

# Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

## To Be or Not to Be Divided

by Jim Kent

Although there have been, and still are, skirmishes of various intensities, we have had only one civil war in our great land and that was on Eureka Hill in Ballarat. World conflicts have not in a great sense affected us, although bombing around the northern coast line and submarine action in Sydney Harbour occurred during WW2.

Prior to Federation in 1901 Australia was virtually just one big island, then came the big cut-up and mythical lines appeared on maps, state governments were appointed and there we are, all snapping at one another. Local government pleaded with state government for funds; state government badgered the Commonwealth government for money and on each side Capitalism and Socialism roared and bellowed at one another, each proclaiming to be right.

When analysed, we are one of the most over-governed people, following the Westminster style of government with leanings toward the British style of Governors, Heads of State, Prime Minister and so on. Perhaps it is not a bad way when you look about the world and perceive the state of other countries with alternative styles of government. But, did you know that at one time in Victoria another state almost came into being.

The State of Victoria came into being in 1851. In 1861 great rumblings occurred amongst the colonists in the south west of Victoria and the south east of South Australia. A huge petition was circulated in these areas seeking signatures to a move to partition an area and create a new state which was to be known as Princeland. The area proposed for the new state was roughly bounded to the north by the Murray River, to the west where the River Murray enters the Southern Ocean, to the east by a straight line from Port Campbell in Victoria to the Murray, and as the south boundary, the ocean.

This petition had its birthplace in Portland with the Henty brothers stirring the pot, hoping that their base in the port of Portland would profit from such a move as it would become the main port for import and export. The main cause of dissent was that neither Melbourne nor Adelaide governments paid much attention to these far away parts of their states. Leagues were formed in towns located in the proposed area. Indeed, Casterton's people very strongly supported the petition.

Not so strong was the support in the coastal towns. Not one signature was gained in Warrnambool town. Meetings were called in all the towns, committees formed, loud voices proclaiming the benefits that would occur naturally. The powers in Melbourne and Adelaide reared up and voiced



### NEXT MEETING:

**Wednesday, 15th October at  
2.00 pm at the RSL**

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### AGM: new line-up of Executive members

President: Evelyn Pevitt  
Secretary: Ros Coventry  
Treasurer: David Coventry  
Vice President: Noel Norris  
Archivist: Ros Coventry

### Historic homestead visit

September 17th: visit to Murndal near Merino-Hamilton.

If not done so, please register your interest.

Advise by phone or email if you are attending - we need to have an exact number of visitors, the number being limited.

**Evelyn** tel **5581 1206**

evelyn.pevitt@gmail.com

or **David** tel **5581 2475**

davidccoventry@yahoo.com.au

Meet on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> Sept at  
the old Railway Station at  
9.30am.**

Bring a picnic lunch / refreshments.



**Clean-up at the Old Cemetery**

There will be another one soon, to be advised. October is the date for the unveiling of the names of the unmarked graves.

**KENT'S CORNER:**

Copies available at the VIC of Volume 2: **Roamin' Round the Town** the Visitor Information Centre: cost is \$25. All copies of volume one have been sold.

Henty Street /Tyers Street corner /McKinlays Glenelg Inn 1873



condemnation of such a disloyal move.

Eventually, in 1863, the petition went to London for approval by the Monarch where it was quickly dismissed and most certainly not approved, and so ended the hopes of Hamilton as a capital city and Portland a main shipping port. Every now and then the public have a go to cut the ties that still bind our country to the British monarchy. Most of us can remember the last referendum when some wanted Australia to become a republic but the No vote fixed that idea.

From my point of view, I believe we are very much over-governed and massive amounts of tax-gathered monies are squandered on the salaries and pensions of members of the various parliaments, many of whom in their tenures have possibly not contributed any great effort for the benefit of their constituents.

You wouldn't think we lived in just one country. In Victoria the speed limit is 100 kph, but drive sixty seven kilometres to the SA border, cross a mythical line, and you can legally do 110 kph. I had been a cane cutter in Queensland for three years before I was legally entitled to enter the bar of an hotel. The legal age was twenty one, yet at eighteen you could be given a gun and trained to shoot your fellow human being. For the life of me I cannot see why all the states cannot have same rules.

I used to drive vintage cars and trucks to rallies all over Australia but to go over to WA I had to register the vehicles in that state to attend a rally. Many years ago if you went over to Mount Gambier for the weekend you had to go the police station and get a visitors' sticker for the windscreen. It seems quite ridiculous that we are not able to agree on so many matters. But despite all the little differences we are most certainly privileged to live in the best country in the world.

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**The Bills Water Troughs** by Jim Kent

I believe I have discovered one of the three Bills water troughs that once were sited at different locations around Casterton. The Historical Society has one of these troughs in the railway station grounds near the WW1 Howitzer gun shed.

The original placing of these troughs were one on the Coleraine road just up from the Portland road turn off, another on the side of what was known as Shiels Terrace between the Old Mill (now Karingal depot) and the Bee Hive store (one time skin store), and the third was in McKinlay Street near the bottom railway gate opposite Tuckett Street.

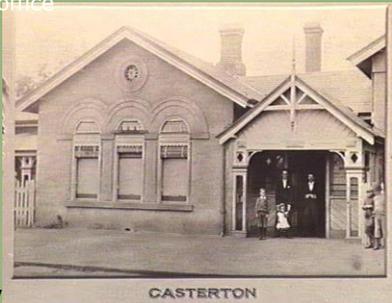
I have noticed in a garden of a house on Racecourse Road a trough that looks very much like a Bills. Currently it is covered with a net possibly because it may have herbs or strawberries growing in it. I will keep my eyes open to confirm if it is an original.

Our Society came by the one we have thanks to Bob Mitchell. The Glenelg Shire as custodians of the Shell Spirit Hill had placed one of these troughs hooked up to the water main from the water basins in Henty Street for stock agisted on this hill paddock. Bob got them to replace it with another trough.

As a small boy, over eighty years ago, the high back on these troughs used to fascinate me as I tried to decipher the writing inscribed on



Casterton Community Museum  
post office



1897

## Casterton Historical Society 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2014

CDHS is located at the  
**Casterton Visitor  
Information Centre**  
e-mail: [castertonhistorical@hotmail.com](mailto:castertonhistorical@hotmail.com)  
tel: 5581 2070



**PO Box 48, Casterton  
3311**

**To visit the Casterton  
Community Museum in  
Jackson Street:**  
call **David Coventry** on  
**5581 2475** or email at  
[davidccoventry@yahoo.com.au](mailto:davidccoventry@yahoo.com.au)

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

To contribute to this newsletter,  
please contact Ros at the Visitor  
Information Centre on 5581 2070  
e-mail: [roscov48@bigpond.com](mailto:roscov48@bigpond.com)  
tel 5581 2875



the back and what connection this had. The writing simply stated “donated by Annis and George Bills, Australia”. The reason for the particular original site goes back to the time when farm produce coming into town came by horse-drawn vehicles and the teams coming from a northerly direction could be watered at the Coleraine road trough.

The teams bringing produce to the Old Mill, S H Waters wool and skin store, or McPherson Brothers chaff cutting store, would avail themselves of the Shields Terrace trough. The teams pulling wagons with goods for the railways to further deliver would use the McKinlay trough, all of these troughs linked to the water main for constant supply.

The troughs were to be seen in almost every town of size in Victoria and the Riverina areas of NSW. Indeed I believe there some even in other countries. Some had an even smaller trough attached for dogs to drink from.

Some years back we had two school teachers working in Casterton, Jan and Kevin Barker, who took a great interest in the location and history of the water troughs. Through my wide travels to veteran and vintage car rallies I would record where I saw such a trough and they would add them to their recording book.

It was from my dear old Dad that I learned the meaning of the writing on the troughs. (I thought the Annis had some connection with the aniseed lollies). He knew all about it and I can still remember him telling me the story. It all started around the beginning of the nineteenth century when a wealthy, childless couple who were animal lovers, decided that they could alleviate the thirst of domesticated animals by having watering points at the places where animals were likely to frequent.

George Bills was born in England in 1859 and both he and his brother came out to Australia and made a living by trapping and selling birds from a shop in Brisbane. The brothers started wire weaving, possibly as a hobby, and eventually went into the business of making wire bed mattresses and then into a most financially successful business making inner spring mattresses. It was from the income of the business that George and Annis Bills could have hundreds of these troughs placed throughout Victoria and New South Wales.

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### Archival Access Victoria - not just a list of records

The PROV catalogue isn't just good for finding out what records are at the archives, but also for finding out a lot about the records themselves. You can learn a lot about Victoria's history from the catalogue entries, and you may even spark an idea in your mind about how a seemingly unrelated record might shed some light on your own research - I did when I discovered 'G W Brown's Notebooks' among records held by the Education Department. Gilbert Wilson Brown was a school inspector and his notebooks were his own personal record of his inspections of various schools (including denominational) during the 1860's. G W Brown visited the North East and Alpine areas seven times during the 1860's - visiting the local schools where my ancestors attended. And I even confirmed a 'Kelly' story (as I know we all have them!) with Brown's notebooks showing that my G-G-Grandfather, John Boyce, attended the Woolshed school with Joe Byrne in the early 1860's. So if you find yourself with a few moments spare, jump on the PROV catalogue and have a brows - who knows what you might discover.

### Public Records Office of Victoria

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