

# Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

**"The Williamstown Chronicle" (Vic.) Saturday, 29th May 1920.  
An Early Settler** --- one of Williamstown's pioneers.

*Mr. W. A. Hall, of Spensley-street, Clifton Hill, has forwarded us the diary of his late father, Mr. William Hall, junr. (late of Parker-street). It is a most interesting document, and from it we extract the following :--*

In February, 1840, father had completed arrangements to emigrate with all his family to Port Phillip, as it was then called. The vessel, a barque named the Andromache, 468 tons, set sail from Plymouth on February 29, crowded with emigrants for the far-distant land, and on June 19 entered Port Phillip Heads without a pilot.

On or about June 23 the whole of the Hall family were hired by a butcher, in Williamstown, for 12 months. The butcher's name was Haines, and his place of business was in Nelson-place, nearly opposite the inner end of the jetty (Gem pier), a little west of Thompson-street. Mr. Haines had started in opposition to John Levin, who had his place of business more easterly, or near the Woolpack Hotel. I was now about 13½ years old. My first employment was to shepherd the butcher's sheep in company with my younger brother, Harry.

As we two became familiar with the surroundings, we wandered further away--as far as Stoney Creek one way and Kororoit Creek in another way. Most of the time between 1840 and 1845 I was shepherding on the plains between Williamstown and the Werribee River and Williamstown and Mount Macedon. During those years my father made the engagements and received all the wages, not allowing me any pocket money. The excuse he had was that he was afraid I would take to smoking, drinking or gambling. Now 18 years old and tired of such restraint, I watched my opportunity to leave home, so on Sunday, January 5, 1845, while all were sleeping, I started off and made towards where the present Williamstown Racecourse is. Here I crossed the Koroit Creek on rocks in the bed of the creek, called Stepping-stones. Soon after sunrise I arrived at the fording place of the River Exe, now called the Werribee.

At the river I refreshed myself with a good wash, and ate some bread which I had taken from home. I then journeyed on, following bullock-dray track towards Geelong. In due time the Little River was reached, where, I had another wash and some more dry bread. Having rested, my companion--a young sheep dog, which followed me from Williamstown--and I started off again. When nearing the Duck Pond, now called Lara, we came across a flock of sheep. The sheep ran together--that is, rounded up--which caused the shepherd to look about. The shepherd was Mr. Alfred Bates, eldest son of Mr. Bates, formerly of Batesford, near Geelong, one of Victoria's earliest squatters in the Western District, but who, by excesses, had become insolvent, and his brother, in Tasmania, hearing of it, came over to Port Phillip and secured the flocks for his nephews, so one of them was shepherding as an act of economy.

Various questions were asked. Some of them were as follows :--'Had I ran away from a ship?' 'Could I kill a sheep and dress it?' 'Did I know how to cook it in a camp oven or three-legged pot?' 'Could I make a damper?' 'Could I set hurdles up with transoms?' If engaged, I would have to sleep in a watch box, alongside the sheep yard, for fear of wild dogs or blacks disturbing the sheep at night.



**NEXT MEETING:**  
**Wed. 19<sup>th</sup> November**  
**2.00 pm at the RSL**

-----000000000000000000-----

## **FUND RAISING**

A raffle will be drawn just before Christmas. The prize is a \$100 voucher from Foodworks. Local members are asked to sell a few tickets for us, we will do a street sit-and-sell, and also at the Show next Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> November.



Roseneath bullock team



Nangeela



**Clean-up at the Old Cemetery**

Ongoing, when requested, for the morning tea and unveiling of the board of 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.

Henty Street /Tyers Street corner /McKinlays Glenelg Inn 1873



Henty Street - 1890s



The interview led to being offered accommodation for the night. While sitting round the tea table I made an engagement with Mr. Bates for a month on trial, at 7/6 per week and rations. I stuck out for a long time for 8/- per week, but Mr. Bates was obdurate, saying that well-bodied men--some mechanics, scholars, tradesmen, etc.--had been offering themselves for £16 and £18 a year, with rations and no bedding. At this time the colony was emerging from a very depressed state. I was first made cook, or hut-keeper, but in a few days another cook was engaged, and I was ordered to shepherd the flock Mr. Bates had been following.

Mr. Bates went to the home station, at the base of Station Peak, where the family resided. Five to six weeks passed when a fellow-shepherd, an elderly man at an out station, knowing that I had no overcoat or bedding, advised me to see my employer and tell him so, and ask him to pay me what was due, so as to enable me to get what I could with the £2/5/-; and, further, if I suited, would he engage me for six months, to pass the winter. Mr. Bates replied that a six months' term would not suit him, but 12 months would, if we could come to terms as to wages.

After thinking the matter over, I made an engagement for 12 months, at £18 a year, with rations, i.e., 10lb meat, 10lb. flour, 2lb. sugar, ¼lb. tea and some salt per week. This was on February 17, 1845. After signing the agreement, Mr. Bates paid me the £2/5/- due to me, and granted me permission to go to Geelong, then called Corio, to make my purchases. So in company with my dog, I set out on the 18th, following the Melbourne and Geelong dray track--a 15 mile walk. In due time the town was reached, and having found a general store, the purchases were soon made, by the aid of a candle. With my faithful sheep dog, we retraced our steps arriving at the station just before daylight, very tired. Our arrival back was an astonishment to Mr. Bates, who allowed me to rest for a greater part of the day.

On August 14, 1845, Mr. Bates, having purchased about 100 store cattle, had two bullock drays well laden with provisions and firearms and about 30 wethers. Mr. Alfred Bates, Mr. Thomas Bates, junr, two bullock drivers and myself--five in all--started from the home station, at the foot of Station Peak, You Yangs, for a long journey to the Western District. It was originally intended to make for Lake Hindmarsh, in the Wimmera District but, as the party proceeded onward, Mr. Bates was advised to go more coastward, towards Adelaide.

The brothers Bates rode ahead to ascertain if the route were clear of cattle or sheep, and to find the best way for the drays and stock to follow, also a camping place for the night. The two bullock drivers, riding at times, while I was on foot, with my dog, drove the cattle and sheep. When we camped for the night, the bullock drivers assisted to kindle the fire and prepare the food which was usually mutton and damper, or dough made in small thin cakes, cooked in boiling fat, or the red embers of the fire. It was found very difficult to bake a damper without a fireplace, as the earth in the open air was found to sweat even after a big fire for two or three hours. A sheep had been killed, skinned, and yet while the flesh was quivering, a shoulder had been cut off, cut in thin slices, and thrown into a camp oven or three-legged iron pot containing boiling fat, and so cooked.

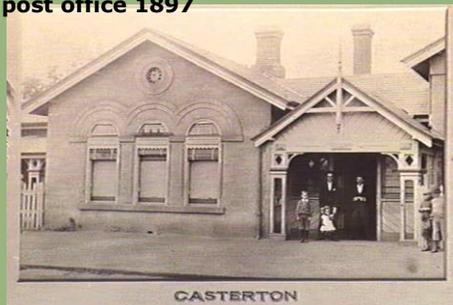
The party had to share the night in watches, fearing the bullocks, cattle or sheep might stray. After four weeks' travelling we crossed Fiery Creek and Hopkins River, passed by Mounts Abrupt and Sturgeon (end of the Grampians), the Grange, the Wannan Downs, and reached the River Glenelg, below the junction of the Wannan River. It was here we crossed the Glenelg on September 13, 1845. To cross the river we obtained a boat from Henty's whose house was close by. The boat was used for the provisions, clothing, etc.

This being accomplished, the boat was taken back to its owner. The drays were pulled across by ropes. The cattle and sheep were then forced to swim over and the men trailed themselves across by means of a rope. Having crossed the Glenelg, we were then in unsettled country. As soon as all were ready, we proceeded towards Mount Gambier in the South Australian territory, 50 miles from the Glenelg and about 20 miles beyond the border of South Australia and Port Phillip.

To be continued in a subsequent newsletter...



**Casterton Community Museum  
post office 1897**



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

**In 2014 CDHS celebrates fifty  
years**

**CDHS is located at the  
Casterton Visitor**

**Information Centre**

**e-mail: [castertonhistorical@](mailto:castertonhistorical@hotmail.com)**

**hotmail.com**

**PO Box 48, Casterton 3311**

**Phone: 5580 2070**



**George Bills**



**A Bills water trough – note the  
little trough on the right for the  
doggies.**

**To visit the Casterton Community  
Museum:**

call **David Coventry** on **5581 2475** or  
email at

**[davidccoventry@yahoo.com.au](mailto:davidccoventry@yahoo.com.au)**

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)  
H tel 5581 2875

**BILLS WATER TROUGHS: a little more about The Bills**

In my travels and through a network of interested people I have collected and have photos of over 200 locations where Bills Horse troughs can be still found today. These Bills horse troughs are monuments which remind us of years gone by when horses were the main way to travel.

Annis Swann was born in Sheffield England on the 25th September 1859. She married George Bills in Brisbane on the 18th May 1885. Annis shared the same love of animals which George Bills had. George Bills was born in Brighton England in 1859 and he and his brother established a wire mattress manufacturing business in Sydney, which operated successfully over many years.

During his lifetime, he took a keen interest in seeking out cases of human need and gave many thousands of pounds anonymously to assist the needy folk. George Bills died 14 Dec 1927 and his wife, Annis died on the 20 Jun 1910. After providing some personal bequests, his will directed the income from the residue of his estate to be used to provide troughs for horses, and for the purpose of preventing cruelty, and alleviating the sufferings of animals. In the will George Bills directed that after many generous bequests to family and friends that the income from the estate reads.

*A trust fund be formed to construct, and erect, and pay for Horse troughs, wherever they may be of opinion. That such horse troughs are necessary, or desirable for the relief of horses or other such dumb animals either in Australasia in the British Isles or in any part of the world subject to the consent of the proper authorities being obtained. To pay such sums or sums of money as they in absolute discretion think fit. To any Society or Societies for the protection of Animals, or for the alleviation of cruelty to Animals either in Australia or the British Islands or any other part of the World and for the purposes aforesaid. I empower my said Trustees at the expense of my estate to have each of such Horse Troughs wherever erected suitably inscribe with the name of Annis and George Bills. Note: It is not known the value of the estate was but believed to be about 70,000 to 80,000 Pounds.*

More than 500 troughs were erected in Australia mostly in New South Wales and Victoria, and some in overseas countries---England, Ireland, Switzerland [for donkeys] and Japan. In the early stages of trough supply, each was individually designed and constructed. One of the firsts was a granite Memorial trough, hewn in one piece as a memorial to Mr Bills. It was situated in Barton St, Hawthorn, Melbourne; the trough has long since been removed. Rolca concrete products supplied many hundreds of the troughs in Victoria and New South Wales. Troughs were supplied on application to the Bills Trust by Councils, and truckloads of 10 would often leave the Rocla Factory for installation by a team of men in country towns. Most of the troughs were made and supplied in the 1930's in Victoria. The cumbersome steel and concrete moulds were later moved to a Rocla factory at Juneee, NSW, where about 20 troughs were made in 1938, later transferred to Sydney where about 200 troughs were made. The growing use of the motor car and trucks caused a halt in demand for the troughs and none have been installed since World War 11.

Interesting fact: As yet, no sighting has been made of Bills horse troughs in South Australia and Queensland.

Information from <http://members.iinet.net.au/~geogem/index5.htm> Photos on-line.

-----000000000000000000-----

**CDHS WEBSITE: we are the Web, visit us at**

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

-----000000000000000000-----