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newsletter:*

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Next Meeting
August 19th AGM

of the Casterton Historical
Society to be held at the
Glenelg Inn at 2pm.

Guest Speaker is Councillor
Bruce Cross.

Nomination forms were
attached / included in July's
newsletter and nominations
should be returned to the
Secretary by 5pm, Friday
7th August.

General meetings held 3rd
Wednesday of the month at
the Glenelg Inn, 7pm.

Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

The Power Station at Casterton

by local historian, Jim Kent

In the July edition I wrote of a large building located in the northern end of McPherson Street, Casterton. In this edition I will describe another large building in the southern end of McPherson Street.

In my youth this building was referred to as "the power station", this description no doubt being derived from the fact that it produced electrical power. But we have to go back to its progenitor which was located alongside of it and was in work as a freezing factory where farm produce was dealt with and sold off to purchasers in frozen form in the first decade of 1900.

Naturally electricity was required to operate the freezing works where rabbits, pigs, lambs and butter were prepared for human consumption. This electricity was only for "in-house" use as the households and streets of Casterton used either kerosene, gas or candles for lighting purposes. As a child I knew of this freezing works as "the butter factory" and it was from this factory that the electricity was sourced to light the streets around 1918-20.

To service this venture an entirely new company was formed, which in turn built an entirely new building housing new engines and generators. The foundation stone for the new power station was laid in 1933 and unveiled by Councillor John Little from Sandford.

The Chairman of the new company was Mr P Q Pinnell and the directors were Mr J Somerville, Mr W Stark, Mr J McCome, Mr H MacKinnon and as Secretary, Mr W Clevedon.

To drive the generator an old oil-fired engine was used until the company purchased a massive 116 HP gas-fired engine coupled to a generator. When the new building was completed two new Ruston-Hornsby engines and generators were installed, plus a couple of smaller oil-fired engines and generators to boost power output. The Ruston and Hornsby engines ran on gas produced in retorts loaded with red gum wood which when burning produced a gas which these engines sucked into their combustion chambers.

Naturally around the 1930s there was not the tomcatting, going on as does with today's younger generation, so the company saw fit to turn off supply to the street lights at midnight acting under the assumption that all respectable Casterton residents would be by then safely esconced in their beds. Later, to supply the increase of electric power, legend has it that the company installed a huge diesel engine that reportably had once powered a German U-boat or submarine.

Some of the workforce I first remember are Jim Harris as Manager, George

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Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project



Held on the 2nd and 4th Saturday from 10 am to 12 noon will commence again in September and the return of balmy weather, one hopes. We are now about three quarters of the way through mapping the entire cemetery.



Milward and Harry Rittman as floor attendants, and Jack Hutchins and Reg Speed as juniors.

Jim Harris used a 1926 Dodge buckboard as the line maintenance vehicle, and later on Arthur Goode came on as Manager. Charlie Anderson, a local builder, was awarded the contract to build the new “power house” made with cement blocks, the foundation stone being granite from a Dergholm source. The power house then provided the domestic, industrial and street lighting until around the 1960s when the tentacles of the SEC began to stretch all over Victoria.

As this supply was superior and most times silent and constant, the era of each town having its own generating supply came to an end. The State Electricity Commission took over from the Casterton Electric Supply Company and for some time used this stately old building as its depot until moving to more modern premises in Russell Street.

The building was sold at auction and used as a storage site for some time. Later it was to become the site of an engineering works and steel fabrication shop, and as it stands today, under new ownership, semi-converted to a gymnasium and exercise centre. Sadly this venture stumbled and today the building is unoccupied.

These then are a few lines to acquaint you with the background of a Casterton building and the purposes it has served. The arrival of SEC power saw the massive R&H engines and other plant sold off. Some went overseas and some to a private museum just north of Harrow, Victoria.

There this old building sits patiently waiting some enterprising young person to occupy it and run a business that once more could contribute to the economy of our town.

TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

VIC volunteers were at the Visitor Information Centre on Saturday July 4th for a training session provided by an expert on the proper use of the equipment used to view microfiche and microfilm records held.

Gary Youdell of TMD came from Melbourne and stayed in town overnight in order to spend some time instructing on the use of the microfilm machine and to also service it.

It was not as difficult as some may have feared. The machines are quite user-friendly - except when being a little temperamental ! We have noted that the most important thing is to ensure that the paper used for printing is always *absolutely dry* and *loaded correctly*, or paper jams may immediately result.

The historical records are there to be used and are accessible at any time the VIC is open. If no-one from the CDHS is present there is a form to complete to contact a researcher - or to have the research done by the Historical Society for you at a small cost. Alternatively, a member of CDHS may be available at the time to come down and assist at that time.

The Research area will be formally opened at the end of October with a History Week Open Day for interested townfolk. There will be further information in future editions.



Gary Youdell from TMD

Casterton Community Museum



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Visitor Information Centre

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Jan Lier for further information: Ph. 0432 774314 or jlier3@bigpond.com or contact Ros on roscov@iprimus.com.au or telephone 5581 2875

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:
[www.ballaratgenealogy.org/
casterton/historicalsociety](http://www.ballaratgenealogy.org/casterton/historicalsociety)

DO YOU HAVE HISTORICAL RECORDS, BOOKS OR PHOTOGRAPHS AT HOME?

The Historical Society is happy to provide advice on caring for any of your paper-based historical items that you feel you may want to preserve for future generations.

Our cultural heritage is of the utmost importance. Even if you would simply like advice on copying those precious items (books, photos or documents) for safekeeping this would go a long way to making sure that items are not lost forever.

Do take stock of your various items and think about which are of family and/or historical interest and importance and need to be preserved.

Join the Historical Society – we do need more members and in particular interested young people to assist with the preservation of our cultural heritage – please contact Ros Coventry for a membership form. We have many fieldtrips during the year to historic sights as part of the activities enjoyed by members of the Society.

Come along – we meet on the third Wednesday of the month at the Glenelg Inn at 7pm.

Calendar of Events:

- **August 19th** - Annual General Meeting – Glenelg Inn
- **September 16th** - General Meeting – Glenelg Inn
- **October 4th (Sunday)** – Field Trip to Dergholm – Lunch at the Dergholm Hotel and visit to Baileys Rocks
- **October 21st** - General Meeting – Glenelg Inn
- **November 6th (Friday)** - Annual Dinner - Guest Speaker John and Hatice Basarin co-authors of the "Beneath the Dardenelles" - story of the HMAS AE2 told from both sides of the Gallipoli battle . John is also involved in the raising of the submarine as the Turkish representative in Australia. Cost is \$25.00 per person - enquiries to Jan Lier or Ros Coventry
- **November 29th (Sunday)** - Strathdownie - Lunch to be advised

Also to be advised – Trip to Wilkin to see the wildflowers – To be lead by Lyn Tait. Date to be determined. Keep watch