weisel is a 12th century village 35km north of Frankfurt am Main

Visit our website at - www.niederweiselmemorial.com

September 2009