

January 2010

*Special items in our  
newsletter:*

The Dance Halls and Orchestras  
Part Two

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# Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

## The Dance Halls and Orchestras of Casterton: part two

by local historian James Kent

### Next Meeting of the Historical Society

**17<sup>th</sup> February BBQ  
meeting at Visitor  
Information Centre  
12 noon, food  
provided, BYO Drinks**

***See the Calendar of  
events for 2010 on  
following pages. A  
number of interesting  
field trips are planned.***

In part one of these reminiscences we looked at the lifetimes of the Argyle and Oddfellows halls. And to continue in this vein, we now arrive at yet another dance hall in Jackson Street, Casterton.

Most Saturday nights in the early 1940s saw the meager fire-fighting equipment of our local Fire Brigade place on alert at the rear of the fire station and floor area vacated, prepared for a throng of dancers.

With hormonal impulse raging through adolescent bodies we whirled compliant girls around the dance floor, breathing liquor fumes down their necks, while dancing to the magical music of Mrs Bond's Orchestra. For the sum of 20 cents admittance was gained to this hall of gaiety, where dancing was almost non-stop from 8.30pm to midnight.

Around the precincts of this dance hall the male portion of the patrons had their various hiding places for a "drop of the doings". It may well have been in the nearby railway carriages, the school shelter sheds, or the hedges bordering the houses, or up a roadside culvert, anywhere a secure tenure for this liquor could be sought.

Also round the outskirts of this popular dance hall some pugilistic exercises were carried out to determine who won the favours of a particular female. These were the nights looked forward to by the teenagers and others of our town.

We now come to the more elite places of dancing and to so come into Henty Street, where from 1937 stands our Town Hall. I don't remember ever dancing taking place in the old Mechanics institute hall, which was demolished to make way for this Town Hall.

The Racing Club, the Hunt Club and various other organizations all held their regular and annual balls and dances in the Argyle Hall in McPherson Street. Fitted out with a magnificent floor very favourable to the art of dancing, this hall has in the past been the venue for some memorable balls and dances.

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## Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project



Held on the 2nd and 4th Saturday from 10 am to 12 noon  
We are now more than three quarters of the way through mapping the entire cemetery.



**“PUBLICANS CHOICE”**

**FILM NIGHTS**

**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the Month at 7.30pm**

**MERINO HERITAGE CINEMA**

**FREE**

In this same hall upstairs is the supper room which on occasions saw it used for the purpose of dancing. Indeed, it was on this very particular dance floor in 1950 that I had the immense fortune to meet up with a girl who was to be my partner for the next 54 years. This particular section of the Town Hall was not used for dances on a regular basis, mainly being held on a Friday night by organizations not in a position to finance a larger type of dance in the main hall.

In today's climate neither of these dance floors see much action with the exception of the very colourful Pipe Band/Lions Club Annual Debutante Ball.

That to the best of my knowledge winds up a description of the public halls used for dances by the people of Casterton and District. In a following issue of Historical Happenings we will delve into memories and record the Orchestras which provided the music for these dance halls.

## PROPOSED CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2010

### CASTERTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

#### **17<sup>th</sup> February**

BBQ at the Visitor Information Centre commencing at 12 noon  
Food provided - BYO Drinks  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month

#### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March**

– Annual Dinner – **“Beneath the Dardanelles”**  
Guest speakers and co-authors John & Hatice Basarin.  
Albion Hotel – 6.30pm for 7pm  
2 course Dinner and Presentation - \$20.00 per person.  
RSVP: 3<sup>rd</sup> March  
Contact Ros Coventry – 55 812875 or [roscov@optusnet.com.au](mailto:roscov@optusnet.com.au)  
Jan Lier – 55 791301 or [jlir3@bigpond.com](mailto:jlir3@bigpond.com)

#### **Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> March**

– Field Trip to Strathdownie –(to be confirmed)  
Leader – Mr John McGrath. Visiting Strathdownie Cemetery, Wilderness Church, Strathdownie Hall and Former State School sites.

#### **21<sup>st</sup> April –**

General Meeting – RSL Casterton 2.00pm  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month

#### **9<sup>th</sup> May –**

Field Trip to the South East Family History Group, Millicent.  
(to be confirmed)  
Visiting Penola & Millicent historic sites.

#### **19<sup>th</sup> May –**

General Meeting – RSL Casterton 2.00pm  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month

**Our Address**

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Casterton Community  
Museum, Railway Station,  
Jackson Street Casterton

Also at the

Visitor Information Centre,  
Shiels Terrace, Casterton



If you would like any further  
info about items from this  
newsletter, please contact

**Jan Lier for further  
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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:  
[www.ballaratgenealogy.org/  
casterton/historicalsociety](http://www.ballaratgenealogy.org/casterton/historicalsociety)

No general meeting in June.

**13<sup>th</sup> June –**

Field Trip to Heritage and History Group, Mt Gambier  
(to be confirmed)

July – No General Meeting

**11<sup>th</sup> July –**

Merino Hotel and Heritage Cinema

Film – “**The Collectors**” .

Produced by Casterton locals, these 8 short films show our “local icons” from  
around the region and their collections.

Lunch and Film - \$20.00

12.00 Lunch – 1.30pm Film

Film only \$5.00

**18<sup>th</sup> August –**

Annual General Meeting

RSL Casterton 2pm

Guest Speaker to be advised

**15<sup>th</sup> September –**

General Meeting RSL Casterton 2pm  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month

**10<sup>th</sup> October –**

Field Trip to Wilkin – Wildflowers

Leader Lyn Tait (to be confirmed)

**14<sup>th</sup> November –**

Field Trip to Chetwynd

Lunch at Sloba & Ilya's (to be confirmed)

Leader – John Gartlan

Interesting historic sites around Chetwynd and Harrow

**Best wishes  
to all for  
the New  
Year 2010**