

Casterton and District
Historical Society Inc
Newsletter

February 2013

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

Items in our newsletter:

The History of the Casterton Convent and the Angelus Bell
by Jim Kent
PROV News

Next Meeting

The next, our first meeting of the year, is the **annual BBQ on Wednesday, February 20th** at the Visitor Information Centre at 7pm. Please bring a plate - salad or sweet or fruit, and BYO drinks.



Sacred Heart Convent c 1940



Sacred Heart Pupils c 1911



The History of the Casterton Convent and the Angelus Bell by Jim Kent

The Catholic Church, as also the State, provided for the early education of children in Casterton. The Church was allotted a building site in Robertson Street and building started with the laying of the foundation stone of the church in 1886. This meant the arrival of the teaching order of nuns, the Sisters of Mercy.

Alongside the church the Hibernian Society erected their hall which for many years served as the Sacred Heart Primary School. On the north side was built the presbytery for the accommodation of the Reverend Fathers and their housekeeper. Also on the north side of the presbytery the Hibernian Society purchased another block of land, still vacant today.

On the south side of the church was a substantial block of land bordered by Robertson Street and Sheils Terrace which was owned by the Dunrobin Estate. The Estate then commissioned the energetic firm of A E Smith and Co, Stock and Station Agents and Auctioneers to sell this vacant block of land.

Naturally this firm looked about for potential buyers and as the Catholic Church and the Hibernian Hall and Presbytery were extensive land holders right next door, they concluded this congregation could well be a very interested party to purchase this large neighbouring block of land. So they sowed the seed to the parish priest that there was a certain body intent on buying this block on the corner and building a set of sale yards on it for the selling of livestock.

This news duly concerned the parish priest who was heard to remark that he had enough trouble competing with bawling babies during his services and he did not want bellowing cattle contributing to the bedlam. So the parish of the Sacred Heart bought this large block of land on the corner and then invited the Order of the Sisters of Mercy to build a convent on it and thus consolidate their activities in one large building. They had previously been operating out of numerous houses and in 1906 the magnificent two-storied brick tiled building of the Convent of Mercy was erected.



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.



Henty Street - 1890s



C 1911



Sacred Heart Convent and Church c1940



It housed all the nuns, those who taught, those who did the cooking and those who attended to the laundry. It was also a boarding school and home to numerous girls of the district during their schooling years.

The teaching nuns were comprehensive in the subjects they taught including music and all manner of musical instruments, languages, commercial principles, etiquette and all general subjects taught to a large range of male and female students irrespective of the students' religious beliefs. A handyman was employed to milk the cows, cut the wood for heating and cooking, trim the hedges and plant and attend the flower and vegetable gardens and to look after the tennis and basketball courts.

What really rang the eventual death knell for the Convent was the result of the wishes of the first Reverend Mother of the Order. The architect who drew up the plans had wanted the building as close as possible to Robertson street but the Reverend Mother wanted it out on the brow of the hill for viewing appreciation, so that is where it was built. The unstable ground in latter years caused all sorts of problems with the building and in the end it had to be demolished before it fell over.

Just near the Convent was the Angelus Bell tower from which a huge cast iron bell, was rung regularly at 6am, 12 noon and 6 pm to remind the faithful to say a prayer and also give notice of the time to those labourers who could not afford a watch. The ringing of the bell was done by pulling a long chain that hung from the crank of the bell.

Another larrikin and I got up to some mischief with the bell one day which we thought was hilarious. In those pre-war days all households on Toorak Hill had a few house cows that roamed along the laneways and the hill common where they were extremely resourceful in sourcing their food from gardens, hedges - any other edible delights - these old cows knew how to go about eating them.

The McPherson brothers had a chaff mill down on the river bank near the old bridge so we borrowed a sheaf of oaten hay, unbeknownst to them. We tied this sheaf of hay with the seed heads down on to the chain that rang the bell, just high enough up so the cows could reach it, then we hid up a nearby tree and waited. Old Father E V Ryan came flat out round the corner of the church to see who was ringing the bell at three in the afternoon. We thought this a great joke and he didn't catch us as we were well hidden up in the pine tree.

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There are three Sisters of Mercy buried in the Casterton New Cemetery

Sr. M Marcella (Sheahan) - died December 16th 1929

Sr. M Joseph (Rowan) - died July 13th 1943

Sr. M Veronica (Mathews) - died 21st June 1970





Sister M Veronica Sister M Joseph

Photos and text: thanks to the Friends of the Casterton New Cemetery.

We're on the Web - visit us at:

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

CDHS is located at the Casterton Visitor Information Centre

e-mail:

castertonhistorical@hotmail.com

Our address:

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Casterton 3311 Phone: 5581 2070

To visit the Casterton

Community Museum: call

David Coventry on **5581 2475** or

email at davidccoventry@yahoo.com.au

To contribute to this newsletter, please contact Jan Watt at the Visitor Information Centre on 5581 2070 or e-mail at janwatt1957@gmail.com or contact Ros at roscov48@bigpond.com tel 5581 2875



OBITUARY - Sister M Veronica (Mathews) (1877 – 1970)

Casterton News, June 22nd 1970

The death has occurred of Sister Veronica Mathews of Casterton Convent of Mercy. Sister Veronica who was 93 years old spent the last four and a half years in the Sisters of Mercy Hospital in Geelong. Sister Veronica spent 84 years in Casterton during which time she was greatly loved and respected.

The Reverend Mother said today that Sister Veronica (Gertrude Mathews) was in the laundry, kitchen and domestic section of her order. She greatly endeared herself to boarders at the Convent.

Her father came from Ireland and Sister Veronica was born at Goroke in 1877.

She has three nieces and a nephew. They are Mrs. McDonald (Waubra), Mrs O Bolger (East Kew) , Mrs C L Fox (Pemberton WA) and Mr P Tierney.

Sister Veronica entered Casterton Convent of Mercy in October 1906. Her funeral will leave Casterton Sacred Heart Church tomorrow at the conclusion of Requiem Mass beginning at noon, for the Casterton Cemetery. Daughter of Patrick and Mary Mathews.

Obituary - Sister Mary Joseph (Rowan) (1874-1954)

Casterton News, July 15th 1954.

Sister Mary Joseph, who passed away on Monday night at the age of 80 years, was a teacher at the Casterton Convent for 42 years. During that time nearly 1,000 children, most of whom are still resident in this district, passed through her hands. The Convent was established here in 1902 and in 1907 Sister Joseph came from Ballarat. She retired from active teaching in 1949.

Following a Requiem Mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart this morning, the funeral took place at the Casterton Cemetery. School children formed a guard of honor both at the Church and at the grave

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Origin of the name of Corndale

The name "Corndale" is really a corruption of the word "Corrundal". This name was given to a swamp about five miles to the north west of where the Corndale School was sited on account that a man by that name of "Corrundal" had camped there for some time. He was probably a shepherd. When the residents of the district were applying for a State School, and a name was being sought, Corndale was decided upon as a simplification of the word Corrundal.

Source: History of Corndale document, unknown author.

CDHS WEBSITE: we are the Web - visit us at

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

Forgotten Australians remembered - National Library of Australia: the Library is releasing a commemorative booklet to mark the third anniversary of the National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. In 2006, the Library launched a national oral history project to record the stories of these remarkable Australians. Over 200 interviews have been recorded to date, with many already available [online](#).

