

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

OCTOBER 2013

Next meeting: excursion to Yallum
Park mansion at Penola

Wednesday, 16th October. Meet at the
RSL at 8.45am. Reputed to be the best
preserved Victorian mansion in Australia
with original fittings and decor. Tour of
the house at 10 am, cost \$10. We will
also visit other sites in Penola. Lunch:
picnic, or local pub or cafe.

**Please confirm your attendance asap
to Ros. Guest participants also
welcome.**

Tel 5581 2875

Executive Committee

The 2014 executive committee voted
in at the AGM is now:

President: Dawn Black

Vice President: Sandra White

Treasurer: David Coventry

Secretary/Public Officer: Ros
Coventry

Membership fees remain the same,
\$15 single and \$25 family and are
2013-14 fees are due now, following
the AGM.



Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

A TALE OF TWO GRAVES

by Jim Kent

I grew up in Robertson Street in Casterton, the middle child of a family of five girls and one boy, living at what is now number 50, near the old showground. My dad was a wheelwright and carriage builder until around 1922 when he entered into the business of selling automobiles of all makes and sizes. Around 1925 he took on the authorized Ford dealership in Casterton.

This all relates to the tale I will tell you about one of the graves, the occupants of this double grave who had also lived in Robertson Street. As kid in the early 1930s I supplemented my pocket money by catching rabbits with the use of ferrets, traps and dogs, and apart from the proceeds of the sale of their skins I also made a profit from the sale of their dressed carcasses. Why they are referred to as *dressed* I don't know, as one would think with the skins off they would be *undressed*.

For fifty years I have been a trustee of the Casterton New Cemetery and as our trusts finances are not fluid enough to employ a caretaker it falls to the trustees to maintain the cemetery in some sort of reasonable state. As I am in my thirty seventh year of retirement I am in the position of being able to do so three to four hours a day, doing little jobs to keep it tidy. It happened that one day I was walking up a pathway between some graves and a particular grave site caught my attention. It was in a deplorable state, the two concrete slabs having disintegrated, but the actual grave surround still in reasonable condition. On reading the headstone I found it was the grave of William J Gavan and Lucy Gavan, his wife. .

This immediately brought back vivid memories as Lucy Gavan was one of my clients who bought the rabbit carcasses from me in the early 1930s. She was a very nice lady and her husband Bill was, as



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



Henty Street / Tyers Street corner
Glenelg Inn 1873



The Logs gaol, Henty Street, demolished
1907



we kids knew then, a returned man, that is to say he had been a soldier in the First AIF.

I am an active member of our local RSL sub branch and at our next meeting I brought up the subject of the sad state of the Gavan gravesite.

Bill had married Lucy, who was the widow of a jockey called Ted Gory who was killed in a race fall at the Tarryoukan races in the early 1900s. There were no children from either of her marriages. Bill had joined the First AIF in 1915 and he was a Farrier Sergeant so he would have been in the Light Horse cavalry regiment. By early in 1915 he was a patient in an Australian stationary hospital in Egypt where he recovered from illness, joined the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, and was sent to Gallipoli. He was a patient in No 1 Australian Casualty clearing Station, a medical centre at Anzac Cove then again a patient at Mudros Hospital which cared for the sick and wounded from the Gallipoli campaign.

About one hundred men from the 13th Light Horse were at Lone Pine with the 23rd and 24th battalions, so Bill may well have been one of the one hundred odd Light Horse reinforcements there. He was next at No 1 Australian Clearing Station and from there on a hospital ship which returned him to Australia.

In my childhood days I knew him as a horse trainer and Shire of Glenelg ranger around the township. He died in 1950; Lucy had died in 1943.

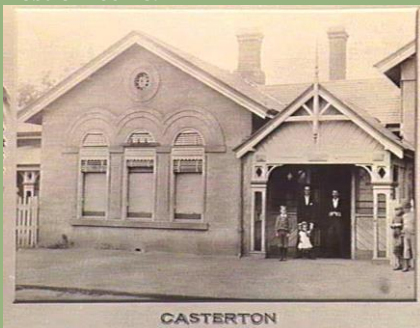
The Office of Australian War Graves will not repair graves of service personnel if they are of a double type so it is left to the relatives to maintain these graves and the Gavans had none. Thus our local RSL sub branch financed some red scoria stone and I broke up the slabs into small pieces for a foundation. Our branch members had a wheelbarrow working bee shoveling the scoria off my big 65 year old International tray truck and filling the graves of Bill and Lucy Gavan.

We also filled up Private W J Thom's grave. He was in the First AIF, army number 3320, 32nd Battalion. He died in Casterton aged 41 in 1928. The Thoms family were local people who had land at Bahgallah and were one time licencees of the Casterton Hotel.

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Post office 1897



CDHS is located at the **Casterton Visitor Information Centre**
e-mail: castertonhistorical@hotmail.com

PO Box 48
Casterton 3311
Phone: 5581 2070

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

The Casterton News and the Merino and Sandford Record:
Thurs, 22nd August 1918.

Soldiers' Memorial Avenue : Start made at Casterton.

Following upon the preparations of the previous Saturday the Coleraine road from Pearce's Bridge again presented a busy appearance on Saturday last. In the morning the members of the trees' and guards' committees tackled the work in real earnest, and had a large number of guards erected and the soil properly prepared for the reception of the trees before noon. In the afternoon quite a crowd of workers, consisting of returned soldiers, Councillors, members of Committee, and others were in attendance, together with a large number of lady visitors, relatives of soldiers and others, and soon had the preliminary work carried out.

An apology was received from Cr. J. J. Durack, and Mr G. T. Graham, Digby. The trees planted consisted of Lambertianas, and though small were healthy and in the congenial soil of the district it is expected they will soon develop into substantial specimens of cypress trees. The trees were numbered, and a record kept by the secretaries, Messrs W. A. W. Kell and H. S. McBean, of each one who planted a tree. **Farrier-Sergeant W. J. Gavan** was the first to plant a tree, as the footballers required his services as umpire, he having failed in health whilst assisting to adjudicate in the glorious struggle for freedom on the other side of the globe.

The planting was officially opened by the President of Glenelg Shire (Cr. J. Little) who said he was proud that day to have the honor of officially planting the first tree in the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue. Honor was due to the A.N.A., the members of which had originated the movement and were responsible for the start that was made that day. It was not, however, the ceremony proper. It was the start of the Avenue, and he hoped that it would be continued to the boundary of the Glenelg Shire, and then the avenue could be further continued on the Mount Gambier road. He had himself favored the Sandford road site, yet though beaten he was satisfied to go on with the movement, and assist in as that small way to honor their brave soldiers. When the trees planted that day were named, they would be in honor of fallen soldiers, and when sufficient had been planted a tree would be named for each soldier.

Cr. J. W. Murrell said he had not come to speak. He was proud to be there, and to see that a start had been made with the Soldiers' Avenue. The trees would keep in their memories the heroic deeds their soldiers had done for them. He thanked all who had worked so hard.

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