

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

AUGUST –SEPTEMBER 2015

Next Meeting

Wednesday, September 17th,
2pm, Visitor Information Centre.

AGM: 19th August at the Glenelg
Inn. Meeting at 7.30pm.



Tom Cawker and Cobb & Co coach
c1890



Mapping the New Cemetery, an on-going
project.



Former Casterton Cottage hospital

Historical Happenings

Casterton Community Museum



Jack “The Shingler” Richardson

by Jim Kent

Just recently a descendant of Jack Richardson approached me for some information about him and was a bit peeved that of all the streets in Casterton not one bears the name of Richardson. This prompted me to pen a letter to the Editor the local newspaper and I suggested that those who have the say in the naming of our streets may possibly look at commemorating the name of this local pioneer and his wife by naming two as yet un-named streets after them.

Those I suggest are really what are termed “service roads” but notwithstanding they are both lined by domestic and commercial buildings and in my opinion constitute a street, rather than being referred to as Mt Gambier Road or the Glenelg Highway.

Henty Street terminates at the junction of Russell Street on the south side of the war memorials and childrens playground. On the north side this becomes either Mount Gambier Road or Henty Highway, as you wish to call it.

I expect there would be opposition to any change of the addresses of the occupants of the two unnamed streets and would no doubt come from Australia Post and possibly the Glenelg Shire. The article in Casterton and Hamilton stirred up some interest in Jack *The Shingler* Richardson and several descendants wanted to know more about him and his wife and their lives. I remember what the late Jacky Richardson, in charge of Peden’s Timber Yard, told me many years ago when I was dealing with this firm for products to restore our first marital home at 59 Shiels Terrace.

The name Richardson suggests a Scottish origin similar to Simpson, Donaldson, Robertson, but this is not so. Once source I have says John Richardson was born in Sussex on 24.2.1820 and Ellen was born in Enniscorthy, Ireland, on 3.2.1832.

I don’t know Ellen came to be in this district but Jack Richardson landed in Melbourne and came to this district in 1847. Jacky Richardson told me that Jack *The Shingler* was a cook at John G Robertson’s Wando Vale property but left in a huff when Mrs Robertson chastised him for feeding the kitchen swill to the pigs just outside the kitchen door.

Another source reports that he was a cook at Warrock, owned then by a nephew of John G Robertson. Anyway, he arrived in the embryo town of Casterton which then consisted of Alexander McKinlay’s Glenelg Inn, McKinlay having arrived in 1846. Jack *The Shingler* helped McKinlay build his inn in what was to become the township. He used wooden shingles to roof the inn and became known as Jack *The Shingler*. It is on record that he went on to build the first house



Casterton Community Museum



KELPIE FESTIVAL, JUNE

The ladies setting off on a railway excursion. Only 245 miles to Melbourne

KENT'S CORNER:

Copies available at the VIC of Volume 2: **Roamin' Round the Town by Jim Kent**

Volume One is also being reprinted and will be available shortly.



The old Logs jail - now thought to have been situated in Clarke Street, not the Henty Street corner as was previously believed.



in Casterton somewhere behind the present day Post Office. This would have become necessary because he married Ellen Curran on 2.10.1851 or, also reported, on 3.11.1851. Ellen's name is sometimes spelled as Curen.

This was the second marriage in the town, the first being John Daly and Ann Devane on 20.2.1850 in the parlour of McKinlay's inn, the Reverend Father Stevens, a travelling priest from Portland officiating. Jack and Ellen were also married in the parlour of the inn by another roving priest, Reverend Father Roe, also from Portland.

The first white child born was reported to have been born to Alexander and Mary McKinlay, a male child who sadly did not survive the birth. Jack and Ellen Richardson produced the first female white child whom they named Mary Anne.

At the time of these marriages the Inn was owned by James and Ellen Kirby, James a brother of the widow of Alexander McKinlay who drowned in a swamp at Strathdownie. James and his brother were also big land owners in the district.

Shingler Jack went on to build more houses in Casterton and he also, like many others, had a go at gold prospecting at the Ballarat diggings but he didn't stay long. It is known they raised five boys and four girls and celebrated fifty years of marriage. A photo of the celebration is in our railway museum and took place at the Argyle Hall, better known at the Drill Hall, which burned down some years ago. Murray Smith's Car Care is now on this site. Ellen Richardson died on 20.10.1907 and Jack on 30.11.1910, drowned in the Glenelg River when attending to his eel lines at the age of 90 years. I knew one of the daughters, a Mrs Shipman, who at one time had a shoe shop in Casterton.

Some years back I became a bit perturbed to find that Ellen and Jack were buried in a unmarked grave in the New Cemetery close to my grandparents grave. At a Historical Society meeting I brought the subject up to doing something to define the graves of these two noble pioneers who in 1847 had brought the population of Casterton to thirteen. Kath Astbury, nee Richardson, agreed, and by donations from the descendants of Jack *The Shingler* and Ellen, a very neat and tidy grave site now looks over them.

The suggestion I have to bring these matters to a satisfactory conclusion is to gather as many names as possible of the descendants and other interested parties in a gigantic petition proposing to name two streets in Jack and Ellen's honour. It will be presented to the two local councillors to raise discussion at a council meeting. It would be a courtesy to contact the residents of the proposed streets and advise them of the intention to rename the streets. I hope that this will happen in the near future.

Earlier I was not able to date Jack's arrival in Melbourne but amazingly more research I have uncovered via the Bilston family, Joan Bilston's forebears. Lo and behold, I am now able to relate how John Richardson came to the Casterton district.

In 1838 Thomas Bilston and Thomas Norris left Melbourne with a convoy of men, animals, seeds, and a steel flour mill for Mr Winter, ex of Tasmania, who was taking up an enormous parcel of land in the Chetwynd district. Winter was to sell out all this land and stock to Willis and Swanson at a later date. The relevant and important part of this story is that Bilston and Norris on their journey had in their employ as a cook a man who was later to become known as Jack *The Shingler*.



Casterton Community Museum



CDHS is located at the
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Issue No. 63 Archival Access Victoria

Bringing the Victorian Archives to you...

New will and probate records available

A new batch of will and probate records have arrived at PROV – bringing the complete collection right up to the end of 2010.

The new records also include records from 2009 that were not finalised until after the new 'CourtView' file management system was introduced in September of that year.

The new records are not currently included in the [online will and probates index](#) (but I spoke to PROV, they will be in the near future) – so for the time being you will need to use the "[Search within a series](#)" function on the PROV website.

You'll want to search within VPRS 17379 for the name of the deceased.

Some history for your ears

I've gotten on the podcast bandwagon. For those who don't know what a podcast is - it's an audio file made available over the internet - usually for free.

The most recent podcast I have subscribed to is 'Rum, Rebels & Ratbags' - created by the ABC. This series is the brainchild of David Hunt - historian and author of the book 'Girt - The Unauthorised History of Australia' and Dom Knight of ABC 702 in Sydney.

For those who haven't read 'Girt' - I recommend it. It is an educational and entertaining read. 'Rum, Rebels & Ratbags' - all about Sir Joseph Banks and his escapades, described in the episode as a celebrity playboy botanist.

You can download the podcasts direct from [SoundCloud](#) - or if you have an iPhone like me, you can get them for free through the Podcasts App (and I imagine other smartphones too).

Random House Research

A game I like to play every now and again - I call it 'Random House Research'. It's easy to play - next time you're out and about and you see an old house that looks like it may have a story or two to tell, jot down the address and go home and research it.

Start with TROVE by typing in the address, or the government gazette - you may get lucky and find some title details for you to dig even further into its history.

Find a name of someone who lived there? Research them too!

Did they live there when they passed away? Maybe a will or probate is available? If they died before 1925 and left a will you can get these for free on the PROV website – this could list items of furniture, details of the property. The story builds bit by bit...

It's a great way to flex your research muscles and also discover a bit more about the history of your town and its inhabitants.

Here is a photo of a house in Wodonga I pass every day – my current random house research focus. I'll let you know what I discover!



CDHS WEBSITE: we are the Web, visit us at

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