

Dear Friends of the Museum

Kia ora koutou

As the days grow shorter and Matariki approaches, it's a fitting time to reflect on the season just passed. Our Friends group continues to grow in energy and enthusiasm, and recent events have highlighted the deep connection our community shares with the stories of our past.

This month we are privileged to have our feature story written by Eris Parker. Those of you interested in the metamorphosis of the Masonic Hotel into The Clements will enjoy Eris's rollicking tale of hotels that popped up in Cambridge in the 1860s. Brothers Archie and Bill Clements get a mention as rivals to the enterprising Robinsons of the Duke of Cambridge Hotel further down Duke Street.

Horahora

A particular highlight this autumn was our tour of Horahora, once the site of New Zealand's first hydroelectric power station. Built in 1912–13 to power the gold mines of Waihi, it later became an electricity source for national grid until it was submerged beneath Lake Karāpiro in 1947. Finlay Park guides Ian and Maia shared stories of the families who once lived in the village, which had homes, a school, and a post office. Stone steps leading down into the water were a haunting reminder of how new technology can transform entire landscapes.

Sharing memories

Our WWII-themed morning tea brought history to life in another way. Held in the museum office, guests enjoyed cups of tea and sampled scones, shortbread and fruitcake made from recipes recommended for sending food to soldiers overseas. As a special feature, we shared artefacts and archives not usually on display—Home Guard manuals, theatre programmes, a Lyceum House video, and hand-knitted women's stockings—all evocative of the era. As everyone had stories to share, it was a warm and moving event that reminded us how history lives on through personal connections.



HMS Buffalo

We were privileged to host a talk in partnership with U3A Cambridge presented by maritime archaeologist Matthew Gainsford. He took us on the final voyage of the *HMS Buffalo*, a vessel that served as a timber carrier, quarantine ship and immigrant transport, now lying wrecked 50 metres off the coast of Whitianga. The marine archaeology team, led by Gainsford and Dr Kurt Bennet, used 3D photography, underwater mapping and historical reanalysis to create a detailed record of the wreck. A significant partner was the Mercury Bay Museum. Through school visits, public programmes and an online display, the project has brought history to life for a wide audience. It's a shining example of how museums and archaeology can work hand in hand to foster curiosity, preserve knowledge, and make our past accessible and meaningful.

Behind the scenes

We're continuing work on several exciting projects. One major focus is our Heritage Buildings project, which aims to update and expand our research and understanding about Cambridge buildings on Waipa's Heritage List.

We're well underway with a full archive audit, being carried out by Kate and Karen. Their meticulous work is unearthing treasures tucked away in boxes and files. Among the recent discoveries is a voice record dated 1946 from Canada, featuring Doreen and Tom Howell singing to one another. The record, made of metal with a resin coating, is an unusual and fragile format that has now been digitised for preservation.

Another gem from the audit is a collection of photographs and letters from the Hewett and Skeet families, showing life in the Cambridge area during mid-20th century. These offer fresh insight, and we look forward to sharing them in upcoming exhibitions and online.

These discoveries remind us why the Friends of the Museum are so important. Your support helps us preserve these taonga, share these stories and continue to grow as a space for history and learning. Help us stay in touch. Please keep your contact details up to date so you never miss a newsletter. Contact Karen on 827 3319 or email karenpayne@cambridgemuseum.org.nz with updates.

Thank you to everyone who has attended events, shared stories or rolled up their sleeves to help behind the scenes. We have more exciting projects on the horizon and look forward to welcoming you to the museum soon.

Ngā mihi nui,

The Cambridge Museum Team

Additions to the collection

- Book: *Looking Back* by Mrs Duff Hewett
- Photo: Cambridge Bowling Club early 20th Century
- POSB money box in the shape of a book
- Booklets: *Camouflage* and *Guard and Sentry Duties NZ*
- Victorian black silk blouse
- WWII meat coupons
- Gerrard Feature Homes catalogue, price list and guide
- Decorative Leamington Bowling Club trophies x3
- Framed map of Waikato County dated 1928
- Cambridge Harriers 75th Jubilee booklet



Who was “the Duchess” of Cambridge?

By Eris Parker

Part 1 – A question

New Zealand Herald 2 February 1871 - When elections for the General Assembly were due, there was a meeting in Ngaruawahia where Mr Douglas proposed Captain McPherson, and Mr Robinson ‘better known as “the Duke” in Cambridge’ proposed Hugh Kirkwood.



So, if Andrew Robinson was “the Duke” who was “the Duchess”?

Andy Robinson was 28 years old, a miner in Dunedin, when he enlisted in the 3rd Waikato Regiment in 1863. His friend George Henry Heigen was also a miner. George was born in Germany; signed up in Sydney; sailed with his regiment to New Zealand on the ‘Charlotte Andrews’, which was welcomed with cheers and led by a band to the barracks in Auckland. The following June he was walking down the aisle with Mary Philomena Kirby. (He needed a special licence and changed his name to Hagin.)

1864

In Camp Cambridge officers were able to choose their sections and a savvy group of sergeants were already ensconced on Duke Street – the main street up from the wharf. Women and children joined their soldiering menfolk, and Andy, George and Mary planned their public house. The population was 843 men, 80 women and 198 children.

1865

As the surveyors sloshed about in the swamps, the men were balloted their farms and soon 350 men were struck off pay and deemed ‘settlers’. They and their families were still allowed to draw rations but had to be on alert and attend a drill every month. Twenty-two men deserted. Sixty substitutes arrived.

Andy had got himself into trouble with his superior when the rum rations turned out to be short. In June 1865 he was taken to Court in Auckland but it could not be proved if he was selling his private stock or the army’s rum. He was acquitted.

George and Andy opened their Duke of Cambridge Hotel, and Mary would have been in her element when they arranged the First Ball for all the officers of the garrison. (Her mother had a ladies and girls’ clothing store in Auckland.)

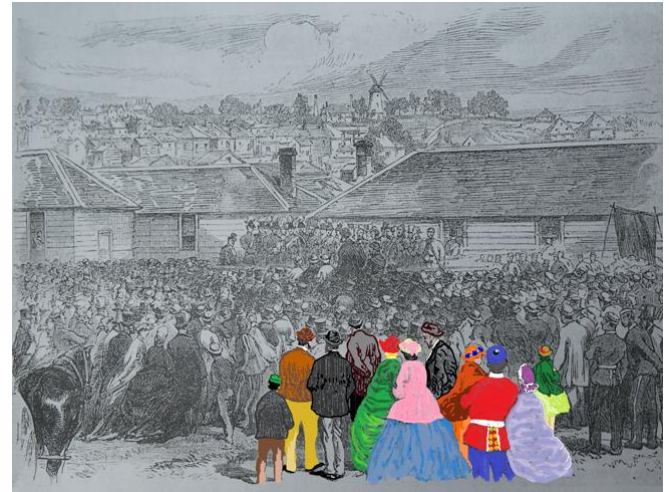
After supper Colonel Lyon and his new wife Sophia, opened the dancing and soon the crinolines and cravats were swishing around the room.

Then in Auckland on 14 September 1865 Andy married Agnes Theresa Kirby – George Hagin’s wife’s sister. Agnes was only sixteen – half Andy’s age, and they tied the knot securely with one ceremony at St Patrick’s Catholic Cathedral, and another at the Presbyterian Church.

They partied that night at Frank Quick’s Hotel in Auckland and a scoundrel stole Agnes’s gold watch, chain and locket. They got the watch and chain back but the locket was lost. The scoundrel

got six month’s hard labour. Agnes joined her sister Mary at the Duke of Cambridge Hotel.

On Christmas Day, the sergeants still on pay shouted their contemporaries a dinner. The monthly parade took place on New Year’s Day, and Pukekura Redoubt arranged a sports day with rifle shooting, a greasy pole, catching the greasy pig, and foot and sack races. There was bobbing for buns for the children and a ladies race - but only Māori ladies entered.



Fashions of the day at the farewell to General Cameron, of the Colonial Defence Forces in Auckland 1 August 1865. (*Illustrated London News* 1865 x ‘Bold Century 1859 – 1959, NZ Insurance Co, Ltd.’)

1866

Competition was appearing on the hotel horizon as Archie and brother Bill Clements built the Masonic Hotel, also on Duke Street. Then in May, a little bundle of joy for Agnes and Andy Robinson when Mary Theresa Josephine was born - possibly a premmie-baby as sadly two days later she died of debility (weakness).

A couple of weeks later Andy and George dissolved their partnership and George and Mary went to Auckland and took over the New Caledonia Store. John and Robert Kirkwood built the Alpha Hotel on the top of the hill with accommodation and a place for the Alpha Lodge’s meetings.

Duke Street was still the main street. To the north of Andy and Agnes’s hotel, Jim McClellan the baker ‘fell off the wagon’ and died of alcohol poisoning, leaving a wife and three young children. Andy served on the Jury at the Inquest held in his hotel. Their neighbour to the west, Chas Baker sold half his acre section to Andy who gave it to the Wesleyans to build their chapel in Chapel Street.

Their neighbour to the nor’ west, Stuart Newall ran the post office from his house and built a boat to woo his sweetheart, Georgina Roberts - rowing her around The Lagoon. One day, when Stuart was out on the lake, Thorne Buckland was riding past and he stood up in his stirrups, waved his hat, and saluted with the cry, “Advance Cambridge”.

In the New Year of 1867 both Andy and Bob Kirkwood held sports for the children, and Andy and Agnes hosted another Ball.

6 July 1867 – “It’s a boy!” – William (for Andy’s father) John (for Agnes’ father).



Then there was the shout of “Gold” and the Thames Rush was on.

Next Christmas the Rifle Club and Oddfellows Lodge tried to out-do each other with balls at the Star Redoubt. And then there was a new Duke in town – Bob Kirkwood changed the name of his Alpha Hotel to the Duke of Edinburgh.

On New Year’s Eve, Andy and Agnes hosted another ball and gave away hats and caps as prizes for the children’s New Year sports.

On Sunday 8 March 1868, the first Wesleyan Chapel on the Waikato Circuit was opened in Cambridge.



(Left - Stuart Newall's house and former Post Office. Centre - Wesleyan Chapel. Right - the rear of the Duke of Cambridge Hotel. Background Pukekura and Maungatautari.)

April 1869 - another flurry of excitement as Agnes and Andy had a girl – Rosanna. And in May 1871 they welcomed Agnes Theresa Bella.

At the end of 1873 Andy Robinson sold his hotel business to William Walker but by the end of the next year he was back at the helm. There was another addition to the family with the arrival of Lucy Jane in 1874 – but sadly the death, of heart disease of Agnes Theresa Bella in November. At that time there was no doctor in Cambridge. William Cunningham had experience but no diploma.

1876

The Duke of Cambridge hotel was looking good. Rooms were Lofty - Well Ventilated - Clean and Comfortably Furnished. Private Rooms with en suite for families' accommodation. Dining, Bar - with only the choicest of Wines, Ales and Spirits. Sample Rooms for Commercial Gentlemen, Good Stabling and Paddock Accommodation. Andy was the Proprietor.

But not for long. He died of kidney disease on 7 March 1876 aged 43 years. He was buried in the Cambridge Cemetery by Reverend Father Golden RC.

Agnes was distraught and left for the warm waters of the Waiwera Springs, but stopped with her Mum and Dad in Auckland. While there she was 'seized with a fit' [a stroke]. On 21 March, feeling worse than when she had left, and fretting for the children, she decided to return home. The train to Mercer was insufferable and she had to take a carriage to the steamboat. The shaft broke on the boat at Rangiriri and all passengers were transferred to another steamboat – the 'Blue Nose'. It was towing a number of barges and Agnes became seriously ill. So they cast off the barges

and sped towards Hamilton. But Agnes died before she reached medical assistance.

Dr Waddington, coroner at her Inquest, said Agnes had complained of shortness of breath and palpitation but he had not prescribed for her during the last twelve months. Cause of death was serious apoplexy. Agnes was 26 years old and left three children: William aged 9, Rosanna 7 and Lucy 2. The jury's verdict – 'died from natural causes.' Agnes was also buried at the Cambridge Cemetery. There is no headstone.

Aunty Mary and Uncle George gathered up the children.

Part 2 – An error identified

Waikato Independent 14 May 1936. C W Vennell's article 'Early Cambridge The First Sixteen Years from 'The Waikato Mail and Midland Counties Farmers' Gazette,' published at Cambridge on September 1st, 1880 (With the addition of a few details supplied by some of Cambridge's present-day residents whose memories go a long way back to bring it up-to-date.)

'Mr Andrew Robinson then built the first hotel in Duke Street, not far from the wharf. This was afterwards part of the Duke of Cambridge Hotel occupied by Mr Robert Kirkwood, who was commonly known to his contemporaries as "The Duke".'

The Kirkwood brothers Hugh, John and Robert arrived in Cambridge with the Militia – noted as having a general store at the wharf. John and Bob enlisted as substitute soldiers in 1866. Bob's acre was on the corner of Victoria and Alpha Streets and this is where they built their Alpha Hotel. Bob continued as a storekeeper and later ran the hotel, changing the name to the Duke of Edinburgh.

The Hally family – mother Eliza, George, James, John and Jessie arrived in Cambridge about 1867. James bought Mr John's store and brought it up from the wharf to the corner of Duke and Victoria Streets. Bob built his store next to their hotel then transferred his Duke of Edinburgh's licence to Hugh Pearson. He went farming for seven years at Tamahere and returned to town to buy the Duke of Cambridge Hotel in 1879. He then married Jessie Hally on 15 September 1879 and they had two children - who did not marry. Bob died of cancer in 1898 and Jessie in 1935. They are both buried at the Cambridge Cemetery.

References - Nominal & Descriptive Roll 3rd Waikato Regiment x National Archives Wellington; Papers Past website National Library; Department of Internal Affairs BDMs

Local historian and prolific writer Eris Parker was a foundation member of the Cambridge Writers Group in 1987. She began volunteering for the Cambridge Museum before being appointed curator from 1992 until 2013. In that time, she researched and wrote books and brochures and spoke many times to local groups and organisations. When her colleague Susan Hague launched the museum's website, it was Eris who provided the research stories and data for all to access. In 2018, the Cambridge Historical Society granted Eris a Life Membership.



What links Cambridge with Methil, Scotland?

A day in the life of museum staff



Mary and Friends of Methil Heritage Centre in Fife, Scotland standing next to the Edward VIII plaque, April 2024 IMAGE SUPPLIED

It's always good when history reveals unexpected links across the world—and that is exactly what happened in a recent exchange with Mary A Reilly of the Friends of Methil Heritage Centre in Fife, Scotland.



Methil Heritage Centre in Fife, Scotland. IMAGE SUPPLIED

Mary contacted us to ask if we could confirm a long-standing rumour that she had first heard in 1992 that there was a post office in New Zealand with the rare insignia of King Edward VIII. It piqued her interest as the Methil Heritage Centre in Fife is housed in a former post office built in 1936 during Edward VIII's short reign. It has Edward VIII insignia and Friends of the Centre had always thought it might be the only one of its kind in the world. Edward VIII's reign lasted less than a year before his abdication and after the scandal, most of his insignia were removed across Britain and the Commonwealth.

After giving a talk about their building in the 1990s, Mary was approached by an audience member who claimed another Edward VIII insignia existed in New Zealand. She contacted the Post Office archives, but no information was found. Then, just recently, a visitor to the centre mentioned having dined in a restaurant in Cambridge, New Zealand that had once been an Edward VIII post office. We were delighted to confirm the connection and sent Mary photos of our own post office building here in Cambridge. She sent these wonderful photos in return.

Our post office was built in 1908, with an arched metal grille above the door bearing Edward VII's insignia. When it was extended in 1936, a second matching grille was added for the new King Edward VIII.

Today, just two are known to remain—one in Methil, and one in Cambridge. A small world indeed—and a grand reminder of how history connects us all.

Coming up

SATURDAY, 28 JUNE

Papa Mahi, Weaving Demonstrations 10am-2pm, Museum Gardens

As part of this month's Matariki celebrations, weavers from the Māori Women's Welfare League will be demonstrating the art of traditional weaving (raranga) in the museum gardens. Fun for all the whānau and family. Koha/donations appreciated.

SUNDAY, 13 JULY, 1pm

Town Centre Tour, meet at the museum at 1pm.

Limited to 20 guests, RSVP by 10 July

If you have ever wondered about the histories behind the shop façades in town, join Elizabeth for a 45-minute guided walk around the CBD. Explore its rich history and uncover hidden secrets. From historic buildings to overlooked features, this tour offers fresh insights into the stories that have shaped our town.

Cost: Free

SUNDAY, 27 JULY, 1pm

Ken Ashman's Railway Collection 1885-1965, Whatawhata.

Limited to 12 guests RSVP by 20 July

Discover a rare and remarkable collection of railway memorabilia including three one-of-a-kind items believed to be the only examples of their kind in the world. Simulators bring the machinery to life. This tour will be about two hours. Coffee and tea will be served.

Cost: \$15 per person to be given to Ken as a donation toward the preservation of the collection.

CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
TE ROOPU WAHINE MAAORI TOKO I TE ORA KA PUTA KA ORA PRESENTS

TE WHAKANUI I A MATARIKI

CELEBRATING THE MĀORI NEW YEAR WITH WHĀNAU, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Papa Mahi - Weaving Demo
Nau mai, haere mai. All welcome.

28

June
Pipiri
10AM - 2PM

Te Whare Taonga o Kemureti
Cambridge Museum
24 Victoria Street

Koha / Donations kindly appreciated, if you are able.

With thanks to:

Waipā
DISTRICT COUNCIL

TE ROOPU WAHINE MĀORI TOKO I TE ORA

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