

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

JULY 2011

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

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The Butcher Shops of Casterton
by Jim Kent

**Office bearers nomination forms
for the AGM are enclosed with this
newsletter.**

**To be returned by Friday, 12th
August.**

**NEXT MEETING DATE and
LUNCH**

**Wednesday 17th August
at 2 pm AGM at the Albion Hotel
Lunch first from 12.30pm**

***Please advise Ros on 5581 2875 by
Wednesday 11th August if you will
attend the lunch before the meeting.***

Please note the new email address for
Jan Lier is jlir3@activ8.net.au

**Casterton New Cemetery Mapping
Project: continuing**



When you next go into a shop in Henty Street to purchase *fresh* meat, you are fortunate that we still have one such specialised family shop dealing in this commodity, plus a supermarket. Do you know where this meat comes from? How far away from Casterton was it slaughtered and how did it get here? How long ago did the beast from whence it came walk into the killing house?

The above questions, in all probability, you will not ask as mostly you just gasp at the displayed purchase price per item or per kilogram. Yet it is not that long ago we had four butcher shops in Henty Street and one out on the Coleraine Road, all dispensing products from their own slaughterhouses on the outskirts of town, using livestock either walked there or transported to them.

I expect it would have been one of the earliest of such a butcher shop in Casterton which still stands in Henty Street, now numbered as number 133. It was in the early days owned and operated by George Smith. Early lithographs of Henty Street show it to be quite a handsome shop with a horse-drawn delivery car in front of it. In later years opposite George Smith's shop the Murrell family for many years conducted a meat retailing shop, three generations being proprietors. This shop of Murrells then passed through several ownerships and finally when under the ownership of Damien Smith ceased trading as a butcher shop and is now White's Cybernetics.

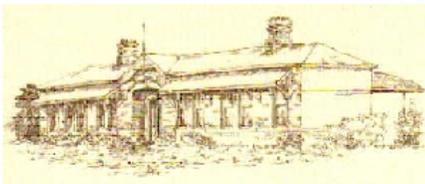
A bit further down Henty Street a family of brothers named McKenzie conducted a butcher shop for many years – a family who for generations were in the business providing meat sourced from their own local slaughterhouse. Today, after passing through various owners selling meat, this shop now trades as Living Elegance. Continuing in an easterly direction down Henty Street we arrive at another Murrell's butcher shop dispensing cuts of meat and smallgoods derivatives. After several ownerships and massive alterations this is now home to Murrell's Footwear, a shoe shop with the cellar still intact beneath.

Still further east along the street we come to what was Koch Brothers butcher shop dispensing meats grown on their own district properties and prepared in their own slaughter house. Again, this shop passed through a number of owners in the butchering trade until today it is the home of Glenny's Fish and Chip shop.



Merino Downs in 1920

Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh
1837-1925



The Coleraine Road butcher shop was located right on the town boundary and run by John Gunther and his family who lived in the adjoining house. The source of their meat came from their slaughter- house situated in nearby Mackwood Lane. It is no longer there because in the mid 1960s I purchased all this Gunther land in their area to build a transport depot, workshop and superphosphate supply shed. The old butcher shop was demolished and a concrete loading ramp built in its place.

To get back to my opening questions, I cannot supply you with any answers as to where or how fresh the meat is that now arrives in our town, per medium of refrigerated trucks. It is up to you, if so inclined, to ask the purveyor of its origin. Most certainly it is not local stock, killed in these previously mentioned butchers' own killing houses.

Gone are the days when Jack Gunther delivered his meat to customers around the town in his 1928 Model A Ford utility, driven by his daughter, Nell. And no longer does Robert Oliver McKenzie ply the street of Casterton with his "chopping cart". He would have sides of beef and bodies of sheep in this cart, calling on housewives for their orders. He would then cut up such orders direct from his cart, the meat having been sourced from his own killing house out on the Bahgallah Road and operated by his sons.

Lock Brothers had their meat sourced from their own slaughterhouse near the Casterton saleyards and worked by Bert Pretlove and Howard Roper, then delivered throughout the town by another horse and cart. The two Murrell meat shops were supplied from their slaughterhouse also out on the Bahgallah Road where a family of well-known meat-workers from generations back attended to this exercise. The boys and the father of the Buckle family were renowned for their expertise with the knife and meat cleaver.

Now, there's some food for thought...

Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh's account of his time at Muntham station continues/... *In the December of the previous year (1836) Hepburn and party had arrived at Hobson's Bay...* Yet four years before this Frank Jenkins (who died in 1903) was actually settled at Buckingham, on the Murrumbidgee River, near the present town of Narandera, but on the opposite side of the river. Frank was only twelve years old then, and a hot time he and his mates must have had with the blacks in the thick country among the anabranches of the Murrumbidgee. Frank Jenkins used to take cheeses and hams and bacon from Buckingham to Sydney in the old days in a bullock dray. Just imagine starting off in these early days over what was scarcely a bush track some 400 miles with a load of farm produce for Sydney. Plenty of grit that

By 1838 a good many Sydney men had pushed through to Port Phillip, among them as already mentioned my father-in-law, Captain Murchison, who was preceded by his son-in-law, Farquhar Mackenzie.

The history of the Muntham flock is a sad one. The Hentys were most successful breeders of Merino sheep in England. In fact, like Sir Samuel McCaughey, at one time in New South Wales, they "swept the board" at the sheep shows in England, so much so, that after a while no one would show

Casterton Community Museum



Island Park Lagoon

We're on the Web -
visit us at:

www.ballaratgenealogy.org/casterton/historical_society

To contribute to this newsletter,
please contact Jan Lier
at the Visitor Information
Centre on 5581 2070 or
e-mail at her **NEW** address
jlir3@activ8.net.au
or contact Ros at
roscov48@bigpond.com
tel 5581 2875

Our Address
PO Box 48
Casterton 3311
Phone: 5581 2070

Casterton Visitor
Information Centre
e-mail:
jlir3@activ8.net.au
roscov48@bigpond.com



against them, and their sheep had to be sent in as non-competitive, and merely for exhibition. In 1830 the Henty brothers took a number of these sheep to Tasmania, and their father, Thomas Henty, followed with another importation. The flock was kept intact without any mixture of other blood, and to the day of his death Mr. Henty never sold a ewe. At his death the whole flock was taken over to Port Phillip by his sons Frank and Edward. The latter, following his father's lead, never sold a ewe (at any rate up to the time I left Muntham in 1862).

Muntham is too rich country for the successful production of Merino sheep. The Muntham flock was never classed or culled; it was full of scab, and foot rot was very prevalent. There could only be one result. Moreover, the sheep had been inbred for years and years, and breeders knew well how prepotent are inbred stock. An inbred flock, herd, or stud requires more than careful management on account of this "prepotency," for necessarily not only will the good qualities be reproduced but it would also appear as if defects were even still more pronounced in the progeny.

The cost of running Muntham must have been very great. I'll just count it up. A sheep manager, cattle manager, two sheep overseers and their families, lead stockman, two stockmen, twenty shepherds, twelve hut-keepers, two grooms, two gardeners, a married couple, housemaid, four labourers. Then the cost of shearing, sheep-mustering, dipping for scab, foot rotting - I am that the sheep that the sheep were carried on at a loss. When I was at Muntham the sheep were small and the fleece extremely light the wool of beautiful quality, but like the wool on Mary's little lambs- It may, have fetched two bob a pound,
But then there was not any.

It will hardly be credited when I state that during the six years I was at Muntham, while not over 6000 sheep were sold, yet the flock did not increase in numbers. There were 55,000 sheep in 1856, and there were no more in 1862, and yet I am positive there were not 6000 wethers sold during the six years, and no ewes were ever sold. The decrease from disease and old age practically balanced the increase!

I should have mentioned that it was only in the spring and early summer that there were any fat sheep, and as everyone had fat sheep at that time of year, fats were at their lowest, and Mr. Henty would not accept the prices going. By the time prices recovered his wethers had fallen off, and were not marketable, and this went on year after year. The flock deteriorated so terribly that when Joe Pearson (another old mate of mine "over the sticks" -as true as steel and as plucky as you make them) bought the sheep in 1879, he could not find one ewe or one ram fit to breed from. The results attained in Tasmania by the good breeders there from similar sheep to those brought over by Mr. Henty in 1830 shows what might have been done with this one-time high-class and valuable flock.

Edward Henty imported some Cotswold ewes and rams from England while I was at Muntham. They did well, and were very prolific. I have often seen ewes with three lambs following them. In 1856 a Mr. McKenzie managed the sheep at Muntham; he came from Wyuna, on the Goulburn. Tom Henty, son of James Henty, of Melbourne, and nephew of Edward, had charge of the cattle and horses. McKenzie did not care about the dual management, and left, and was succeeded by a young Scotchman, Robert George Macpherson, who had had some experience with Mr. Rutherford on the Murray. MacPherson was a fine fellow, and very good-looking.

To be continued