

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

JUNE-JULY 2013

Items in our newsletter:

The Bakers of Casterton
Items from 1958 Casterton News
PROV news

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

THE BAKERS OF CASTERTON

by James Kent

Next Meeting

No meetings are held in June-July. The AGM will be held on **Wednesday, 21st August** at the **Albion Hotel at 2pm**. Lunch is available from 12 noon. Please advise the Albion directly to book for lunch.

Henty Street / Tyers Street corner
Glenelg Inn 1873



Nareen school c 1919

James Rowley was the first known baker in Casterton. He commenced his business in the 1860s, and another early baker was Israel Grinham. There have been a number of bread bakers who operated in Casterton during my life time, from 1927. Starting at the eastern end at number three Henty Street, after our very first settlers we find John Craig Stewart established with a two storied residence, living quarters upstairs and a shop fronting the footpath. At the rear of these premises the bakehouse was manned by John Stewart and his sons, Dougald, William Alexander, better known as 'Sandy' and Theodore Richardson, again more commonly referred to as 'Bricky'.

From these premises they produced a product of incredible quality using, by today's standards, very primitive methods. A huge brick oven, fired by wood known as stringybark, baked a variety of bread loaves and delectable smallgoods. Deliveries were conducted by horses and closed-in carts, one of the drivers I recall being little Billy McEwen. Another method of distribution to country customers was to wrap the bread in paper and put it in the empty cream cans that went back to the farms from the local butter factory. Imagine the health authorities today condoning this method.

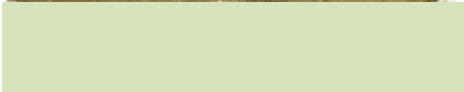
Now we have to move to the western end of Henty street to locate the bakery of John R Carter (number 144) where again we find the principal assisted by his sons plus Jim Newton as baker and 'Joe' Davis as junior hand. Again we see the residence and shop combined with the wood-fired bakehouse at the rear of the premises. Deliveries were again done per medium of horse and closed-in cart, moving throughout the town streets and the products taken to the householder's door by way of wicker basket. Jimmy Joyce was one driver I remember. Another distribution method was by the mail bag contractors who delivered to the country mail boxes. Once again a first class product emerged from these premises.

In 1931 a couple of enterprising brothers open up a third bakery in Casterton. Aubrey and Charlie Baxter commenced operation in a shed they leased from Pedens, roughly where the St Vincent DePaul shop is today. These brothers, from memory, had a shop in Henty Street (number 58) to display and sell their bakery products. Today it is a bookshop next to Korner Kuts (sic) Hairdressing. The Baxter boys were quite innovative in their delivery methods, using a motorised Willy's van for this purpose and during the war years their bread was delivered in a car powered by burning charcoal.

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. Price \$25.

Sacred Heart Pupils c 1911



Chetwynd Hall WWI memorial unveiling



Casterton New Cemetery



J C Stewart's bakery is long gone. J R Carter's struggled on with a number of successors such as De Graaf, Van Wegan, Fell and Peter Lowe. As did Baxters in McPherson Street with Neil Bell, Andy Hamilton, the Hulm family and Van Wegan with Fell's following on. Eventually a modern bakery was built on the Baxter site by the Van Wegan family. I brought down from Orange in New South Wales a huge oil-fired oven for use in this Dutch-owned bakery. Modern baking methods by the multinational bakers and huge delivery transports soon wrote 'finis' to small town bakeries and today we see each morning a truck of sliced and packaged bread roll over our bridge, the product originating in a huge bakery in a seaside city.

Then, in a very modern two-storied motor garage (number 61) built in 1927, an enterprising Andy Mangan set up a modern bakery in this building. His *modus operandi* was the first and only "hot bake" oven in Casterton and it produced a very credible product. In time this business passed into the capable hands of the Herbert family and today it operates as a bakery of breads and smallgoods combined with a very popular cafe style eatery dispensing various blends of coffee.

And so in summary, after one hundred and sixty five years of commercial activities in Henty Street we are still fortunate to have available to those of us who favour the home-style breads, a bakery where these products can still be purchased. The days of the old baker shops are long gone, no longer just a place where bread and smallgoods were regularly baked in brick lined ovens and then sold over the counter and delivered around the town and country side. To survive, those that remained in business turned to a cafe selling coffee and smallgoods because massive bread factories spelt the finish of many country bakers.

Casterton News, June 13, 1958

He drove down the scout emblem hill - for a joke!

The man who drove a horse-drawn express wagon down Toorak Hill, Casterton, where the scout emblem is now carved in the steep slope, was one of two early Muntham celebrities honored by the naming of roads in McNicol Estate this week. He was Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, overseer of Muntham from 1856 to 1862, during which time Muntham included the land which is now a soldier settlement.

The other road is named Gallie Rd after Mrs Edward Henty, whose family name was Gallie. Edward Henty was the first owner of Muntham taking the property up when the Henty brothers settled this district. Muntham in Fetherstonhaugh's days contained 77,000 acres reaching almost from Coleraine to Casterton. When driving the wagon to Casterton on day, accompanied by McKenzie, the sheep manager and a Tasmanian visitor, he drove the wagon down the hill to scare the visitor, telling him it was the only road in.

Neither wagon, nor horses nor passengers were damaged, but the visitor complained bitterly when he discovered the joke on his way home. There were no sheep tracks around the hill then. Fetherstonhaugh, with the aid of Tom Clibborn, later secretary of the AJC, Sydney, laid out Coleraine's first steeplechase course, near the present town site. He was author of a well known history of the early Western District "After Many Days".



Casterton Community Museum

Post office 1897



CDHS is located at the Casterton Visitor Information Centre
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To visit the Casterton Community Museum:
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To contribute to this newsletter, please contact Ros at the Visitor Information Centre on 5581 2070 or e-mail at roscov48@bigpond.com
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Casterton News, November 14 1958
Oldest locally born man dies

The funeral of Casterton's oldest locally born resident, Mr Samuel Charles McCombe, 90, of Robertson Street, took place at Casterton Cemetery on Wednesday, exactly a year after he led the *Back to Casterton* gala procession down Henty Street. Mr McCombe was the oldest son of the late Samuel and Sarah McCombe (nee Humphries) who were married at Henty in 1865 by the Rev Dr F Russell, who established the Church of England in the Glenelg and Wannon Valleys. His parents both came to Victoria in 1853 arriving soon after in this district, where they met for the first time.

Mr McCombe was born in Jackson Street in a house which stood near the present residence of Mr C Miller. After attending Casterton State School, he started in business as a carrier, driving his own bullock team throughout the district.

When "Springbank" was opened up at Dunrobin, Mr McCombe took up a block, and farmed the land until he retired some years ago. He then moved to Casterton, where he lived at Roberts Street until his death on Tuesday. At the Back to Casterton celebrations last year, Mr McCombe and his sister, Mrs V Pentland led the gala procession as oldest locally born residents.

On July 15 this year, 25 relatives from Mount Gambier and the district gathered at his home to celebrate the 90th anniversary of his birth, and congratulatory telegrams were received from Tasmania and NSW. Mr McCombe was a member of Casterton's earliest football team, which played against Condah, Hamilton, Coleraine and Sandford. Twice married, Mr McCombe was a widower for many years.

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PROV NEWS:

Some of the finest buildings to be seen when driving through Victorian country towns (and even Melbourne's suburbs) are the Mechanic Institutes – in the 19th century the term 'mechanic' meant a manual labourer, or someone who used machinery in their work. These local institutes were centres of education for the working man. Their goal was to enhance the literary, scientific and other useful knowledge of its members and the community in general. This was achieved through free lectures, the loaning of reference material and free library reading rooms.

PROV holds some records relating to Mechanics' Institutes ranging from 1886 to 1946 - amongst the scant records are register of grants applied for by the institutes as well as by libraries and museums. The records also contain references to items of correspondence. If you are after more information on a mechanics institute in your area (or in general), check out the [Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria](http://www.mechanicsinstitutes.org.au) website. The group's aim is to foster the preservation and restoration of the social, cultural and physical heritage of mechanics' institutes through the development of information exchanges and systems of mutual support.

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

