

Museum Manager's Report

We have recently become proud owners of a new display cabinet (pictured), which allows us to show lots of the small quirky items that we hold in our collection. We will be changing these around regularly, so they will always be well worth examining.



Many thanks to the Waipa District Council for arranging contractors to waterblast the exterior of the Old Courthouse. It is a glorious old building that receives many compliments from our visitors, so we love seeing it smartened up. Thanks also to the Council for replacing the old air conditioning unit in our Collection Store with one that is now providing optimum heating and humidity conditions for our collection.

Our team of volunteers has been working hard on indexing the *Waikato Independent* newspapers for 1939. Another team is involved in administrative and maintenance work. Many thanks to you all. We appreciate your time and your company.

Vincent O'Malley's latest book *The New Zealand Wars Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa* has been added to our research collection. In it, he explores the events, causes and consequences of the mid-nineteenth century New Zealand Wars.

Speaking of must-have books, I'm sure many of you have a copy of *Waipa Home of Champions* by Richard Stowers and Kingsley Field. We have prepared an index for the book, making it easier to reference. The index can be found on our website: <http://cambridgemuseum.org.nz/visit-the-museum/research/>. We recommend you print it out and slot it under the cover.

Karen and I recently attended an Exhibitions training workshop presented by Penelope Jackson. We found this valuable and look forward to implementing many of the ideas gained with some spectacular displays!

A large portion of the collection is held in the old jail house, and Karen and I are spending a lot of time in there carrying out an inventory and assessment of each of the items. Chelsea is improving storage conditions by boxing similar objects in archival acid-free materials so that they can be transferred and stored in the new container store. The container store is gradually filling, so we can now see real progress.

"Birds of a Feather" winner

Congratulations to **Annabel Nelson** from Leamington, who won the draw for a family pass to Sanctuary Mountain, Maungatautari. We received 56 entries from children, who had to search our exhibits for birds – in either physical or pictorial form – and answer some challenging questions.

Annabel answered all the questions correctly, and now she and her family are off to see and hear our native birds in their natural habitat.



Our thanks to Sanctuary Mountain for their prize donation.



Cambridge Community Marae

Hard work and tenacity were required to fundraise, plan and build the Cambridge Community Marae. It began with a debate over the use of a rest room, and ended with a Marae and Cultural Centre of which we can all be proud. This story is taken from newspaper clippings from the 1940s to the 1990s.

The Cambridge ladies' rest room was built behind C H Priestley's shop in Victoria Street in 1921. It was little used in the beginning, being placed in a side street, and the Council was requested to erect a bold sign in the main street to draw attention to it. As well as providing toilets, it consisted of a main room with a bare floor, and tables and chairs, mainly used by mothers for changing and feeding their babies.

In the early 1940s, when the Karapiro hydro station and dam were under construction, a large camp was set up to house the work force. Following the workers' families' visits to town for shopping and recreation, the Council received a complaint that Māori families were using the rest room as a meeting and eating place. As the rest room was not well maintained or suitable for this purpose, a suggestion was made to establish a separate rest room as a meeting place for Māori families. The Borough Council did not initially approve of the idea of segregated rest rooms but, despite this, Miss Ruby Martin of the Methodist Māori Mission started fundraising in 1945.

The Chairman Tribal Committee of Ngati Koroki wrote a letter to the Council in 1951, stating that some money had been raised to build a rest room for Māori. He asked that the Council provide a suitable section near the town centre on which to build. This time the Council agreed, pending State financial assistance from the Māori Affairs Department.

By 1953, reports were that Māori favoured a community centre instead of a rest room, and in April 1953, the Kemureti Māori Womens' Welfare League was formed to continue the fundraising efforts of Miss Martin.

In 1960, £250 had been raised, and a section in Cook Street, Leamington was offered by the Council as a suggested site. A steering group was appointed to investigate the feasibility of erecting a hall. It estimated a cost of £2,500 and, as this was considered beyond the scope of local Māori, it recommended that the project be shelved. The Māori Women's Welfare League fought this decision, suggesting that each Māori family donate £10 to the cause, but the project lapsed for several years.

Fundraising efforts were reignited when the first Cambridge Marae and Cultural Centre Committee was formed in 1967, and by 1969, \$1000 had been raised.

In 1975, the Borough Council offered a section of domain land in Bracken Street, rate and rent free, in exchange for the Cook Street site. This offer was accepted.

By 1982, little progress had been made. The Cambridge Marae and Cultural Centre Committee had been disbanded and work had stalled. However, in early 1983, a Trust was formed, \$5,700 had been raised, and bold fundraising plans were mooted.

But the fundraising hit a wall in February 1983, when a failed music festival, featuring Graham Brazier and the Legionnaires, landed the Trust with a \$10K debt. 2,500 tickets needed to be taken up for the festival to break even, but only 500 tickets were sold – despite estimates that between 1,500 and 2,000 people attended. This was a devastating blow, and the community worked hard for four years to pay back the debt in full.

A request was made in 1985 to rezone the Bracken Street site and change its jurisdiction to the Crown so that the Trust would qualify for government funding. In 1990, these changes were approved and, with the additional funding, building could finally commence.

It was an emotional day in May 1996, when the Māori Women's Welfare League formally presented the Trust with \$11,000 to complete kitchen and catering facilities for the wharekai. This was the accumulation of funds raised over many years – from when Miss Ruby Martin first held stalls and sports days in the 1940s to fund a new rest room in Cambridge.



Local kuia Lizzie Tairi (left) and Ollie Kara performing a karanga during the powhiri at the opening of the marae on 27 November 1999.

The Kohanga Reo was completed and opened in January 1991, and the marae in November 1999. The Museum has a file of newspaper clippings on the development of the Community Marae dating from the 1940s to the 1990s and beyond.



Bryan Cox and Norman Rosser

On 23 May, Bryan Cox came to the museum with Dave Homewood to view our display on Norman Rosser, a local man who had trained as a pilot in WWII, and for whom Mr Cox was best man in 1947. Mr Cox is famous in New Zealand as the oldest person – at the age of 94 – to hold a recreational pilot's licence.

Mr Cox was so interesting, I asked if I could interview him for this newsletter, and he was kind enough to oblige.

He was born in Cambridge in 1925. His family lived in French Pass from 1925-1935. For secondary education, the family moved to Te Rapa and milked cows on the property that is now The Base. Te Rapa was a Stores Depot for the Air Force and Mr Cox's mother worked there as a WAAF.

Mr Cox joined the Air Training Corps as a cadet in 1941 aged 16, and joined the Air Force in 1943. In training, he flew a Tiger Moth (140 HP) until February 1944, and then a Harvard trainer (600HP) for three months, when he got his Wings. He then moved from Woodbourne to Ohakea, where he met Mr Rosser. At Ohakea, Mr Cox flew P40 Kittyhawk fighters (1150HP), and then flew Corsairs (2200HP) at Ardmore.

All this training was carried out within a few months. In his fifth flight in a Corsair, with 200 hours total flying time under his belt, he flew to 40,000 feet. After training, the pilots were posted into 13 squadrons with 27 pilots – some aged as young as 19.

He did three tours in the Pacific. When he returned between tours, he would practise doing loops over Cambridge. He remembered how Mrs Ross (from the



family of Ross Todd Motors) used to wave tea towels at him when he was looping over their property in 1945. He flew for two and a half years in the Corsairs.

His 20th birthday was memorable for trying to save a pilot who had been shot down over Rabaul in the Solomon Islands. In trying to save this pilot, seven others were killed on a day that is now known as Black Monday.

After his three tours, he went to Japan for a year with the Occupational Squadron. He was at Iwakune, 20 miles from Hiroshima. The hangars there had no iron because this was taken and used for shelters for the victims of Hiroshima.

Mr Cox was very close to his brother Grant who was sent to Canada for air crew training in WWII. Grant became ill with spinal meningitis and did light duties for a time, when he met Wynne Moore and married her.

In 1944, the family were devastated to learn that Grant had been shot down in a Berlin raid. The NZ Government had a policy of bringing war widows to New Zealand to meet their husband's families, and Wynne came out and stayed for some time with the Cox family.

Bryan arrived home in 1947. He got on well with Wynne, and in 1949, they married, "even though we didn't really have to," said Bryan, "because she was already Mrs Cox."

Mr Cox was a civilian flight instructor for over 30 years, and still enjoys recreational flying. He has written three books: *Too Young to Die*, *Pacific Scrapbook* and *Cats Have Only Nine Lives*.

Cambridge man Norman Rosser is mentioned several times in Bryan Cox's autobiography "Too Young to Die". Here is an extract:

"Norm Rosser was starting operational flying at Bougainville with No. 24 squadron. Due to a shortage of suitable bomb racks, his Corsair NZ 5401 was fitted with makeshift P-40 racks. His formation dive-bombed a target of gun emplacements at Old Vivie on Bougainville, but unfortunately one of his two 500lb bombs would not release. The airstrip at Piva was cleared of all personnel, and even the control tower was evacuated while Norm prepared to land with the bomb still attached under the aircraft. He did a gentle tail-high landing but about 50 yards after touchdown was greeted by the sight of his 500lb bomb bouncing off the ground just to the right of the cockpit. His immediate reaction was to open the throttle to get clear; this caused him to collide with the bomb which took away part of his tailplane. Luckily the bomb didn't explode, and Norm throttled back to pull up further on down the strip."



Bryan Cox (left) and Norm Rosser in 1944



Cambridge Museum website www.cambridgemuseum.org.nz

In early June, we received the following email message from one of our visitors:

I'm a French world traveller visiting NZ and Cambridge this day and I've never seen such a complete website in my life. It was a pleasure for me to make research on the website of the museum in order to write my article for my blog <http://www.leglobeflyer.com>. Congratulations again for remarkable work!
Regards, Yves



For those of you who haven't visited our website, you are missing a real treat. It was initiated by Eris Parker and Susan Hague, and is continually developing.

Recent additions have been access to our Research Guides, Book Indices and Facebook. Under "Cambridge Historical Society" you can encourage your friends to fill out a membership form, and access past copies of these newsletters.

To His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester

Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester was the younger brother of Edward VIII and George VI. He visited New Zealand on a royal tour in 1934. The following is the text in a framed document prepared for the Royal Visit, held in the Museum's collection.

Cambridge, New Zealand,
29th December, 1934

C H Priestley, Mayor

May it please your Royal Highness ...

ON BEHALF of the Mayoress, the Councillors and the Citizens, I have great pleasure as Mayor of Cambridge in extending to your Royal Highness a loyal and very hearty welcome to our town and district.

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS is the first member of the Royal Family to visit Cambridge since it was founded as a Military Settlement in the year 1866.

THE TOWN was named after the ancient University town of Cambridge, from which some of our early settlers had come.

OUR MAIN STREET was named, when first laid out, Victoria Street, in honour of Queen Victoria, and the open space fronting the Town Hall is called the Jubilee Gardens to remind us of Her Majesty's long and glorious reign.



OUR EARLY SETTLERS, some of whom are still alive, adorned Victoria Street with trees to make their newly laid out town more like a bit of the Homeland, and these trees have grown, as your Royal Highness will see as you drive out of the town, into a picturesque avenue of which the citizens are justly proud.

THE TOWN, as your Royal Highness now sees it, has been built within the span of a man's life, and the countryside has been brought in from a wilderness of scrub and fern, and developed into a highly productive dairying and sheep farming district within the memory of some who are present to-day to join in this welcome to your Royal Highness.

WE WOULD ASK your Royal Highness to accept our thanks for the honour you have done us by coming here to-day, and though your visit is necessarily a brief one, we trust it will prove enjoyable to yourself, and that you will carry away a pleasant memory of Cambridge in New Zealand.

WE ALSO DESIRE to take this opportunity to express to your Royal Highness the assurance of the loyalty of the people of Cambridge to the Crown of Great Britain, to express the belief that your tour of the Dominion will confirm and strengthen the ties of affection which have always existed between the people of this Dominion and the Homeland.

IN CONCLUSION, we trust your Royal Highness' tour of New Zealand will be in every way a pleasant one, and that it will provide you with happy memories of this Britain of the Far South, and we wish you God speed in your travels and a safe return Home.

