

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

Next Meeting

The AGM will be held on **Wednesday, 21st August at the Albion Hotel at 2pm.** Lunch from 12 noon. Please advise the Albion directly if you wish to book for lunch.

Executive Committee Nominations

Nominations will only be accepted in the format of the supplied form.

A member can nominate for only one committee position. Members at the AGM can endorse a member already holding a position to fill the vacancy.

Each nomination form must bear the signature of the nominee and be supported, in writing, by 2 full members who are eligible to vote and whose signatures must also be on the form.

Close of nominations is 5pm, Wednesday 14th August 2013 and must be sent to the secretary by this date.



Nareen school c 1919

PLACE NAMES AROUND THE CASTERTON DISTRICT by James Kent

In August of 1836 Major Thomas Mitchell and his exploration party were the first people of European descent to pass through what is now Casterton and district. The Major was so impressed by the beautiful geographical features and the verdant native pastures growing thereon that in his journal he referred to this locale as Australia Felix. Upon the Major's arrival at the bay now known as Portland, although he was surprised to see that settlement had taken place there, he reported to the Henty brothers, who were engaged in whaling and to a lesser degree primary production at this bay on the southern ocean, that to the north of there he had just travelled through some amazingly fertile country.

It did not take long for the Henty Brothers to blaze a trail up from the coast and we see Edward take up Muntham and Connells Run, Francis at Merino Downs and John at Sandford House and they were quickly followed by others from Van Dieman's Land. A veritable flood of land seekers crossed Bass Strait to take up this virgin and fertile pasture land we now know as the Western District of Victoria.

Amongst these new arrivals was a man called Edmund Morton who took up a selection of land immediately south of the Casterton township, which became known as Morton's Run or The Cattle Station, later on to become Springbank. Morton met a tragic end when, in 1840, for some reason or another the local aboriginals killed him.

Morton and one of his workers, William Lawrence, known as Larry the Tonguer (so named because he used to cut out the tongues from the whales at Henty's Whaling Station at Portland) were out stripping stringy bark to roof a woolshed when they were raided by aboriginals and murdered. The area where they were camping was soon found by a search party, and on the coals of their fire were part remains of Morton and Larry; their skeletons were on the ground and what flesh the aboriginals had left was taken by the dingoes. This run was then abandoned.

John McPherson, who was a nephew of William Murray who had the pastoral property Dunrobin immediately to the north of Casterton, then took up Morton's Run and held it from 1842-1852 and as such this relationship may account for Springbank becoming part of Dunrobin in 1842. In the year 1838 John McPherson became the first white resident landholder in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, then known as Limestone Plains. He named the property Springbank Station and built himself a homestead on the high ground which today forms Springbank Island in Lake Burley Griffin. John, in 1839, moved his family down to the Port Phillip district of New South Wales (later Victoria), then moving west in the December of 1841 he took up twenty five thousand acres of land near what is now Casterton which he also named Springbank Station.



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. Price \$25.

Sacred Heart Pupils c 1911



Henty Street / Tyers Street corner
Glennelg Inn 1873



Chetwynd Hall WW1 memorial unveiling

Following McPherson was Samuel P Hawkins 1852-54, Edmund Kirby 1854-62, William H Tuckett in 1862, Henry Miller 1869 and then Alexander S Murray 1876. This run was forfeited in 1881.

The Duffy Land Act of 1862 made blocks of land available to selectors and as a result of this Land Act Springbank was surveyed and was then known as the Parish of Bahgallah, County of Follett. The blocks of land surveyed were not of a very large acreage but the applicants for ownership were great in numbers, and the actual quality of the land varied somewhat. Geographically, Bahgallah could be referred to as 'high' country, and the well known Kanawinka fault line runs through it, with a gravel deposit closely aligned to it.

Bahgallah is obviously of aboriginal origin and it means place of galahs, a beautifully coloured grey and pink bird of the parrot family. The first settlers at Bahgallah were John McIntyre and his son, Murdoch, who took possession of their land in the March of 1866. Other original settlers to take up land in Bahgallah were Joseph Grummett, Patrick O'Connell, Archie Wombwell, Jeremiah Lehane and Israel Grinham to name a few. To augment their income the original settlers took on outside work. They became timber workers, shearers, farm labourers, fencers and teamsters using horse and bullock teams to motivate their wagons. Allen McIntyre, Pat O'Connell, Jimmy 'the Whip' Smith, Frank Humphries and Billy Smith were some of the teamsters in the early days of Bahgallah. At the time of writing there are some descendants of the very first Bahgallah settlers still living on the original blocks, Ethel Stone and Maurice O'Connell, whilst around the Casterton districts many descendants of the original Bahgallah settlers are located.

There once was a hotel at Bahgallah called the Torwood Inn and the licensee was a Mr Yea. It was only licensed for the year of 1866 and a Casterton auctioneer by the name of Peachey offered it for sale in 1866. Sadly I can't tell you where it was located or much information about it. In the early years of our country liquor licenses were granted by the local Court Houses, at a later date in the 1900s these licenses were granted by a Licensing Court in the capital city of the state. If any person knows where that pub was, please do let me know.

According to the Bahgallah Primary School No 1586 Centenary Booklet 1875-1975, the school opened for the intake of pupils in June of 1875. This came about following a petition organized by Edward Tanner, Israel Grinham, John Deyer, Fred Marchant and Thomas Ryan. The petition started in 1872 and by 1875 had brought results; a Mr Thomas Evans was the Head Teacher of school No 1586 which had at the end of 1875 an enrolment of fifty five children.

I remember reading about the problem of education in the early days of this country when the Education Department of that time endeavoured to have a school available so that no child would be further away from it than four miles. The Bluff School would have accommodated the settlers' children who were further south than Bahgallah. A common practice in those times was two schools, some distance apart, sharing one teacher for alternative days.

Out to the west of Casterton is an area known as Lake Mundi. Yes there is a lake, or maybe you would term it a swamp. In any case it was named after a military gentleman by the name of Lieutenant Alfred M Mundy, late of the 21st Regiment, who passed through that way in 1839 with a survey party on their way from Port Phillip, New South Wales to Adelaide, South Australia, many years ago. At one time it did have saw mills, schools and even a hotel called the Halfway House, because it was a changing station for coach horses halfway between Casterton and Penola. Annie Mangan was the Licensee of this hotel back in the days of horse-drawn coaches.





Post office 1897



CDHS is located at the Casterton Visitor Information Centre
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To visit the Casterton Community Museum:
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To contribute to this newsletter, please contact Ros at the Visitor Information Centre on 5581 2070 or e-mail at roscov48@bigpond.com
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Still in a westerly direction, we have a settlement known as Strathdownie, a name of strong Scottish origin. This settlement also had schools, a post office, churches and a hotel named after the district. At one time Mr McFarlane was the Licensee, then Edward John Balkin took over. Strathdownie residents established a cemetery, which is still in use today.

Moving now in a southerly direction we come to Merino, at one time quite a town. First known as Paddy Waterholes, it then was officially named Merino, I suppose after the breed of sheep of that name. Consisting of shops, hotels, railway station, flour mill, schools, churches, race course, clubs and societies, today, like most other small towns, it quietly slumbers on. Just a bit further south was Emu Creek settlement. Now known as Digby, it too had its day of churches, hotels, race course, shops and so on, and still lives on today as a residential settlement which supports a hotel/store, churches and a hall.

Out to the north east of Casterton is the site of the very first attempt at closer settlement. It took place with the government of the day buying the Wando Vale Station of ten thousand acres and breaking it up into smaller holdings which were taken up by the settlers. Sadly, very few of these original settlers have descendants living at Wando Vale, so named by the explorer Sir Thomas Mitchell, after his meeting with an aboriginal female while on his way through to the coast.

Further on in the same direction is the settlement of Chetwynd. Now this settlement also has its origin from Mitchell's exploration party, the Major's second in command being named Granville William Chetwynd Stapylton, and the good Major named the stream that flows through the settlement after him also. Today its stores, hotel, race course, school, churches and post office are gone and it is mainly a residential settlement, while still retaining its original name.

Moving a little more to the northwest of Casterton we pass through yet another early settlement, this time identified by the name of Dergholm. I suppose the original surveyors just put this name on their maps as Dergholm Station was in this locality. Another theory is that the name Dergholm originated from the word Darscholm.

The word itself has, to me, an Anglicised origin as in England the word *holm* was to describe a home, whilst in Ireland *derg* is to be found naming a lake or a river and as Dergholm is situated on the Glenelg River, with its adjacent billabongs, possibly the original owners of Dergholm Station coined this name for it. In any case there it is, still a viable settlement, at one time much more so.

You must remember the advent of the motor vehicle spelt *finis* to these small settlements that arose around the larger ones, in this case, Casterton. Just imagine all these little settlements around Casterton township, much like satellites, and now in this day and age we see small towns like Casterton falling victim to nearby cities. Within, and on the boundaries of these cities, massive multipurpose shopping complexes have been built by equally huge companies and it is to these massive commercial premises the motor vehicle takes the prospective purchaser. Everything is in favour of these complexes, cheaper prices for the multitude of goods on offer, close-by parking of your vehicle, freshness of items on sale and intense competition ensures lower prices than those which the smaller shop keeper can offer.

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CDHS WEBSITE: we are the Web - visit us at
<http://www.swvic.org/castertonhistoricalsociety.htm>

