

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2011

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

Items in our newsletter:

The Skin Stores of Casterton by Jim Kent
The Sporting Use of Thoroughbred Horses
by Jim Kent

The Skin Stores of Casterton by Jim Kent

NEXT MEETING DATE

**Wednesday, 21st September,
2 pm at the RSL.**

Please note the new email address
for Jan Lier is
jlir3@activ8.net.au

Adam Lindsay Gordon Committee AGM

All Welcome

Sat, 17th September
Albion Hotel **1pm to 4pm**

Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project: continuing



We have just to walk all again to re-
check details - and photograph the
headstones.

As human life progresses through the ages certain things develop and for a period of time reign supreme before succumbing to more modern technology and such is the case with what were Casterton's Skin Stores.

From time immemorial Man has robbed the animal world of its skins and furs to keep himself covered bodily and in some cases provide a larger covering wherein he may dwell. As mankind brought into being a monetary system to replace the barter practice, so it became natural to trade in skins, wool and furs which were hunted, collected and then exchanged for money. Casterton was no exception to this trade. In my lifetime there were no less than four skin stores operational in the township and I shall identify them and their locations.

Located at what is now 51 Robertson Street, Alfred Howlett had his house and skin store. Before this he traded throughout the district, firstly by way of horse and wagon, then by motor truck. Down near the old flour mill, now Karingal Transport, S H Waters, after a career as a wool classer commenced trading and had previously had been the Bee Hive general store. In my time McCarthy managed this S H Waters Skin Store assisted by Frank Thompson and E T "Ted" Gurry, later on Jim Joyce, Stan Harwood, David Young, a Mr McKay and a Mr Knight were also in managerial positions

Then over near the Island Park entrance gates in Murray Street, Harry Murrell had a skin store. Later on John Gunther continued trade in this store and of recent years it has been a transport depot and today it is owned and used by Gary Phillips for the garaging of his vehicles and as his workshop.

Over McPherson and up Murray Street a bit, Munro and Block had their skin store and this later became a depot for Ampol fuels who used it as a drum and bulk storage site for their fuel and oil.

The main source of items for these skin stores came from

**THE AVENUE OF
REMEMBERANCE OF
CASTERTON**

WHO KNOWS MORE ?

Do any readers have any knowledge of the Avenue of Rememberance of Casterton.

It was reported in the newspaper of the day that an avenue was planted after the First World War.

There appears no record of where this was. Any information would be greatly appreciated.



Merino Downs in 1920

Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh
1837-1925



Casterton’s four butchers who had their own respective slaughterhouses, where their weekly kill gave them sheep skins, cattle hides and tallow to trade to these stores.

Pre the twenty first century the surrounding districts of Casterton were dotted with small mixed-farming families, mainly self- sufficient in many items, and most certainly in meat, which was home-killed as sourced from the farm itself. The skins and hides, plus the small oddments of both shorn and plucked “dead” wool, were traded in the skin stores, plus horse hair taken from the tails of their horses . Racehorse trainers thinned out their horses’ tails also, this practice known as stripping.

During the years of trucking I transported from these stores skins, hides and tallow in the off-shears time of the year. It took a day to load a transport with sheep skins. Hides were heavily salted and folded into squares and sheep skins when in full or three quarter wool became a load a lot quicker for the Melbourne warehouses.

Professional rabbit trappers and the spotlight shooters, together with the weekend rabbiters, also contributed to the volume of trade in fox, hare and rabbit skins. As licenses were the norm for possum and water rat skins, very little trade took place in these items. As health regulations concerning food became more prevalent the local slaughterhouse had to close thus pruning off a one-time large avenue of supply for these local skin stores. Hence it was inevitable that they would shut down. This was the case with the four skin stores, like a lot of other industries that at one time have attempted to survive in Casterton.

The Sporting Use of Thoroughbred Horses

by Jim Kent

From the very early days mankind has used the horse for many various reasons and upon the evolution of what we term thoroughbred horses. These types of horses have been used by humans in what is termed sporting conditions, such as racing, trotting, show jumping and other equestrian pursuits.

The purpose of this article is not to elaborate, glorify nor vilify any of these various usages these horses have been put to but rather to acquaint you with quite another aspect closely connected to the thoroughbred horse, that is of training them to race over a given distance on a special track in the company of other such horses while being ridden by those people known as jockeys.

After that introductory preamble, we arrive at the crux of this article and that is to look at the people who once lived and some who still live in Casterton and are horse trainers. In the past years we have had here trainers of quite some distinction following this noble profession. To mention a few: Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, Fred



Island Park Lagoon

We're on the Web - visit us at:

www.ballaratgenealogy.org.au/casterton/historical_society

To contribute to this newsletter, please contact Jan Lier at the Visitor Information Centre on 5581 2070 or e-mail at her **NEW** address jlir3@activ8.net.au or contact Ros at roscov48@bigpond.com tel 5581 2875

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Ramborn, Billy Trainor, Morris Edwards, Tom Cawker, Murdoch McIntyre, and of course I must mention Barney Casey, born within a stone's throw of the Casterton racecourse on the hill bearing the Casey name as you approach the racecourse.

Barney, and his brothers and sisters, grew up with my late father. Barney was in his adult life to train and ride racehorses for the Chaffey brothers of Woodlands, a property opposite George Jennings' Woodside Inn and racecourse, situated on the Penola Road near the present day golf course.

Sadly in 1914 Barney was involved in a fall while running in a steeplechase in Melbourne and it cost him his life.

We now come to a later stage and take a toll of what could only be termed a remarkable confluence of horse trainers in one section of one street in Casterton, namely Robertson Street, more specifically the eastern side running from the cross road of Shiels Terrace. Believe it or not, in this short stretch there were no less than seven horse trainers all at one time domiciled there with stables attached to their premises.

Starting from the south end we find Bill Gavan of *Welltira* fame, Brian "Barney" McFarlane and his jockey wife, Alma, Bill and Emma Lawrence and their jockey son, Jim. Then Noel Balkin of *Piping Hot* fame, then Bill Heath, late of *Burthong*, Jim Hanlon of *Coonamoon* and *Ninth of May* fame, then Frances J Gorman, better known as "Frothy", a nickname acquired from this publican days, and then Bill Reilly.

Some of the other names to later on train from this section of Robertson Street are Bill Cutler, Neville Shiels, Jim Lawrence, A Mullins, G C "Joey" Smith.

Truly this street has been a home to many a racehorse.