

## Museum Manager's Report

We have had a bumper January this year, with 750 visitors through the door: 40% were travelling New Zealanders, 29% were from overseas and 31% from Cambridge. Children made up a quarter of our visitors.

Karen and I have been making good progress with our **Collections project**, which includes inventoring and assessing items in the collection. Chelsea has carefully boxed many of the key collection items. The cargo container behind the museum, used for storage, is now five-sixths full with fully processed items.

**Kate Elliott** the Regional Collections Advisor has recently retired. Her assistance and advice has been invaluable, so on her last visit, we presented her with a small gift from the Cambridge Historical Society to show our appreciation.

### Bev and Bruce Dean

generously hosted a morning tea for volunteers and staff in early December. It was a rare opportunity for volunteers to meet each other and share insights on their various projects.

**Research enquiries** keep us on our toes and we are always striving to find answers to your questions on all aspects of Cambridge. We have an impressive research resource here, so please spread the word.

The Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust and author **Joanna Boileau** have recently given us a copy of *Starch Work By Experts: Chinese Laundries in Aotearoa New Zealand* which includes nearly three pages on the history of Chinese laundries in Cambridge. These families had challenging lives, and are well worth researching.

Other books that have been added include *Mystery Creek Magic Fifty Years* and *Beyond the Landing - The Centennial Establishment of the Morrinsville Town Board*. Please visit us to see these publications.

You might also be interested in a publication available online: *Occasional Publications in Archaeology No. 1: Planning a Future for New Zealand War Sites and Landscapes*. It can be found at: <https://www.heritage.org.nz/resources/research-and-papers/occasional-papers> This records archaeological sites such as blockhouses, redoubts and pa sites of the New Zealand wars. The local references are redoubts at Cambridge, Ohaupo, Pukerimu, and the Rotoorangi Pa/Redoubt.

Kathryn Parsons

## President's Message

Happy New year to you all and hope you have had an enjoyable break with family and friends during this long period of beautiful weather.

For those of you who joined us for our AGM you will have seen the updated and exciting plans for our proposed new museum prepared by Archimedia Hamilton.

Mixed response to the initial plans encouraged the Cambridge Heritage Charitable Trust (CHCT) to engage another designer and they now have a proposal that has met with much approval. It is expected that these plans will be submitted for resource consent approval within the next few weeks.

At the AGM we were pleased to welcome **Jo Barnes** as Secretary and **Jeff Nobes** as Treasurer.

I would like to thank **Bruce Hancock** for his time and commitment in his role as Treasurer for the past three years. Bruce is heavily involved in the

Collection Project and will remain on the committee as well as a Board member of the CHCT.

**Dave Payne** has served the committee for three years, the last two as Secretary. As well as dealing with the paperwork, Dave has organised several trips to the Karapiro Power Station and one to Finlay Park. While not remaining on the committee, he is keen to assist. Thank you David.

**Jeff Nobes** joined the Cambridge Historical Society in 2017 and was appointed Treasurer to replace Bruce. Jeff lived in the UK for 15 years where he worked for a London firm of Architects and Interior Designers as their accountant and company secretary. After returning home to NZ he practised as an Accountant in Hamilton until he retired. He has always had a keen interest in history, particularly local social history and the remainder of his spare time is devoted to gardening, playing golf and fishing.

**Dr Jo Barnes** was appointed to the position of Secretary at our last AGM. Jo has been a member since 2017. Jo recently retired from her position of senior lecturer at the University of Waikato. During her 23 years at the university she lectured in sociology, social policy, criminology and research methods. In her retirement she is researching her family history and related social history.

Also at the AGM we were fortunate enough to have Annika Hinze present the mobile app that links to our museum. Read more about the app later in this newsletter.

Grant Middlemiss



## Who was James H Burn-Murdoch?

Some time ago, in a research file, I found a letter signed James H Burn-Murdoch. It was dated 7 June 1940 and written to Charles Scott of 4 Williams Street, Cambridge. At that time, Burn-Murdoch was 74 years old, and his correspondent Charles was 62. I have already quoted several excerpts from this letter in previous newsletters.

The letter was written in London during the air raids of 1940. Burn-Murdoch had to break off writing several times as *"Jerry and Co. thought that it might amuse us all to have a couple of air raids..."* The letter is full of lively anecdotes and reminiscences of Cambridge and its residents in the 1890s. It mentions, among others, Richard and Susan Reynolds, Mrs Potts, and John and Robert Fisher. It also refers to events in his life after he left Cambridge for his next big adventure in India.

Where he was before his years in Cambridge is unknown – although he does mention that he had *"several years' experience on large sheep runs with merinos, which experience was really of but little use for a man taking up a small wee farm of 450 acres and half of it bottomless pumice stone flats."* The 450 acres he refers to is Wai Valley, Pukerimu, bought from Richard Reynolds in around 1890-91 (referred to in our last newsletter).

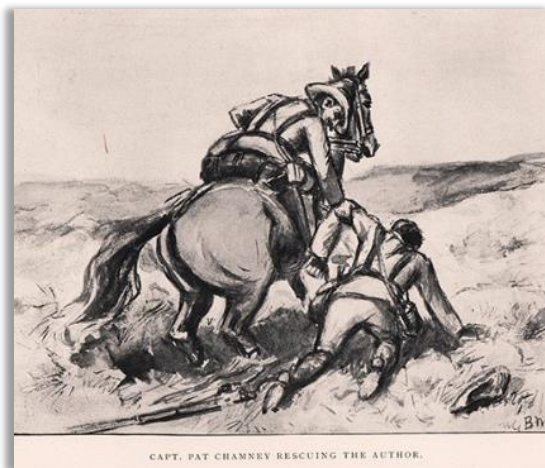
Burn-Murdoch left Cambridge for India in around 1893-94, taking with him his horse Demon (*"as nice a little buckner when ridden by a stranger as you could wish for"*) and from being his own boss over two or three farm workers in Cambridge, he was now wholly responsible for at least 500 working at a tea plantation. After six or seven years in India, and after enlisting with the Surma Valley Light Horse (SVLH), he enlisted with Lumsden's Horse to fight in the Boer War. Before he left the district he raffled Demon, and his Captain in the SVLH became Demon's new owner.

However, before long, when Col. Lumsden was *"sending round the hat for subscriptions towards the regiment's expenses, my Captain sent Demon down to him in Calcutta, but made the stipulation as follows: 'I send you as part of my subscription a charger named Demon, and he is damned well named as no less than three times, owing to his upwards agility, I have smelt mother earth hard, so my condition of gift is that no other man in your regiment but Burn-Murdoch is to ride him' which little joke on my Captain's part, the horse was given back to me for good and all."*

While researching Lumsden's Horse on-line, I came across a book published in 1901 *"With Lumsden's Horse Agin the Boers"* by J H Burn-Murdoch. This book had been mentioned in his letter to Charles Scott: *"By the way, I find that I have not got a spare copy of my book at hand, and during this bit of a war racket, I am afraid I would find it*

*hard to get one, so meantime you might ask Mrs Potts if she would be good enough to let you have the loan of her copy - if she has not lost it, which is highly likely."*

I managed to find on-line this illustration from the book, possibly drawn by Burn-Murdoch himself judging by the initials "BM" in the bottom-right corner.



CAPT. PAT CHAMNEY RESCUING THE AUTHOR.

This may show him being rescued after his sustaining a head injury in the war. He mentioned an injury in his letter, but his language is so colourful that sometimes it can be misconstrued, eg. *"I might have remained in South Africa, but Destiny said otherwise by giving me my "Blighty" ie a bust up skull through trying to stop a pom by it instead of catching the ball in my hands, but then I was never any good at cricket."* At first I took this literally to mean that he suffered a head injury playing cricket, but later he writes about Demon being shot dead under him at full gallop, and *"I got my shell crack at the same time."*

Demon was 14 years old when Burn-Murdoch took him to South Africa. He calls him a *"dear old pal"* and wrote *"I was mighty glad though that he was killed outright after so many years faithful service and was not destined to live on under some damned cruel Boer."*

After Burn-Murdoch's service in South Africa, he was Works Manager for a short-lived Spanish peat company. He then worked for a galvanising company in London. As galvanising was a relatively new process and he had become expert at it, he was offered the position of Process Superintendent by an American company, which entailed him travelling all over the States. He met his wife there and they were happily married until she died in 1927. He remained in England for the rest of his life, breeding Black Leghorns and Labradors. He published a book on Labradors, and wrote frequently to the papers under a nom de plume.

He died in March 1948, aged 82.





## Swimming in Cambridge

*On hot summer days, you will almost always find swimmers in the Waikato River near the Karapiro Bridge in Cambridge. This has been a tradition from Cambridge's beginning, right back to the time of the New Zealand Wars.*

Researcher Eris Parker carried out research on eleven members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Waikato Militia memorialised on a plaque at the Leamington Cemetery "who died during the Maori War". Of the eleven men, three drowned in the Waikato River.

**Private Frederick Higgins**, after being advised not to, went swimming while intoxicated in the river in January 1864. At the turning of the river was a whirlpool. Private Higgins was drawn under and drowned just as a boat reached him.



**Private Augustus Hartman** bathed there in December 1864. He swam down the river about 300 yards trying to get back on the bank but the force of the current was too strong. Friends tried to save him but he went under. His body was recovered near Hamilton.

On 12 December that same year, **Private David Halliday** possibly suffered cramp while swimming, and he couldn't be saved. His body was found near Pukerimu.

Despite the dangers, residents both young and old took advantage of the cool waters of the river and Karapiro Creek.

**K L Wilkinson**, in an article published in 1936 remembered "the long summer days loafed away in the Karapiro creek, then a delightfully clear, sandy bottomed stream meandering along between glorious beaches, unchoked by a prolific growth of willows. The twelve o'clock rush – excited swarms of small boys, out from school, tearing down Duke Street, disrobing as they ran, until, when they reached the creek, they dived straight in, naked as the day they were born."

The first Swimming Club was established in the 1890s. The Club used a roped off area in the Waikato River in front of "Waterside" **Major John Wilson's** property in Wilson Street.



The Club then moved to Lake Te Koutu. **William Rout**, who published a series of articles on the history of Cambridge in 1897, wrote "A few years ago a bathing house was erected at the lake and is now much frequented by persons of both sexes, at special hours in the summer time, set apart for them." The bathing

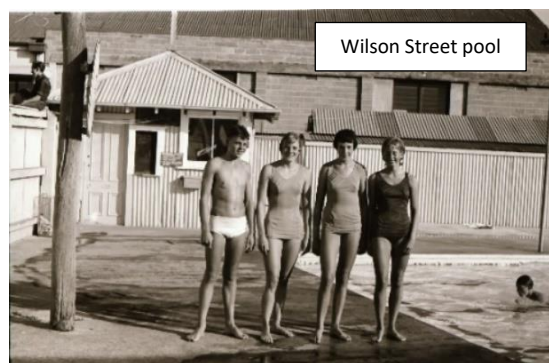
house can be seen near the centre of this photograph taken in the 1890s.

In 1912, the Cambridge Swimming Club moved to new swimming baths in Wilson Street, where the Robert Harris coffee shop now stands. The pool was 75ft long by 30ft wide, held 72,000 gallons and cost £750.

In January 1920, a subcommittee of the Club was formed to issue season tickets, after approval, for mixed bathing to any lady and gentleman who made application. Mixed bathing was held on Wednesday evening between 7pm and 9pm.

In 1928 the pool was extended from 25 to over 33 yards, and the changing rooms were refurbished. A group led by **Frank Green**, the pool's caretaker, raised £100 for this. It provided more shallow area for swimming tuition. Many long-time Cambridge residents have fond memories of these pools, and the White Heather takeaways nearby.

Cambridge Borough Council			
PUBLIC SWIMMING BATH			
HOURS			
GENTLEMEN			
Monday	10-12	4-6	
Tuesday	2-4	7-9	
Wednesday	10-12	4-6	
Thursday		2-4	
Friday		4-6	
Saturday	4:30-6	10-12	4-6
Sunday		9-11	
LADIES			
Monday		2-4	
Tuesday	1-3	4-6	
Wednesday		2-4	
Thursday	10-12	4-6	7-9
Friday	10-12	2-4	
Saturday	3:30-4:30		
MIXED BATHING			
	Wednesday	7 to 9 p.m.	
J. W. DOOKS, Town Clerk.			



In 1964 Cambridge celebrated 100 years as a town. A new pool was mooted and, after much fundraising, the Centennial Swimming Pools in Williamson Street were opened in 1971. The pools are currently being upgraded and we look forward to a new facility re-opening there in the very near future.

*But you can be sure, now and well into the future, Cambridge swimmers will still be enjoying the cool waters of the Waikato River, down by the Karapiro Bridge.*



## Walks and Talks



For Heritage Month, Waipa District Libraries have planned a number of presentations and activities in Cambridge.

PLEASE REGISTER AT THE CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY

### Chronicles of Cambridge | 1864 to 1874

(Roger Gordon and Greg Gascoigne)

In conjunction with the Cambridge Historical Society  
Tuesday 25 February: 6.30pm

### Cambridge Central Heritage Walk

By popular demand, a second walk guided by Roger Gordon. Limited numbers. Requires a reasonable level of fitness. Allow up to 2 hours.

Friday 5 March: 10am (meet at Town Hall)

## Goodbye Chelsea, Hello Elizabeth



We farewelled **Chelsea Tairi** as Museum Assistant in December. Chelsea had been with us since December 2018 and has provided us with a wealth of experience and skills. We will miss her cheery company and creative talents. Her work with the storage of key collection items will live on for many years.



We are delighted to welcome **Elizabeth Harvey** as Chelsea's replacement. Elizabeth has a background in museum digitisation and interpretation, and we are looking forward to making the most of her skills.

### New Members

We welcome **Ian and Joy Thomas**, and **Bob McQueen** to the Society.

## A Mobile App for Cambridge Museum

With the initial launch of the app in November 2019, this first version offers information on 12 historical places in Cambridge, 13 stories connected to people and Museum exhibits, and a tour through the south end of central Cambridge. More walks and new content are being prepared to come out this summer, including walks for Cambridge heritage buildings, and the equine stars of Cambridge.

Scan the QR code to get your app from the play store and app store.

Android app



iPhone app

