

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

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MONETARY BANKING IN CASTERTON

by local historian, Jim Kent

Next Meeting of the Historical Society

No meeting in June, outing
proposed to Mount Gambier
is now postponed to Spring.

What's on in July:

18th July

Outing to Merino

Lunch at the Pub followed by a
film *The Collectors*
produced and filmed by Casterton
locals, these 8 short films show our
local icons from around the region
and their collections.
Plus optional visit to the cemeteries
of Merino



March annual dinner

In tracing the history of banking in Casterton we see that the National Bank, as it was known then was one of the very first banking and financial houses to be established in the embryo township of Casterton.

The seed of the township was sown when one Alexander McKinley built an Inn adjacent to the ford across the Glenelg River, where the track to Adelaide crossed this river and he opened for business on 15th September 1846. The National Bank was to establish a branch agency in 1872 using an existing vacant shop as its place of business.

After completion of the surveying and laying out of the grid pattern that forms the streets for both business and residential purposes, the National Bank then embarked on building a more permanent structure to conduct its business affairs within. The chosen site is located on the western end of the CBD of Henty Street and bounded on the eastern side by McPherson Street, thus giving the bank a favourable corner site. This handsome building is still in use today and was, when construction commenced in 1878, firstly only a one-storey configuration. By the mid 1880s business dictated that a second storey be added to cater for the domestic needs of the Manager of the time, and also of future managers. It was not without problems that this addition was carried out as the added weight caused foundations to settle prompting the installing of a steel band to stabilise the bottom storey and adding buttresses to prevent further movement of the building.

Adjacent to this National Bank was the State Savings Bank, then this bank vacated the premises and moved to another site in Henty Street, selling the previous premises to the store conducted by W J Peden. The National Bank, around the 1930s, also sold to W J Peden its surplus Henty Street frontage, thus enabling Pedens to build the large departmental shop that co-exists today alongside the National Bank of today.

The people of Casterton are renowned for attaching sobriquets to all and sundry who reside in the town, nick names are quickly arrived at for the unsuspecting. The noble position of Bank Manager does not insulate this person from the imagination of the local wags, and during the 1930s the National Bank Manager was a Mr Norman Tait, rapidly retitled Mr Hesitate, possibly because of his reluctance to advance loans or increase overdraft limits in a hurry.

Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project

We have now completed all sections - Jan needs to finish up doing the bits and pieces on the computer - then we will walk the walk again to recheck with the return of better weather.



Morning by Clarice Beckett



Clarice Beckett: a lamented and belated discovery

In the 1960's Rosalind Hollinrake came across some paintings signed C Beckett and embarked on a search for the identity behind this unfamiliar name. She found in an open-sided barn near Benalla the horrible sight of more than 1200 rotting Beckett paintings, the majority destroyed by almost 40 years of exposure. Clarice Beckett is now regarded as one of Australia's finest painters.

Around the intersection of Clarke and Henty Streets we saw, in the early days of Casterton, two other banks residing in imposing two-storied buildings. On the northern corner was the Colonial Bank, now long been absorbed into the more ambitious banks, and since its demise from banking this building has seen quite some tenants, both commercial and domestic today as it trades as a hair salon in its bottom storey, and a domestic residence in its second storey.

Over on the southern corner was located the Union Bank, where again financial aspects of banking were conducted in the bottom storey whilst its Manager and family lived in the second storey. In my youthful days the Union bank was under the control of a Mr Campbell who used a walking stick to aid his movements, and he was also known to use the curved end of his stick to detain a person he wished to converse with – as a consequence he was known as Hookum Campbell.

This stately building now trades as the ANZ Bank, following mergers with the top storey occupied in a domestic situation. Over on the north side of Henty Street there were another two banking institutions, namely the English, Scottish and Australian, better known as the ES&A, again in my youthful days the Manager of this bank was a small, rotund gentleman with a pompous nature. He quickly became referred to as Captain Mainwaring after the character in the TV series “Dad’s Army”.

And again, close by was the Commercial Bank of Sydney, known as the CBC - the first manager there that I remember was Hughie Ross, an ardent worker in the long gone Casterton Athletic Sports group that stage the Australia Day Sports Carnival at Island Park.

Both these building are now occupied by other commercial operations, while directly opposite was the workingman’s bank, The State Savings Bank of Victoria. This bank was taken into the family of the Commonwealth Bank which had operated out of the Post Office. Today it a full-on commercial banking institution.

And just up from there was the Commercial Bank of Victoria, referred to as the CBV, again now occupied by another business.

On the other corner opposite to the National Bank an imposing two storied edifice was erected and occupied by a banking firm known as the Bank of New South Wales, then like other banks through mergers and takeovers, this bank became known as Westpac and today is occupied by another type of business.

So, in summary, over my lifetime I have seen no less than eight banks all operating at the same time in Henty street, where they cared for the financial transactions of the many farmers, graziers and shopkeepers, who once formed part of a very viable community. Sadly today, owing to factors largely out of our control, these banking institutions are now whittled down to three major banks, with a few in-house types of smaller scale financial institutions also offering services for monetary transactions.

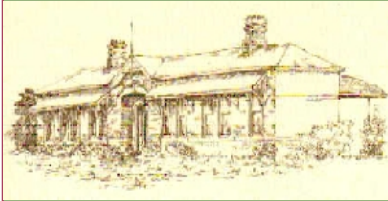
Say what you like about them, life would be difficult without banks, and as a small community wedged in between regional cities we are indeed fortunate to still have choice of banks currently staffed by very helpful and well mannered staff.

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*Editor's note:*

Victorian artist, Clarice Beckett, 1887-1935, was born in Casterton, daughter of Joseph Clifden Beckett, manager of the **Colonial Bank of Casterton** from 1875 to 1903. Read more about her life in July's newsletter.

Casterton Community Museum



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[www.ballaratgenealogy.org.au/casterton/historicalsociety](http://www.ballaratgenealogy.org.au/casterton/historicalsociety)

## 2010 ANZAC AWARDS: Peace Prize to John Basarin

The ANZAC Peace Prize, announced annually, is awarded by the RSL 'to recognise any outstanding effort by an Australian citizen who has promoted the concept of international understanding and who, in so doing, has made a contribution to world peace.'

The RSL ANZAC Awards Committee has awarded the 2010 ANZAC Peace Prize to **Mr John (Vehici) Basarin of Victoria** in recognition of his sustained and enthusiastic commitment to promote relationships between Australia and other communities around the world, particularly in Turkey, with a significant emphasis on his commitment to Rotary Youth Exchange programs and building understanding of the Gallipoli Campaign.

## Heritagecare in Casterton

by Coordinator, Roger Southern

Congratulations to the Historical society volunteers for the hours of work to help set up and staff the Visitor Information Centre location where local residents, researchers and passing travelers can access information about the history & heritage of the district. Congratulations to Jan for her leadership. A leader is someone people want to follow and is a sine qua non of effective results

The Society is immensely grateful for the cooperation and support from Glenelg Shire staff and the Casterton Arts and Crafts Association. The Glenelg Shire has generously contributed financially towards establishing our research area at the VIC with air conditioning, blinds, insulation and a new ceiling. This will help better manage and maintain the archives in conditions which are much more favourable to researchers and to the collection.

Thanks to member-volunteers for additional research and indexing - local history and reference books, documents, parish maps, and rate books are now accessible to all. Births, marriages and deaths are available on CD, and databases such as cemetery records, are available in a comfortable environment over a cup of tea. Also local obituaries, organizing a streets and houses file, and files related to local and family history are being generated as demand grows. Awareness of heritage is fundamental – places of cultural significance enrich people lives and foster a deep and inspiring sense of connection to community and landscape (Burra charter) - where we have come from, what things matter.

The Heritagecare program is a partnership between the State Government agency Heritage Victoria, and Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), which recruits volunteers and manages projects. The Brumby Government is providing more than \$1.7 million over four years (2006-2010) for Heritagecare. Heritagecare assists public and private heritage owners while enabling community participation in managing heritage places, objects and collections. As Heritagecare project officer my role has been to help recruit volunteers, look after their welfare, provide limited training opportunities and provide reports to the project partner. I believe we have achieved significant results. By one measure every \$1 spent on Heritagecare has generated the equivalent of \$60 in work. But the intangible benefits (too many to mention) are great too.

In this district I have had privilege of working with the New Cemetery Trust mapping project of course but also with Coleraine HS and Portland HS, and we have had Hands on Heritage groups spend a week helping the owners of Warrock and Murndal heritage-registered properties.

Heritagecare is not sure of its future – we will hear in May if it has been funded as part of a new strategy – feel free to bring to the attention of local members, Minister Justin Madden if you feel it should continue and if so what directions it should take.

STOP PRESS – Unfortunately Heritage Care has not been funded and our friend Roger and the Heritage Care will finish on the 30<sup>th</sup> June. Thank you Roger for all that you have done.