

## A Word from Kathryn

2020 was our busiest July on record with 624 people visiting the Museum. New Zealanders were out and about during the school holidays enjoying Waipa’s many attractions, including your Cambridge Museum.

With the children back into their usual routines, Elizabeth and I were invited to Goodwood School to showcase some taonga from the Museum’s collection to Year 2 classes. We took along some toki (adzes), a kumete (bowl) and kaheru (spade), and enjoyed discussing Maori horticulture and King Tawhiao with them.

Research enquiries have been keeping us busy. Our archives and research records are continually evolving, and we like to keep up-to-date with information found not only at the Museum but elsewhere. Karen has been meeting weekly with **Winston Steen** at the Fire Station, cataloguing the wealth of information and objects held there. The Cambridge Volunteer Fire Brigade is an important link to the development of Cambridge, and holds vital information on the fate of some of our iconic old buildings. Winston’s assistance and incredible memory have been invaluable.

Sadly, with the recent return to COVID-19 Level 2, volunteers are not able to work at the Museum. We look forward to seeing everyone’s friendly faces back at Level 1.

We are currently preparing a new display for the Military Room on the **Waikato Mounted Rifles**, including a timeline showing its Cambridge connection.



Congratulations to **Hannah Wood**, winner of Elizabeth’s “Then & Now” quiz held during the school holidays. Hannah’s entry was drawn from 52 others. She has won a voucher for four to play at Cambridge Mini Golf in Leamington.

**Kathryn Parsons**  
Museum Manager

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## President’s Report

Your Committee has had significant changes over the two months since the last newsletter was published.

At the June Committee meeting, **Grant Middlemiss** handed in his resignation as President for personal reasons, saying that he was prepared to stay involved on the Committee and the Cambridge Heritage Charitable Trust.

Subsequently we received the resignation of Vice-President **Irene Cooper** for reasons related to her deteriorating health.

After some persuasion, I agreed to assume the role of President in a caretaker role until the AGM in November to assist in preserving some experience in the Society’s affairs, and in maintaining continuity of their management.

At the July Committee meeting, in accordance with the rules of the Society, that was formalised. In addition Grant Middlemiss was elected to the Committee in my place, and **Nigel Salter** was elected to the Committee in lieu of replacing the Vice President, that role to be replaced at the AGM.

Nigel is an Accountant with considerable business experience, who has moved here from Queensland to retire and has shown an interest in helping the Society. He has agreed to take up responsibility for the HR matters previously managed by Irene.

The Committee wish to record their appreciation for the work carried out by Grant and Irene during their time in office. Grant has consolidated the sterling work he and **Tony Gainsford** carried out gaining back the operation of the museum from the Council and securing ongoing funding from them, and has put in place proper governance processes for the ongoing management of the Society. Irene established a basis for staff review and remuneration, and carried out the initial implementation of it.

The challenges we have going forward are substantial. Amongst other things we need to resurrect our expansion plans from the wreckage of the pandemic, and consolidate our ongoing funding and status with the Waipa District Council through the ten-year plan review due early next year.

I look forward to working with the Committee and members to set up the basis for achieving those goals.

**Bruce Hancock**  
President



## Cambridge 1899

This article, written by Ivy Nicholls to the Cambridge Historical Society in 1964, is held in our collection, no. 1576/10.

Your letter re Cambridge Pioneers to hand. I do not know if our family can be classed as Cambridge Pioneers? In the Ellen Melville Pioneer Hall, Auckland, the book of remembrance to NZ Women before 1875 contains both my grandmothers' and my mother's name on their roll. My grandmother Nicholls arrived in 1855 and my grandmother Hart with my mother landed in 1870.

My mother, Mrs J K Nicholls, a widow with two small children, went to Cambridge from Takapuna early 1899. We stayed in rooms owned by an old Salvation Army woman, **Mrs [Eliza] Maxwell** on the lower side of Alpha Street for a few months, then my mother bought two houses and a section of land on the high part of Alpha St, next door on one side to the Rout family property and on the other we bordered old **Tommy Wells'** orchard by a thick box-thorn hedge. Mrs Carnachan's several acres of land were at the back opposite the railroad station. They milked several cows and I crossed the paddocks each day for milk and cream.



Neighbour Thomas Wells' residence in Alpha Street, (now Cambridge Vets)



The National Hotel on fire (right) in 1912



Hally's Mill (no longer there) situated across the river from the Gasworks. Millstone held at the museum.

My mother let one house and we lived in the other. A couple of years or so later, Mr and Mrs Peake with teenage John and Lucy rented one of our houses while they were breaking in land at Roto-o-rangi. The Peakes bought the house and section later on, then, when their farmhouse was ready for occupation, they sold the Alpha St property to the Roman Catholics who built a school on the section. While the Priest was living in the house, the big fire in Cambridge which burnt out the National Hotel also burnt down the Priest's house. Our house next door had one side burnt out, the rest was saved by the fire brigade and repaired.



Neighbour William Rout, who wrote a History of Cambridge, published as newspaper articles in 1897 (held at the museum)

The **Rout** family lived on the corner of Alpha St with frontage to the street which runs down at the back of Cambridge to Duke St. Their small son Nelson along with Freddie Kinsford, who lived opposite on the lower side of Alpha St, played together with us as very small children. The Kinsford house was later bought by George Dickenson, the

undertaker. Nelson Rout went to the First World War; he married overseas and was later killed in action. His widow sold the property to the Roman Catholics and they joined the two places together – our old section and house (which was burnt down) and the Rout place, which, I think, is the Roman Catholic Convent and school as it is today.



As small children when we first lived in Cambridge in 1899, we played down on the riverbank near the Karapiro bridge. It was like a beach there in those days; men with horse and dray would cart away loads of white sand. A very old resident warned my mother that it was dangerous to allow children to play on the river beach as there were patches of quick-sand and the story was that a man with his horse and dray were all swallowed up in the quick-sands and never seen again. Today the green swirling river spreads and backs up there looking deep and menacing.

My brother and I went to the Cambridge School in 1899. We attended the Presbyterian Church and Sunday School. The Rev Irwin was the minister in those days. The Mack children were playmates at school; their father [Mathew Joseph Mack] was Guard on the train and they lived in the railroad house opposite Carnachan's paddocks near the station. We children ran wild playing on Carter's flat which was sand and scrub and on the banks of the lake behind the railroad goods-shed – it was all open ground in those days – not many trees growing high like today. Most of that bank is covered with thick bamboo and trees there now ... too dark and covered in.



Mr Mack

The Carnachans were a very old Cambridge family; Mr Carnachan had been in the Maori wars. Miss Jeany used to tell the children bloodcurdling stories of how when they were young they had to run out of their house and hide in the tea-tree at the back when the Maoris were on the war-path. Their house was on the same street as Rout's but on the other side further up. It was sold to Mervyn Wells, I think, when the Carnachans moved to Epsom in the early 1900s.



Ivy Nicholls 1912

We left Cambridge in 1902 but returned again to Alpha Street in 1907. In the May of 1907 we bought a farm where I lived until 1923 then I went overseas. We sold our Alpha St house in 1920 when my mother died. Miss Meldrum rented our house for a number of years; I think she was a dress-maker. We saw the high level bridge opened and used it constantly for shopping in Cambridge. We saw the Post Office opened with its clock-tower on top – such a pity it

was pulled off. And the Town Hall where we danced the hours away and helped with church bazaars and teas during the First World War years.

We often visited people on the riverbank where the big water-wheel ground the flour.

Ivy Nicholls, 1964

**Excerpt from "Mysterious disappearance of Cambridge storekeeper": *Waikato Times* 17 March 1887**

very little extra weight. It was thought that perhaps Mr Simpson had wandered too near the edge of one of these and had fallen over, or that he had been bathing, and had been engulfed in one of the quicksands that abound in the creek, which are very dangerous in consequence of their being continually on the move, and although a certain part may be safe to-day, next week you may find a dangerous quicksand in that very part. Many of Mr Simpson's friends thoroughly searched every part of the domain and the neighbourhood of the Karapiro Creek on Tuesday, and again yesterday, without finding any trace of him. Had he been bathing,

The following report from the *Waikato Independent* dated 11 March 1964 relates to Mrs Eliza Maxwell, mentioned in the second paragraph of this article. She was also mentioned in our previous newsletter (June 2020), where her barn was burned down in the early 1880s, possibly by an arsonist. She died in 1912 aged 85. This article refers to a parade at Cambridge's centennial celebrations in 1964:

**HUNDRED YEARS OLD PARROT**

A hundred year-old parrot will be an unusual exhibit on a float in Saturday's procession.

For the last twelve years the parrot has been in the care of Mr and Mrs E. Hall, of Leamington, but it really belongs to their daughter Jean.

The parrot belonged originally to Mrs Eliza Maxwell, one of the pioneer settlers of Cambridge, whose home was formerly in Alpha Street at the rear of the Masonic Hotel. The parrot passed into the possession of Mrs L. Denton, a grand-daughter of Mrs Maxwell, and on the death of Mr Denton was left to the Hall family.

The parrot is a good talker and shows no evidence of its great age.





## Dennis Davis - Builder

We have on display at the museum at present several impressive examples of Victorian woodworking tools, including planes and saws. These have been carefully cleaned and oiled by Committee member Bruce Dean, who has showcased the rich patina of these once unassuming workaday objects.

They were owned by Dennis Davis who was a builder in Cambridge and Hamilton for many years.

Mr Davis was born in 1925 and at age 16 left school in Hamilton. He attended the Hamilton Technical College, training as a carpenter. World War II had begun and because of the shortage of tradesmen, registered carpenters in retirement were called back to train and employ apprentices.

Mr Davis was given these tools by his first employer who had used them as an apprentice in 1901. Some of the tools were handmade by apprentices who had to do this as part of their training.

Mr Davis built his own house in Cambridge with these tools. He was engaged to Loraine Retter. Loraine's mother refused to let them marry until he had a house, so he came to Cambridge and built one. On their wedding day in 1950, the Davises moved into their new house at 6 Brooke Terrace. The family lived there until 2018.

Mr Davis was employed by Speight Pearce Nicoll Davys Ltd (SPND) and the Taupo Totara Timber Co. After 1955, he could no longer build houses as he was allergic to the chemicals introduced in the drying process of timber.

However, he continued to build as a builder/handyman. He contracted in the weekends doing maintenance on Housing Corporation houses in Hamilton. In the 1980s, he worked for Moore Levesque & Morriss Ltd in Cambridge, helping build and design some of their factory machinery. He also worked at Nicholson's Orchard building sheds and carrying out maintenance.

**At home he built interior furniture, sheds and landscape structures, made renovations and added to the house as the family grew. He often helped friends with building.**

**His daughter Margaret had happy memories of him playing music using a bow on one of his saws.**

**Mr Davis used the tools all his life until he died in 2009 aged 85.**

The tools were made in the UK by the following companies:



## John Napier Miller

The name "J MILLER" is engraved on the brass back of one of the saws on display at the museum. He may have been Cambridge resident John Napier Miller, who was born in 1846 at the Whakatatumumu Wesleyan Mission Station set up by his parents in 1840. His father, Rev Frederick Miller (known as Te Mira in Maori) died of TB aged 32 when John was two years old.

In his early teens John was sent to England to study for the Wesleyan ministry, but after some years he returned to New Zealand and became a carpenter.

Messrs Miller and McFarlane of Cambridge are the successful contractors for the extensive additions to Messrs Wells and Soutter's premises. The work of erecting the new additions will be commenced immediately.

Waikato Times 2.1.1883

He married Annie Finch of Pirongia in 1874, and took up residence at Cambridge, where he worked in partnership with Mr McFarlane in a carpentering and joinery business. He assisted in the erection of many of the oldest buildings in Cambridge, including the Anglican Church. He died in Paeroa in 1928 at the age of 81.

*The brass backed bench saw with "J MILLER" engraved on it was made by Christopher Johnson & Co, Sheffield, England. Mr Johnson started a cutlery business in 1836. In 1859, he relocated to Portobello Street, which was to be the centre of the firm's operations well into the twentieth century. Johnson was essentially a merchant but he listed himself as a steel converter and refiner, and a 'manufacturer' of files, tools, and a complete range of cutlery (including table and pocket knives). The company closed in 1955.*

