

President’s Report

We are still in turbulent times due to Covid and its pandemic, and I trust you are all staying safe and surviving the restrictions on our lives it has caused.

One diversion I have enjoyed is getting to know the museum website a bit better. You might be surprised just how much interesting material is on it when you go beneath the surface! Have a look today.

As you will see when reading the rest of this newsletter, our staff have been very busy preparing some exciting new projects at the museum for us to enjoy going forward. I wish to commend them for making such progress under difficult circumstances.

It is with considerable regret that I note that the Cambridge Heritage Community Trust tasked with extending the museum on the existing site has decided to wind up. This is due to challenges with the site, cost, Covid and the uncertainty of future fundraising caused by it, amongst other things.

We look forward to working with the Council in eventually developing a new museum, probably incorporated with a new library, in due course.

The date for the AGM this year has been set for Tuesday 23 November at the Cambridge Bridge Club, 14 Fort Street. Our speaker will be John Coster on the subject of “Small Museums in New Zealand”. A formal notice with more details will be sent to members soon, but please put that date in your diary.

Just a reminder for those who have yet to pay your subscriptions this year to please do so as soon as you can.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the AGM. Please consider putting yourselves forward for a role on the Committee to provide some extra inspiration and enthusiasm going forward in these challenging times.

Bruce Hancock
President

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Museum Manager’s Report

The October change in the Covid-19 alert levels has again meant the Museum had to close. Museum staff have proved to be adaptable, working at home on research, writing material, gathering content for future displays and exhibitions, education-related planning, compiling research guides and working on the website – just to name a few.

Like all of you, we miss seeing everyone, sharing news and working together, and will relish the Museum reopening. We will then be able to complete our new display on healthcare. We also have plans afoot for an online curated collection of 50 of our most important collection objects, and an exhibition of Buckingham photographs at the Cambridge Town Hall in the New Year.

Over the past couple of months, we have added two displays: a celebration of the 150th anniversary of St Andrew’s Church, and objects in the collection displayed from a Turangawaewae perspective.

During the August-September lockdown, we provided quizzes and activities from the Museum’s website and encouraged use of our Heritage Walk app. See <https://bit.ly/3AE5ohE>.

The flags currently flying in the main streets of Cambridge mark our national day of remembrance on 28 October: Te Pūtake o te Riri, He Rā Maumahara. This day lies at the heart of our history and cultural identity, when we remember the lasting importance and disastrous impact of the New Zealand wars. Discover more about local events by visiting Te Ara Wai Journeys website. Start here <https://tearawai.nz/explore-cambridge>.



We understand that some members may be nervous about visiting the Museum in Alert Level 2. Be assured that we are following the government guidelines with mask and tracing app requirements, along with limiting visitor numbers so that we can ensure social distances are met.

Kathryn Parsons
Museum Manager



Robert Boyce - Pharmacist

The Boyce family go back a long way in Cambridge.



Robert's grandparents Charles and Sarah Boyce (pictured) arrived in Cambridge in 1874. Charles worked as a cooper (barrel maker) for Hally's Brewery, later setting up a

cooperage of his own to supply the town with churns, butter kegs and cheese vats. In 1884 he opened a bakery and general store. Charles and Sarah had eleven children who were known as enterprising and musically gifted¹.



Their eldest son Charles (pictured) was Robert's father. Charles married Lillian and they had four children. Charles worked with Charles Snr in the bakery, eventually taking over the business until he was struck down with influenza during the 1918 pandemic. He disposed of the bakery and worked, with his brother Thomas, in Boyce & Sons general store.



Charles Jnr was an authority on native flora and a fluent te reo speaker. He was bandmaster, past master of the Alpha Masonic Lodge, a JP, Borough Council member and member of the St Andrew's church and choir. He took a keen interest in athletics. He was still working with his brother in the store when he died in 1942 at the age of 62. Thomas sold the business in the 1950s.



Robert (Bob) Boyce was born in 1912. He attended Cambridge High School (pictured there in 1926), and then worked for a short time as assistant in a pharmacy at Te Kuiti before becoming manager of his uncle's pharmacy in Opotiki. He opened his own pharmacy in Cambridge in 1936, eventually (in 1949) moving his premises into the original Boyce & Sons building at what is now 73 Victoria Street. (In 1969, the frontage for the building was redesigned and rebuilt. Its signage reads "Boyce Building est. 1884".)

Bob Boyce worked at his pharmacy for over 60 years. During WWII pharmacists were among workers required to stay at home in New Zealand and work for the war effort.

While Bob's wife Ruby looked after their young son Tony, he juggled his work at the pharmacy with volunteer ambulance duties. He would have to shut up to take

patients, with diseases such as meningitis, diphtheria and influenza, to the hospital – quickly, as these were often fatal if not treated immediately. Bob said he and the other ambulance officers deodorised themselves once they got back and used antiseptic spray for their noses and throats so that they could not catch the disease and pass it on to others. (Despite driving the ambulance during the war years, Mr Boyce did not get his official driver's licence until he bought a brand new Morris Oxford in 1953, which he kept all his life.)

Throughout the war and for some years afterwards, there were severe shortages of everyday supplies, and certainly no fancy cosmetics for Bob to offer to his customers. As well as supplying prescriptions to the townspeople, Boyce's pharmacy made up calf drenches and "all sorts of things" for farm animals.²

Bob's son Tony joined the pharmacy as an apprentice in 1959 and worked with his father, eventually taking over the business in the 1990s when Bob retired. Mr Robert Boyce passed away in 2002, aged 90.

When Tony sold the business to Munro Burgess Amcal in 2005, he remarked that he had seen generations of customers come and go. The biggest professional change for him had been the dispensing of pre-mixed medicines instead of pharmacists mixing the prescriptions themselves. He also spoke of looming problems as the rising cost of healthcare and an aging population collide.

Tony worked part-time for Amcal before retiring in 2008 after nearly 50 years of service as a pharmacist.

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The Cambridge Museum is planning a "How are you? Kei te pēhea koe?" exhibition in November, featuring objects and ephemera from Boyce's Pharmacy.



¹ Family history by Ian Boyce

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² Robert Boyce Interview, Cambridge Independent, 13/8/1992



The Datsuns

Can you believe that this Cambridge band has now been around for over 20 years? This year they released their seventh album, reminding us why this band has survived for so long.

They've been described as grunge, garage metal, heavy metal and garage punk. Their music is a clashing roller-coaster of sound – urgent, energetic and loud.

Back in 1995 when they were still at Cambridge High School, **Dolf de Borst, Phil Somervell** and **Matt Osment** formed a band called *Trinket*. **Christian Livingstone** joined the band in 1997, and in 1998 they were skilful enough to open for Swedish garage punk band *The Hellacopters* in Hamilton. (A connection with *The Hellacopters* remains today with de Borst currently living in Sweden and a touring member of the band.)

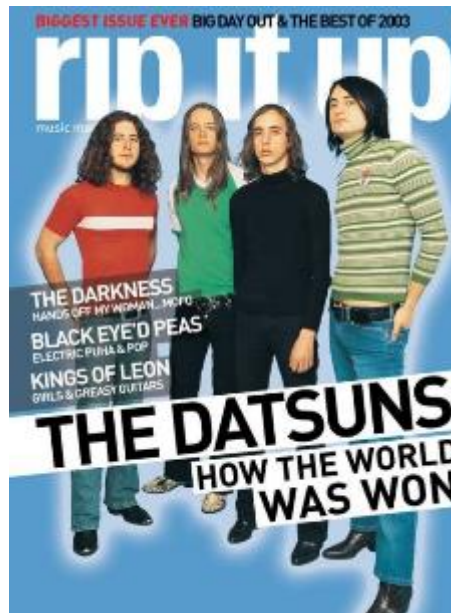
In the early days, the band practised upstairs in the Cambridge Town Hall. Mayor Buckland could not have foreseen, when he laid that foundation stone for the Town Hall in 1907, that 90 years later it would be reverberating to the clash of heavy metal.

In 2000, *Trinket* changed its name to *The Datsuns* and no-one can argue with the brilliance of that move. Funny, nostalgic and kiwi, the name resonated equally well overseas. The four band members had retro cool in spades and, fortunately for them, the garage metal influences of their music were undergoing a resurgence internationally. That same year, their first 7-inch vinyl "Super Gyration!" was released, and they opened for the *White Stripes* in Hamilton.

The following year, *The Datsuns* toured Australia and released four more songs, including "MF from Hell" – written for the sole purpose, it would seem, of antagonising the parents of young people. The song explodes with energy, its lyrics are unforgettable and, like the name of the band, it makes you grin.

In 2002, *The Datsuns* recorded two **John Peel** sessions, which launched their career. John Peel was an English DJ from 1967 until his death in 2004. He had an enthusiasm for music outside the mainstream and had launched the careers of countless recording artists through the Peel

Sessions recorded and then played on his radio show. He was also a percipient and very funny writer. Some of the musicians he promoted over the decades were The Kinks, David Bowie, T-Rex, Jimmie Hendrix, Elvis Costello, Led Zeppelin – and now *The Datsuns*, so this was a big deal. In a recent interview³, Somervell said: "That came from us just sending him [Peel] a 7-inch and a funny photo and a letter, and then ... he opened his show with one of our songs and things kicked off from there."



L-R Matt Osment (drums), Phil Somervell (guitar), Christian Livingstone (guitar), Dolf de Borst (lead vocals, bass)

Having slept on the floor of a friend's house for some time, they enjoyed the expensive meals paid for by the record companies lining up to sign them. On one occasion, they were given "Led Zeppelin box sets that were brought to the table on a large platter covered with banana leaves."⁴

Before long, there were London live shows, a signing with Richard Branson's V2 Records, and appearances on "Top of the Pops" and "Later with Jools Holland" alongside *Coldplay*, the *Foo Fighters* and Robbie Williams. Their debut album hit No.1 in NZ and No.17 in the UK, they were on the cover of rock magazine NME and lead singer Dolf de Borst (or Dolf De Datsun as he was billing himself) was No.3 in the "cool" list of 2002. Looking at this 2003 cover photo of *RipItUp* (courtesy of Simon Grigg), we can all see why.

The next few years involved constant touring, recording, and fraternising with music idols.

Their fourth album "Headstunts" recorded in 2008 was the first with new drummer **Benjamin Cole** – whose parents Michael and Dayelle, incidentally, have long been associated with the Cambridge Historical Society.

Dolf De Borst once said: "This band's like a four-way dictatorship. Everybody's got their own camp and wants to push it 'in this way'. They say that a compromise is a situation where nobody is happy. That is kind of how it is with the band. We recognise that it is part of the strength too. The band is still going and we've made six records."

Seven now, counting their 2021 album "Eye to Eye". Why not surprise family members by buying them a Cambridge classic?



Eye to Eye album cover

The Cambridge Museum is planning an exhibition on The Datsuns for NZ Music Month in May 2022. If you have any merchandise that the Museum may borrow, please contact me (Karen) on 827 3319.

³ Music101, June 2021

⁴ Audioculture.co.nz



Letter to Kenny from “Nui”

We do not have the full name of the writer of this excerpt from a letter to Kenny Wilkinson dated 27 May 1958. “Nui” is talking about the Karapiro stream which runs under the Karapiro bridge just below the Duke Street hill.

The flooding he refers to was in February 1958 – a period of heavy rain which brought flooding to many parts of New Zealand, cutting off lifelines and causing extensive damage in some areas. Waikato was the worst affected region.

“... What I want to refer to are my experiences of my many years from early childhood of the Waikato River and the once lovely Karapiro Creek. My sister, Sally, on her last trip to Cambridge stood on the Karapiro Bridge and held a tangi when she gazed on the practically stagnant pond, which was once a clear rippling stream flowing over a bed of clear sand, wadable for miles, as far as the foothills of the Pukemako Range (about 5 miles). I clearly remember my brother Jim and myself wading as far as Dougherty’s in preference to taking Thornton’s Road, and in seeing a hare climbing the bank at Breakall’s – it appeared to me like a miniature deer. At a guess, I would say it was in the year 1885.

The creek was much warmer and wider in those days. Much warmer than the river, as it was not shaded by willow trees, or choked in a narrow gut as it is in parts today. But to get down to tin tacks.

My humble opinion of the last disastrous flood in the Lower Waikato – I hold with the opinion that there may have been no more volume of water in the river than during the previous big floods. My reason for that belief is that the big wash-out at Arapuni Dam deposited so much sand that the bed of the river was covered with sand, so causing the flooding, and is now backing the Karapiro Creek so that it is an eyesore at the bridge. Added to that, the effluence from the Borough septic tanks does not improve the situation. Why in the world was the second septic tank erected where it is instead of towards Moon’s Creek, which would be preferable to the effluence contaminating about a mile of the creek.

You will no doubt remember what the river was like when that sand was intermingled with water. It seemed to be of the consistency of bricklayer’s mortar.



Accession 2958/5/2: Edwardian postcard - the old Karapiro bridge (left), with earlier low level bridge to Leamington in the distance (right). The Karapiro Stream runs left to right. Look how high the water level is!

When the gates at Arapuni were closed and the river practically empty, I expected to see a sunken barge of bricks which we as boys walked on, a summer level reached about chest high. There was no sign of it – it was buried in sand. We never troubled to learn the history of the wreck, and its story seems to be lost in oblivion. The only one who may be able to throw some light on it is Major W Kay, well remembered to old “diggers” as OC of the NZ’s at Torquay, England. His father had a brick kiln and made bricks. The said kiln was situated on the flat just below the approach to the high level bridge. If you are interested, I could get in touch with him ...”

End of excerpt.



Accession 2958/5/6/1 : A 1906 photo of the Karapiro Stream running under the Karapiro Bridge with Duke Street running up the hill on the left.

