

Casterton and District  
Historical Society Inc  
Newsletter

August 2012

# Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

*Items in our newsletter:*

The Story Behind the Spirit of Ecstasy by Jim Kent  
Casterton obituaries 1916,1943  
Archival Access Victoria News

## The Story Behind the Spirit of Ecstasy

By Jim Kent

It all started when Henry Royce, Manchester electrical engineer, combined with the Hon Charles Rolls, who was a son of Lord Llangattock, decided to join together and manufacture and sell to the public a motor vehicle which was the consummate in design and engineering principles.

Their car carried the initials RR imposed on a plate carrying their names, Rolls on top, Royce underneath, the plate attached to radiator surround and topped by plain unadorned radiator cap. This took place in England in 1904.

Now it so happened that John Scott-Montagu of Beaulieu, who was the editor of a motoring magazine and an avid devotee of the rather new motor car, of which he had a connection since the advent of the automobile. So following his passion, he became an owner of a Rolls-Royce motor car around the early 1900s. This same John W E Scott-Montague became, on the death of his father who was the first Lord Montagu, the second Lord Montagu.

As the editor of a magazine called The Car, Lord John Montagu had as his secretary an extremely attractive young woman by the name of Eleanor Thornton with whom he had developed a romantic liaison. This type of intense friendship was quite the norm with the aristocracy whether they were in a married state or not.

So at this stage we see Lord John Montagu, a married man, owner of a Rolls-Royce car, editor of an illustrated car magazine, holding a commission in the British Army and having for his mistress his secretary who was the bewitchingly beautiful Eleanor Thornton, who in turn was enamored with Lord John Montagu. Bear with me as I give you the background to the tragic tale of the most well-known mascot ever to adorn a motor car's radiator cap.

Among Lord John Montagu and Eleanor Thornton's circle of close friends was noted sculptor, Charles S Sykes, and it was to the sculptor that Lord John Montagu requested an individual item to place on the radiator cap of his Silver Ghost Rolls-Royce.

### **NEXT MEETING**

**Annual General Meeting of the**

**Casterton and District Historical  
Society Inc.**

**to be held on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup>  
August 2012**

**2pm, at Harrow RSL Rooms**

Meet 11am at the Johnny Mullagh Cricket  
Centre for a tour of the Bradman  
Collection and Museum tour  
Cost: \$10.00

Then lunch at 12.30 at the Harrow Café -  
followed by the AGM.

If time permits a trip to Clunies Woolshed  
post the meeting.  
Contact Ros to confirm your attendance for  
the Museum tour and Lunch.  
Phone 55812875 or email  
[roscov48@bigpond.com](mailto:roscov48@bigpond.com)

**Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project:**





Notable locals: Alice McEvoy, Jack Cleary, Frank Daley, John Cleary c 1940

**KENTS CORNER**

Due to the great interest in Jim Kent's book published November 2011, copies sold out immediately. A new printing is available again at the Visitor Information Centre - we hope to publish a new edition within twelve months.



Bilston's house



W Sykes complied with this request by creating a small statue of a young woman in a fluttering dress and having one finger placed across her lips, suggested secrecy. This figurine was dubbed The Whisper and the model chosen by Sykes was none other than the beautiful Eleanor Thornton.

Well, the attachment of any ornament did not really impress Mr Rolls or Mr Royce, understandably, as some of them could be considered vulgar, risqué or just plain mundane. Not so with Mr Sykes effort and it came to pass the Messrs Rolls and Royce asked Mr Sykes to design and cast a mascot to adorn all their cars as from 1911. For this commission Charles Sykes chose as a model Eleanor Thornton who was possessed of an alluring figure topped off with a gloriously beautiful face.

He sculptured a forward-leaning female figure with flying tresses and to add individuality to it placed two wings from the shoulders of Eleanor Thornton's divine form, this giving it the appearance of being airborne. Sykes was to go on having his design of what became known as The Spirit of Ecstasy was placed on the caps of all Rolls-Royce motor cars.

No two figurines as the same, as all the castings were done in what was known as the lost wax method, which resulted in each mould being destroyed, so as to recover the casting. Up to 1934 this forward-leaning female figure became the Rolls-Royce mascot. From 1934 he created a kneeling version of The Spirit of Ecstasy and this continued until some time after the Second World War ended, when it reverted to a smaller standing one which then adorned the Silver Wrath and Silver Dawn models.

Sadly, Eleanor Thornton was not to see her divine form continue to be attached to the caps of the Rolls-Royce cars. During World War 1 Lord Montague was directed to take his unit to India and ship which transported the unit together with Lord Montague and Eleanor Thornton was torpedoed off Crete and sank. Eleanor lost her life whilst here lover was rescued and survived. So there is the tragic ending to the sad story behind the figure of the female form which is still today some one hundred years later, to be seen on the nose-cones of these fabulous cars.

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**Obituary from the Casterton News, January 31<sup>st</sup> 1916**

**BILSTON** – On January 11<sup>th</sup> 1916, at Katanning, WA, of heart trouble at the age of 78 years and 6 months, George Yarra Bilston, the first white child born in Melbourne, eldest son of the late Thomas Bilston, one of the earliest Victorian settlers and grandson of the late Captain William Wheeler, beloved father of TS, GS, RN, AJ and E St I Bilston also Mrs E I Stevens, Ballarat, Mrs Chas Currie, "Listowel" Casterton; and Mrs J R Mackay, "Katrine" Auckland New Zealand. "After life's faithful fever he sleeps well.



Casterton Community Museum



Roseneath bullock team



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We're on the Web - visit us at:

<http://www.swvic.org/castertonhistoricalsociety.htm>

Our address:  
PO Box 48  
Casterton 3311  
Phone: 5581 2070

Visit the Casterton  
Community Museum: call David  
Coventry on 5581 2475 or email  
at [davidcoventry@yahoo.com.au](mailto:davidcoventry@yahoo.com.au)

CDHS is located at the Casterton  
Visitor Information Centre  
e-mail:  
[castertonhistorical@hotmail.com](mailto:castertonhistorical@hotmail.com)

To contribute to this  
newsletter, please contact Jan  
Lier  
at the Visitor Information  
Centre on 5581 2070 or  
e-mail at  
[jlier3@activ8.net.au](mailto:jlier3@activ8.net.au)  
or contact Ros at  
[roscov48@hienond.com](mailto:roscov48@hienond.com)

**From the Casterton News, November 4<sup>th</sup> 1943:**

**Obituary of Mr. Charles William Koch**

The sudden death of Thursday afternoon last of Mr. Charles William Koch, the well known grazier and farmer, at his home, "Rosebank," Nangeela, came as a painful shock to members of the family, relatives and a wide circle of friends. Mr Koch, who was 73 years of age, had visited his medical advisor in Casterton the previous day and made arrangements to enter hospital.

Early on Thursday afternoon he collapsed on leaving his bed. A son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles Koch, well known pioneers of this district, he was born at Sandford, and as a young man was associated with his father in his wide-spread agricultural operations. On the subdivision of Wando Vale Estate he secured a settlement block, after disposal of which he purchased "Springvale" Estate near Pigeon Ponds. He rained there until about 1925, when he purchased "Rosebank" Estate at Nangeela, where his homestead for the past 18 years has become a well known landmark. An industrious and progressive man, Mr. Koch engaged in practically all branches of farming, as well as sheep and cattle raising, and, besides becoming the owner of a large acreage, leased considerable areas. As a student, Mr. Koch spent a term at Xavier College, where at sport he showed prowess as a pedestrian and won several silver cups.

He was a member of the Victoria Mounted Rifles, and in 1927 when he was 24 years of age had the distinction and proud honor of being selected as a member of the Australian Military contingent which went to England to take part in the celebrations of Queen Victoria's jubilee.

From 1930 Mr. Koch displayed a keen interest in municipal affairs, and in that year won a triangular contest for the Central riding at a by election granted necessary by the death of Cr J W Murrell. Following his service for the term, he fought several close contests for West Riding elections. Mr. Koch leaves a widow who (before marriage was Miss Ellen Mary O'Connell) and family of one son and two daughters.

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**Archival Access Victoria News:** It's not just the family tree that's growing... Regarding the growth of the family history industry - the data comes from analysis conducted by online magazine GenealogyInTime of internet traffic across the top 100 genealogy websites.

- 1 in 200 internet search queries are related to genealogy
- family research appears to be a seasonal activity, with website traffic falling during the warmer months.
- genealogy services (like Archival Access!) have a growth rate of 29%
- traffic on Ancestry.com.au grew 49%
- it appears traffic on Irish genealogy websites has slowed down - one theory is that no new Irish records have been released for a while.

**Fading Victoria** If you have read the latest issue of Inside History magazine you would have seen the article regarding Rowan Crowe's website, Fading Victoria, dedicated to documenting and photographing some of Victoria's forgotten heritage buildings. Home to a wonderful collection of images that Rowan has captured of old homesteads, milking sheds mills and more dating back to the mid 1850's.

Some of these buildings are at risk of losing their battle against Mother Nature, Father Time and that annoying third cousin twice removed that nobody really gets along with, 'urban development'. I love Victoria's old buildings, especially the gems you can find in small country towns, and was thrilled to find out about this website - I hope others are too.

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**CDHS WEBSITE: we are the Web - visit us at**  
<http://www.swvic.org/castertonhistoricalsociety.htm>