

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

October 2009

*Special items in our
newsletter:*

Dame Mary Gilmore
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History Week October page 3

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Historic photographs

**Next general
meeting of the
Casterton
Historical Society**

**Wednesday,
October 21st**

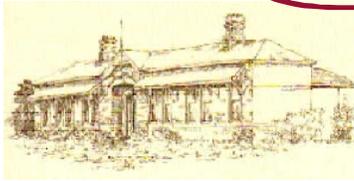
**at the RSL, Henty
Street, at 2pm**

***Please note change
of venue and time***



Sunday, October 4th, is the date of the next Historical Society outing: Dergholm with a picnic lunch at Baileys Rocks. We meet at the railway station at 10.30am.

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

The Life of Dame Mary Gilmore

by local historian, James Kent

Following a recent enquiry from Anthony McAleer from the Immigration Museum regarding the Gilmores, Jim Kent has provided some notes on the life of Dame Mary Gilmore 1865 – 1962.

Over the years our town of Casterton has been home to many notable people, one of whom was Dame Mary Jean Gilmore. Born to parents, Donald Cameron, a native of Inverness, Scotland, and Mary Ann (nee Beattie) whose parents had emigrated from County Armagh, the 16th of August 1865 saw the entry to this world, at Maryvale, near Goulburn, NSW, of a baby girl who would be named Mary Jean Cameron. Little did her farming parents know that their daughter would become an honored Australian, and have a royal honor bestowed upon her.

Her father could best be described as a “wanderer”, trying his hand at various pursuits, and by doing so moved his family around the more settled parts of NSW. Her mother was more of a settled nature, and while living in Sydney did some writing for various newspapers, and journals, printed at these times. No doubt her daughter, Mary Jean, inherited her remarkable writing skills from the maternal side of the family.

Mary’s schooling was of a broken nature owing to the nomadic lifestyle of living her parents adopted life. However she managed to complete her primary school to such a degree that it enabled her to become a pupil teacher at various schools. Later on in life she became a full-time teacher at schools sited at Silverton, NSW and Neutral Bay, around the close of the 1800’s.

It would have been while teaching at Neutral Bay that she struck up a friendship with that famous Australian writer Henry Lawson. Just how far this relationship between these two kindred people reached is unknown, as far as the romantic side of things is concerned. Lawson is reputed to have desired to marry Mary, but this cannot be verified.

Without doubt their lines of thought were on the same plane as both Mary and Henry wrote of the plight of the poor and exploited worker of the day, their articles being published in the Bulletin, a large and radical newspaper. Around this time the great shearers’ strike occurred, which saw the birth of the Labor Party. Mary supported this fledgling political party with her writings to both the Bulletin and the Worker, the A.W.U. newspaper and she also wrote articles and poems for the female side of this Union.

/...

And now we come to the part of her life when her name was to be changed from

ANOTHER FILM!!

**Film Night at the
Merino Hotel
Cinema**

**Another fantastic film
that was produced by
the Promoting
Heywood Committee
will be shown. This
high quality film takes
an historic look at the
timber industry in our
region**

To be held on

**Wednesday 18th
November at
6.30pm for dinner
and 8pm for the
film.**

**Cost is \$15.00 for
dinner & \$5.00 for the
film.**

**RSVP:
Ros Coventry
on
55 812875
by
Friday 13th November**

Cameron to Gilmore. There lived in the southern part of the old Glenelg Shire a family by name of Gilmore, in the area we know of as Myaring, but the property has long passed out of the Gilmore hands and today "Shallum" is in the hands of the third generation of Sullivan's.

The sons of the original Gilmore owner, as a means of making a living, used to travel the land by railways and bicycle to the northern states, and shear sheep on the great sheep stations of NSW and QLD. Conditions in those days were vastly different from today - so bad were they that it saw Jack Gilmore die of food poisoning at the age of 22 years. He is buried in the western Queensland town of Winton. His brother, William Andrew Gilmore, was to meet up with Mary Jean Cameron and from then on complete their lives together.

It so came about that one enterprising chap by name of William Lane had visions of establishing a New Australia in the far-off land of Paraguay. He collected around himself numerous disciples with the same ambition and among these were Will Gilmore and Mary Cameron. The consignment of visionaries sailed from Sydney to Paraguay in 1896 and commenced the establishment of this utopian colony, which sadly did not succeed.

William and Mary married whilst in Paraguay and left the newborn colony. William found work on a local ranch and Mary resumed her teaching and it was here that the only child of the marriage was born in 1898, a son who they called Dysart William Gilmore. The Gilmore family returned to Australia and lived on a property near the ancestral home of the Gilmores, their property was located in the area we know of as Wilkin.

It is some 35 years or more since I have been on this riverside property at Wilkin. Then the poplar trees that Mary planted were fully grown - legend has it that Mary brought the cuttings from Sydney wrapped in a damp flannel cloth. In later years after she had returned to Sydney this property of William and Mary Gilmore passed into the hands of Jack McDonald, better known as Quart Pot Jack, and from him to Constable Jack Phillips, who renamed it "The Ponderosa". It is presently a privately owned property and residence.

William Gilmore resumed his shearing career basing himself at Cloncurry, Western Queensland, where he had a brother who was a landowner. He was to die there and is buried in the Cloncurry cemetery.

Mary and her son were for some time domiciled in the southern end of McPherson Street, Casterton, so that her son could receive his education at the nearby primary school while Mary continued writing articles for the newspapers of the day. Then with her son she returned to Sydney where she continued her prodigious writings for all types of newspapers, both radical and otherwise. She had many books of prose and poems published, whilst all the time campaigning vigorously for a range of social and economic reforms.

She was a founding member of the Lyceum Club, Sydney, and also of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, a member of the Journalist Institute, the Australian Labor Party and the RSCPA.

She was to be honored and feted Australia wide, and in 1937 was made a Dame of the British Empire, which recognized her work for the poor and exploited. She died at 92 years old, and after a State funeral, was buried with her husband and son in the Cloncurry Cemetery.

The Railway station currently houses the Casterton Community Museum.

Railway Station 1937



Trains came to Casterton in 1884 and for the greater part of the following century the station was the hub of life in the district. The Architectural style is known as Victorian Period Gothic Revival (1851-1901).

A mixed passenger-goods train continued to operate on the Casterton Line until 1949 when the passenger service was withdrawn. In March 1954 a rail car service was trialed but was removed in July 1954. A goods train continued until the line was closed in March 1977.

The magnificent railway bridge spanning the Glenelg River was sold for removal in 1986 a little over a century after being built. This area with its historical and archeological significance is being restored with the aim to return it to a focal point of the town again.



Photo by
H A George:
Casterton
1868

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Jan Lier for further information: Ph. 0432 774314 or jlier3@bigpond.com or contact Ros on roscov@iprimus.com.au

Visit us on the Web at:
www.ballaratgenealogy.org.au/casterton/historicalsociety

VICTORIAN HISTORY WEEK IN OCTOBER

History week will be held from Monday 26th October. A Heritage Victoria grant has covered the costs of qualified historian from Melbourne to provide a significance assessment of the Casterton Community Museum collection and it is envisaged that the Historical Society will have various displays around town as well as at the Visitor Information Centre. Locations will be printed in the Casterton News prior to the 26th October but our photographs here might give some clues of where they will be.

The Premier's Community Volunteering Awards 2009

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Please visit www.awardsaustralia.com/PCVA to make your nomination, and send this e-flyer on to other people and organisations in your network!

NOMINATIONS CLOSE ON WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2009



Former Mechanics Institute before second story built
- now the site of current Town Hall



The Garrison's Bridge Inn Hotel
was on the site of the present
Tourist Information Centre from 1879 to approx 1919



Henty Street looking West, 1920

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