

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

MAY 2013

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

All that glitters by Jim Kent

Like a lot of people I have always had in interest in gold, that elusive metal that people commit crimes over, take enormous risks to find, and mine in the forlorn hope the ownership and sale of it will bring happiness. Over my lifetime of working I used to quite often, if the mines were taking on labour, become a hard rock miner in the huge Mt Isa mines out near the Northern Territory border. After the six months June to December cane cutting season we would head west to this great mine and go underground.

The Leichart river divided the town from the mine and there was no bridge in those days, just a concrete causeway. It was a wild town in all respects with every nationality there except Japanese. There were two dance halls operating and there were new immigrants and native born patrons and a great deal of friction between them in the dance halls caused by the ratio of one female to around ten males, as it was in the Isa in the post war era.

If we couldn't get a start in the mines we came back to western Queensland round Oramac, Julia Creek and Hughendon and went shearing in the big sheds of that area until the cane cutting season started again at Gordonvale near Cairns. I mined mainly on number seven level in the Isa and at time the faces we were blowing would reveal a seam which we followed until it cut out.

A commonly held belief is that Edmund Hargreaves was the discoverer of gold in Australia and he is reported to have found samples around Bathurst around 1851 but I am not sure he is entitled to this honour. Hargreaves claimed the ten thousand pound reward offered by the New South Wales government to anybody who could find a goldfield. He named the area where supposedly he had found the nuggets Ophir after the biblical city from where Solomon had received precious stones and gold. The news caused an enormous flood of gold-seeking immigrants, many of them from the California goldfields where the topography resembled that of Australian.

Hargreaves based his reward on fire specks of gold panned out of Lester Creek in 1851 yet others before him had found traces of this metal all over the land. On what was to become a major gold field alluvial gold was lying around on the surface in central Victoria where now are Ballarat, Ararat, Maryborough, Clunes and Bendigo, plus reef gold was found underground in these area. I wonder did E H Hammond salt Lewis creek to get his specimens? It started the gold rush which did a lot toward populating our vast land,

Items in our newsletter:
All that glitters by Jim Kent
A minute piece of paper by Jim Kent

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday, 15th May at 2pm at the Casterton RSL**. There will be no meeting in June-July. The AGM will be held on Wednesday, 21st August.

Casterton New Cemetery





KENTS CORNER

Due to the great interest in Jim Kent's book published November 2011, copies sold out immediately. A new printing is available at the Visitor Information Centre – we will publish a new edition of articles late in 2013.

Casterton New Cemetery



Sacred Heart Pupils c 1911



Henty Street/Tyers Street Glenelg Inn 1873



Post office fire



Lasseter was another with gold in his eyes and I have no doubt he was on to some gold bearing ore of high percentage somewhere in the huge area of ranges of the Northern Territory. No doubt it will one day be found by modern techniques.

My mother's people were gold miners who came out from Ireland to the Clunes fields, then moving up to Landsborough and Wattle Creek before selecting and settling on land in the Landsborough area. As a child when visiting Landsborough and Wattle Creek I well remember the diggings that surrounded the house – the squarely dug shapes were the European digs while the Chinese-dug shafts were circular. These holes in the hard quartz ground were everywhere.

Generally speaking quartz or slate is needed to indicate gold bearing country and what puzzles me is why metal scientists are not able to analyse gold and then produce it from the materials analysed. To me it is a bit like fish – they are there but a lot of water is mixed up with them, as with gold mixed up with a lot of dirt and stone. I doubt any of this valuable metal is in commercial quantities in the Casterton district.

James Slattery didn't agree with this view and in the year of 1894 he floated a mining company issuing sixty thousand four dollar shares which were all taken up quickly by Casterton locals. With this capital investment James intended to establish a gold and silver mine in the Brimboal scrub near the boundary of Roseneath station.

Although he sank a few shafts and surveyed a township no Eldorado came to light. I don't know how the shareholders fared on this venture.

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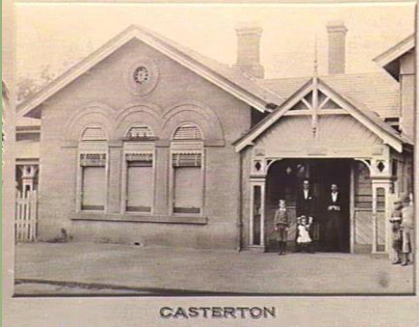
A minute piece of paper
by Jim Kent

Have you ever given another thought to the sequence of events which will take place after you have slipped an envelope into the posting slot in the wall of a post office? I am referring to that minute piece of paper we stick onto a larger piece, the smaller having a lot of heliographs and numbers on it, denoting a dignitary, head of state or design, and the value of the currency. The larger carries a name and address and provide the smaller is of correct currency it will be the means of conveying the larger to its destination in the country of origin, or the world. Quite a chain of events commence once you have slipped your missive into the slot before it eventually arrives at its destination, in my opinion a remarkable set of circumstances.

The common use of stamps as a medium of exchanging correspondence began when Isaac Nichols was appointed Australia's first Post Master at Sydney settlement around the end of the eighteenth century. This system carried on until 1825 when the first Postal Act was passed through Parliament giving the government direct control of all mail and the right to appoint Post Masters and contractors to deliver such mail.



Post office 1897



CDHS is located at the **Casterton Visitor Information Centre**
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To visit the Casterton Community Museum:
call **David Coventry** on **5581 2475** or email at
davidcoventry@yahoo.com.au

To contribute to this newsletter, please contact Ros at the Visitor Information Centre on 5581 2070 or e-mail at roscov48@bigpond.com
H tel 5581 2875



In my youth I had a stamp collection, a popular hobby. Unsealed envelopes cost one cent to post, sealed cost two cents irrespective of whether the article went next door or to the other side of the world. Early days of the Australian land settlement saw eight months or more for a letter to arrive from England. Later on the clipper ships shortened this time somewhat, then steamers also, until today when aircraft give almost overnight delivery.

All of this correspondence is now undercut by the introduction of electronic devices which instantly send the messages once laboriously written on paper and posted. No matter what, I believe the written correspondence will remain relevant mainly because of the legal aspects of a written letter. Next time you stick a minute piece of paper at a cost of sixty cents on an envelope, consider the chain of movements activated.

Looking at the local scene we go to Tyers Street facing the Glenelg River, and the little building we are interested in adjoined Alex McInlay's Inn which he built in 1846. This was the first post office, as such, in Casterton. Mail went out from here by horse-drawn coach, then by coastal steamer to the infant settlements along the southern coast and up to the SA border via the sandy telegraph road, through the Tullich area to Lindsay, right on the Victoria-South Australian border.

Later on a larger official Post Office was built between the Albion Hotel and the Court House. This building caught fire and was destroyed in 1906, then the lovely building which is the Post Office today was built and opened for business in 1909.

When the railway arrived in 1884 the mail bags came and went by rail until that closed down and contractors using motor vehicles took over, indeed your author had for three years the Casterton-Apsley mail run as one of my avenue of income. I delivered to post offices at Dunrobin, Dergholm, Poolangelo, Longkoop and Apsley with home deliveries to residents on all the roads radiating out from the main road to Apsley.

To the west of Casterton mail went through the Strathdownie and Ardno post offices from where Ardno Reid did home deliveries with a spring cart and horse. In the northern direction mail went to Wando Vale post office then Wando Bridge post office then to Chetwynd and to Harrow post office. In the southern direction Sandford, Henty, Digby, Hotspur, Heywood and Portland all had their own telegraph and post offices.

The written letter is a very wonderful way of conveying a message or request and to think that weeny bit of paper to your envelope guarantees that your missive will be delivered to the address on the envelope.

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

