

## From Elizabeth

### Tēnā koutou and greetings



You might be forgiven for thinking we're going car crazy here with the recent members' meeting at the Ross Brothers' Museum (see Grant's note) and the serialisation of Neville Souter's *First Cars of Cambridge* in this newsletter. Yet both are excellent examples of how Society members are caring for the heritage and histories in this town. Cambridge Museum is run by the community for the community.

### The new History Curriculum

The new history curriculum being taught in schools for the first time in 2023 offers more opportunities for the Museum and Historical Society to deepen our community's understanding of the past.

Visitor numbers are beginning to rise again, and we are looking at ways we can grow – not bigger but smarter. This involves refreshing the gallery displays, and extending outwards to where people are already gathering and sharing experiences. This could potentially include in the front gardens of the Museum, in the library, in social groups, online and even in the new retail areas.

### Glorious Glass

2022 is the United Nations International Year of Glass, and following on from the excellent work at our Bottle Working Bee, we are preparing a new display featuring glass bottles from our Collection. It will challenge you to consider how you use glass every day and examine how this has changed over time. Inspired by Bruce Dean's expertise, there will also be a guide on what to look for when dating bottles that you find in your garden.

### Spread the word

And now I'd like to ask for your help. We value your support as members and friends. Please spread the word about the value of local heritage, look out for intriguing local stories we can share, and encourage people to visit and support the Museum. There are even opportunities to volunteer (see back page). Make sure to visit the Museum when you're passing; we always love to see you.

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## Tēnā koe from the President



It was great to see our members turn out in force to the Society's visit to the Ross Brothers Museum at Hautapu on Thursday 26 May.

For those of you who don't know, the Ross brothers are an old Cambridge family with links to the Hicks, Peake, Browne and Wallace families. They are a major earthmoving contracting firm and their museum has an amazing collection of classic muscle cars, along with some very large, retired earthmoving equipment, trucks and vintage fire engines.



This was the first of our post-covid events and we look forward to upcoming events planned by the committee and museum staff.

I'd also like to thank and acknowledge those members who have participated in working bees to file the Buckingham photo collection and to sort and document our extensive bottle collection. If you would like to assist in our periodic working bees please email Elizabeth or Karen to let them know of your availability.

Grant Middlemiss

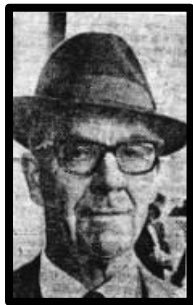


**Working Bee for our bottle collection.** L-R: Jo Barnes, Dave Payne, Bruce Dean, Karen Payne, Sue Milner, Marcia Baildon. Not pictured are Bruce Hancock, Grant Middlemiss and Elizabeth Harvey who were photographing the objects. Bruce Dean entertained everyone with his stories on the bottles' history.



## The First Cars of Cambridge – Part 3

*The following is an abridged transcript of a talk given to the Cambridge Historical Society by Neville Souter, aged 70, in September 1969. His grandfather, Captain William Burns Souter founded the firm of W Souter & Co in the early 1860s passing the business on to his sons Edwin (Neville's father) and Joseph in 1888. The first and second parts of Mr Souter's speech have been published in our March and April 2022 issue.*



*Neville Souter (pictured in the Waikato Independent 18/9/1969) attended the Cambridge District High School and took over the business shortly after his father's death in 1924. Already the firm had transferred from seed, grain, farm implements and real estate to the motor business. Mr Souter died in 1976 aged 77.*

“One thing I haven't touched on is Licencing and Registration. Until the passing of the Motor Vehicles Act of 1925 you could go to any County Council or City Council office and register a new car for 10/-. You were given a registration number and you had to provide plates, have them written by a signwriter and attach them to your car.

This was the simple registration procedure until 1924. Until this year there was no annual registration fee and if you happened to be a motor dealer you simply had the local printing works provide you with a few hundred sheets of paper number plates which were gummed on to the back of the new car before it was sold and if you didn't remember to do so, well, it didn't seem to matter. There was a prefix to all numbers such as A for Auckland, MM for Matamata, WO for Waikato etc.

No one ever bothered about a driving licence. I did not have one until 1924 although I had been driving for many years before that date.

There was one traffic inspector this side of Auckland and that was Joseph de Silva in Hamilton. An incongruous situation existed in relation to Auckland. If a person lived in Auckland and owned a car he was required to have a driving licence but anyone living 40 miles outside the city could drive in Auckland for one month without a licence.

In the early days the roads were very bad in Auckland and it was the common custom to drive on the tram lines. Auckland taxi drivers were particularly adept at this and as many of the tyres of the day were shod with steel studs you can imagine what a din they created.

In retrospect it is refreshing to reflect that little was seen of the restrictions which assailed motorists in other parts of

the world. Just prior to the turn of the century, a series of ridiculous laws in England treated all mechanically propelled vehicles as traction engines, confining them to 4mph and the need for a pedestrian carrying a red flag to precede them. The nearest we ever got to this state of affairs were those bylaws relating to a traction engine and when, as children, we saw a horseman carrying a red flag go past we knew that in ten minutes or so one of Cambridge's several steam engines would be following.

The early New Zealand motorist suffered very little interference from the powers that be. There were no traffic inspectors and the average policeman seemed to confine his activities to warning children caught riding bicycles on the footpath. One reason for this attitude could be that the cars were incapable of speeds calculated to give offence, and licences and Warrants of Fitness had not appeared on the scene so there was nothing to check.

It is true that some 50 years ago speed limits were introduced in some of the bigger cities, but these erred on the side of the ridiculous as they ranged from 4 to 12 mph.

In addition to the present day signals, it was also necessary to indicate when slowing down or when turning to the left. The slowing down sign was given thus: “On slowing down the driver shall hold out the right arm and hand horizontally to the right but with a backward patting motion of the hand from the wrist”. When turning to the left “the driver shall hold out the right arm and hand horizontally to the right but with a forward sweeping action of the forearm and wrist”.

In connection with the latter sign which many drivers considered unnecessary I feel that I was, to a certain extent, responsible for its abolition. In 1921 I was served with a summons for failing to signal my intention to turn left when passing from Collingwood St to Victoria St in Hamilton. I put the matter before the Auckland Automobile Association and after due deliberation this body also agreed that the bylaw was unreasonable and retained Mr E H Northcroft (afterward Judge Northcroft) to defend the case.

The hearing duly took place and by the time all the legal arguments were dealt with, it took nearly all day. During the proceedings the Court adjourned to a car standing outside the building and the traffic inspector was placed in the driver's seat. He was then instructed to give the right hand signal which he did in the customary manner. He was then told to give the left hand signal and after doing so, it was apparent that there was no real difference between the two signals as after signalling to the right, the arm was returned to the wheel in a forward sweeping motion which designated the left signal.



The Magistrate finally decided against us and I was fined the usual 30/- and costs, but Mr Northcroft immediately asked for the fine to be increased to 10/-/- so we could appeal. This the magistrate agreed to but before the matter was re-opened, a notice appeared in the Gazette to the effect that the bylaw was abolished. So, in fact we lost and won the action.

1925 saw the opening of an all weather road to Auckland and it seemed strange to set out for the city in the middle of winter without even a bag of chains in the car. Part of the Rangiriri hills road was still used and an entirely new section laid for six or seven miles this side of the Meremere Power Station to Springhill Road. Part of this road required constant attention for a number of years after the opening, due to the road metal sinking into the swamp.

For some years prior to this a concrete road was creeping south from Auckland and as each section was being laid, various detours had to be used. Some of them were shockingly bad. The concrete road ended just this side of Papakura. It was not particularly smooth but in later years provided an admirable foundation for the modern bitumen road.

At this time the only weather road to Wellington was via Napier and this was a two day journey. The road up the middle of the island, now known as the Desert Road Route, was only partially completed.

Up to 1925 practically all motor vehicles were open touring cars, and for the preceding 10 years or so were fitted with hoods and side curtains – some good but mostly bad. But this year saw the advent of closed cars called sedans in the US and saloons in the UK and Continent. One of the reasons why this type of car had never been popular previously was because some wiseacre in the early days had said that they would collect carbon monoxide and suffocate the passengers. Likewise it was said that no car would ever attain 60mph as air pressure would kill the occupants.

Hardly any of the manufacturers of this time mentioned speed in their advertisements as few of them had anything to boast about. But a brochure issued by the Chandler Motor Co in 1919, in the course of its claims, says: *"Speed. The Chandler offers a possible speed greater than 999 out of any 1000 men would ever want or dare to use"*. Brave words to be sure but my people sold quite a number of those fine cars and its top speed was about 55mph, or not quite as fast as a Mini Minor can go in third gear.

1925 was also the year that Chrysler introduced balloon tyres and hydraulic brakes and was roundly condemned by other manufacturers for fitting a brake system which they claimed was fundamentally dangerous. Nevertheless, as

time went on, one after another followed the Chrysler line until hydraulics, today, are a universal fitting. One of the bitterest opponents and one of the last to give in was Ford.

Another first for 1925 was the introduction of pumps for the dispensing of petrol, the first being worked by hand and later, of course, being electrically operated. This innovation found great favour among garage attendants as it saw the end of the tiresome lumping of four gallon tins from the benzine shed, which for safety reasons, was usually

situated some distance from the potential customer.

There were wonderful improvements during the next 10 years. The Chrysler set a new standard and was years ahead of its competitors but these were not slow to take up the challenge

and many of the new models of other makes seemed to possess features introduced by Chrysler. Synchro-mesh gears, one of the highlights of the mid-20s and invented by Cadillac enabled the worst driver to change gears silently. Today all cars have synchro-mesh gears which is a method of synchronising the speeds of the gears to be engaged by a relatively simple system of clutches.

In view of these fine new models, by about 1920 the popular comment was that cars were as good as they would ever be. By this time, front and rear bumpers, shock absorbers, balloon tyres, windscreen wipers, dome lights, sun visors etc were being included by most makers as standard equipment. Performance was being stepped up and more flexible springs were giving a soft ride. We find that visits to the repair shops for major overhauls are seldom necessary.

All this and yet more to come and at the present day we see a tremendous advancement in car performance. Most of the smallest are capable of 80mph while the bigger models have no difficulty of topping 100. We find the visits to the shop for major repairs are seldom necessary, the once familiar valve grinds are a thing of the past – the necessity of greasing and servicing every 500 miles has been abolished. We have radio, automatic transmissions, power brakes, power steering, interior heating and demisting, splinterless glass, disk brakes and many other fittings too commonplace to mention.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen I think it can be conceded that the man from the Reliable Dayton Motor Company was right when he said that the motor carriage is here to stay!"

*This concludes Mr Souter's speech. A hearty round of applause!*





## Te Ihingarangi

*Part 10 of a history of the Karapiro-Maungatautari area by Te Kaapo Clark and Lyn Tairi. This chapter moves onto the establishment of the Native Land Court in Cambridge.*

### 1800

#### KO NGĀTI RAUKAWA, NGĀTI KOROKI, NGĀTI WAIRERE, NGĀTI HAUA

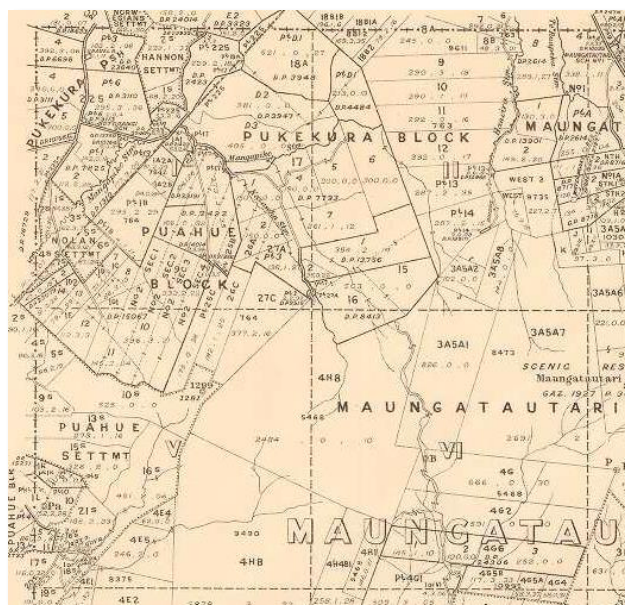
Throughout the remainder of the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s regular visits to the Native Land Courts at Cambridge and Kihikihi were necessary to establish ownership of the Pukekura, Puahue and Maungatautari blocks. Many disputes arose over the land, hence the necessity for several investigations of ownership over the years. The Native Land Court was established under the 1862 Native Land Act which was designed to individualise land title.

No more than 10 persons were recognised as owners of any one block, no matter how many were in fact joint owners. The 10 grantees could be dealt with as individuals and were not bound to consult with the other nine before consenting to sell. All of this was alien to the established Maori system of communal ownership. Huge amounts of land changed hands. The Act had a profound effect on the Maori social structure and community life style.

On 3 November 1868, the Native Land Court sat at Cambridge to decide the ownership of the Pukekura, Maungatautari and Puahue blocks. The Court upheld the claims of the following to the Pukekura Block: Te Raihi, Hori Pua, Te Hakiriwhi, Irihia Te Kauae, Piripi Whanatangi,

Horomona, Hori Wirihana, Hemi Kokako, Parakaia Te Korako, Maihi Karaka, Te Waata, Te Reweti, Te Hura, Te Ngiranira, Huka, Te Waaka Ngai, Meretana, Harete Tamehana, Reone, Wiremu Te Whitu, Ihaia Tioriori, Aperahama Te Rangipouri, Nepia Warino, Te Teria, Te Kono Hone Te One and Te Ponui.

These owners claimed the right to membership through descent from Kauwhata, the original owner of the area. They belonged to Ngāti Koroki, Ngāti Kahukura or Ngāti Haua hapu. Ngāti Raukawa decided to abandon their claim before the final judgement was made. However Ngāti Kauwhata returned in 1881 to make an unsuccessful claim to the land.



Extract from Maungatautari Survey District Map, T P Mahony 1933

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Visit to Di Tocker's Glass Casting Studio, Friday 17 June 1.30pm in Cambridge Park, Leamington

Expect to leave with a thorough understanding of the glass casting process, and how a practitioner such as Di Tocker started in this field 20 years ago.

[www.ditocker.nz](http://www.ditocker.nz)

Limited to 15 guests. Please RSVP by 13 June 2022

### Photograph Working Bee at the Museum, Monday 27 June, 7-9pm

Help preserve a unique collection of Cambridge photographs taken between 1960-80. Gloves provided.

**Winter Series: Talks with local art collectors** - July and August, dates to be announced

... and more to follow!



## Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers play an important role at Cambridge Museum by helping us maintain our collection and enhance the visitor experience.

We provide a friendly, sociable environment and work hard to ensure you find enjoyment and satisfaction from being a part of our team.

Current opportunities include:

- Hosting
- Collection support
- Digitising our photo collections – confidence with computers needed.

*If you would like to learn more, please get in touch.*

