

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

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Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on
Wednesday, March 20th at the RSL
at 7pm.



Casterton New Cemetery



Headstone Symbols in Cemeteries

by Jim Kent

One of the modern types of headstone can be viewed on the west boundary of the Roman Catholic section of the Casterton New Cemetery. This is a magnificent tombstone signifying the final resting place of one of my sons-in-law, John Garvey. John W Garvey married my daughter, Leonie, and they had one son, Jackson. John was a licensed plumber and Leonie a law clerk. Both John and Leonie were outstanding athletes, excelling in individual and team sports. Tragedy struck the young family while they were on a working tour of Australia, and the result of a dreadful accident. John was Chief Plumber at an iron ore mine at Shay's Gap in Western Australia and Leonie was in an advanced state of pregnancy with their second child. On a particular weekend when John was off-duty, an emergency arose with a water bore and he was called in to rectify the fault.

To sum up the accident, somehow John came into contact with an electrical generator which was being used in the repair work, and he received a fatal charge of electricity. The mine owners did everything possible to alleviate Leonie's suffering and his body was brought back to Casterton, his funeral being held in June 1992, one of the largest ever witnessed here. Leonie had a magnificent monument erected over the grave.

Writing of John's death brings to mind an amazing set of facts. I married in February 1951 and in February 2013 this amounts to sixty two years of marriage for me. During the sixty two years my family has experienced only two deaths, John Garvey in 1992 and my wife, Jean, on 11th March 2004 from Leukemia. The amazing statistic is that with children, grandchildren, and their partners, there is at the time of writing in December 2012 a total of 101 members of the family of Jean and myself. All family members experience excellent health and their careers see them all around Australia and the world.

A tombstone which is a splendid example of the monumental mason's trade is that of a lifelong friend, John Charles McCallum, and his wife, Grace. This is situated south east of the Rotunda just before turning east on the road to the Lawn section, on the corner of the Presbyterian section. The Lawn section is south of the Presbyterian and faces east-west and



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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.

Casterton New Cemetery



Sacred Heart Convent and Church c1940



Sacred Heart Pupils c 1911



Henty Street c 1910



contains eighteen grave sites in multiple rows, commencing usage in January 1995. Since then this type of grave has grown in use. Headstones or grave markers vary between cemeteries - some are brass plaques level with the ground, others on raised concrete slabs, some on angular slabs and some on continuous concrete plinths. In the Casterton New Cemetery the sections are divided into bays by continuous plinths.

There is a choice of styles of headstones permitted in this Lawn section – they can be grey granite or dark marble, the tops can be rectangular or fluted, descriptions in gold, silver or a darker colour. The headstones sit on a similar material base, giving the sites an orderly appearance. The Trust members endeavour to maintain a lawn covering over the grave sites, watering being carried out during the hotter months through a tank hooked up to a pumping pressure system, but the nature of the sandy soil does not lend itself to a high quality lawn appearance.

The types of headstones themselves need some explanation of the meanings they endeavour to convey. In the cemeteries of coastal towns there is often seen a headstone in the shape of a boat anchor signifying the occupant was seafarer, and this also represents a very early form of the Christian cross. A beautiful marble angel guards the grave site of Isabella Harris in the Casterton New Cemetery. Angels are meant to represent agents of the Christian God and are also believed to be heavenly figures leading us to assume the grave's occupant has ascended to heaven.

Often you will come across butterflies fluttering around the headstones of children's graves which are meant to represent the life of the child as caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly as three stages of a short life. In the early days of Christian funerals quite often candles were lit in holders incorporated into the headstones which were meant to convey the message that prayers have been said for the deceased. A number of various shapes of crosses adorn the tops of headstones in Christian countries, sometimes a straight two sections and sometimes with the centre encircled by a Celtic ring.

A dove on a headstone signifies that the grave occupant is at peace with the world and suggests purity and spirituality. A dragon may be used by Chinese people to impart the sense of immense power. Two joined hearts on a headstone means that the occupants were husband and wife, and the figure of a lamb identifies that the grave holds the remains of an innocent child. At times a scroll is used to indicate that a life is unfolding from uncertain length and past to a hidden future. It may also contain information relevant to the honour and commemoration of the interred.

The Jewish faith adorn their members' graves with the six pointed Star of David which is virtually two triangles with apex upward and downward, signifying divine protection. Occasionally you observe a torch incorporated into the design to advise viewers that the grave occupant has gone to eternal life. An arch over a double grave indicates that the occupants have been joined together in Heaven. A single complete column means the grave bearer had lead a noble life. A broken-off top of a column means that the grave bearer had an early death. Columns can be circular, plain-sided, pointed or capped.



We're on the Web - visit us at:

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

CDHS is located at the Casterton Visitor Information Centre

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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 rosco48@bigpond.com tel 5581 2875



Crossed swords indicate that a life was lost in battle. A rare but strange one is that of a snake in a circle which is supposed to mean everlasting life in Heaven. Joined hands on a headstone means the grave's occupants were in a partnership or relationship. A crown on a headstone means the occupant has gone to their reward and glory. Sometimes a horseshoe emblem is used to give protection from evil and also to indicate that the occupant had equine interests. We can observe the Masonic symbols of the compass and square, ancient instruments used by the originators of this movement when they were the builders of the great edifices in ancient times. It signifies the grave occupant was a member of this organisation.

Cemeteries should not be seen as places of great sadness but rather perceived as hallowed ground where we reverently inter our loved ones and honour their final resting place with a long-lasting type of monument bearing their significant details. Some nationalities favour mausoleums whilst others prefer crypts or vaults - as in everything, a matter of personal choice.

From PROV NEWS: Lost the plot?

Every so often I receive a query from someone suffering 'the brick walls'. Sometimes there is little that a record from PROV can do to ease the pain. In most cases, these requests relate to where someone's final resting place is. PROV does hold some [cemetery records](#) - including burial registers lists or index to burials - but there are only a handful of cemeteries included in this collection. My first question to people who contact me for burial information is this - "Have you seen the death certificate?". To my surprise, the answer is usually no.

Death certificates contain a wealth of information - including the place of burial - and it is wise to consider if spending \$20 can answer your question instead of sending me into the Archives to perhaps turn up nothing at all! Even if a death certificate only tells you the name of the cemetery, you can still find out a bit more through a quick search on Google, TROVE or by ringing the cemetery trust to see if they have a burial register. One website that I have used quite often is '[Carol's Headstone Photographs](#)'. There are hundreds of Victorian cemeteries listed and if you contact Carol, she will send you a photo of the headstone of any person listed on the website - free. It is a great service and an excellent resource. There is also a blog which lists new cemeteries added and updates to ones already photographed - see it [here](#). If you're unlucky enough to have a death certificate that doesn't list the burial place (and they do exist!) you can always create a short-list of possible cemeteries based on the place where the individual died, or where their family is buried.

CDHS WEBSITE: we are the Web - visit us at

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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](#).

