



Dear Friends of the Museum

It was lovely to see so many of you join us at our festive morning tea before Christmas, despite the rain clouds.

Our conversations with you and the votes you cast with your star stickers are helping us plan an exciting programme for the upcoming year. Heather and Jane from the Committee are working together to curate a fantastic line-up including home tours, railway memorabilia, heritage visits and guided walks and talks. Be sure to check the back page for full details.

It will soon be time to subscribe and renew your association with the Friends of Cambridge Museum and the Cambridge Historical Society. We sincerely hope you will continue to support us to “awaken curiosity and wonder” about the area’s histories. Please encourage your family, friends and colleagues to join us.

We would like to reach as many people as possible this year and are thrilled to be part of the **Autumn Festival’s Carnival Day on Sunday, 30 March between 9am and 2pm**. Our stall will be on the town hall piazza and will include fun and games for Friends and family. There may even be a few prizes to be won.

What’s new at the Museum?

2025 has begun with record-breaking visitor numbers for January. If you haven’t already seen our new display on the Cambridge Harriers Club which is celebrating its 75th Anniversary this year, please pop in and share your thoughts.

Maungatautari Horse’s Head Mystery Solved

We’ve been blown away by the public response to the museum’s appearance on TVNZ’s *Find my Country House NZ* (Season 3, Episode 19). Lots of new faces have visited and the mystery of the papier-mâché horse’s head in the gallery has been solved.



Kellie Watson revealed that it was originally made by pupils at Maungatautari School in the 1980s for the Fieldays, under the leadership of Principal Gary Bennett. In its heyday (no pun intended), two people underneath a body made of sacking and straw walked it around. Kellie remembers it walking past her when she was a very young girl. Judging by the vibrancy and character on the face of the horse, it would have been difficult to forget.

If you missed it, you can view the episode on TVNZ On Demand or here: <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/country-house-hunters-new-zealand>

A Little-Known Chapter of New Zealand’s History



Lau Yuet Seen and Lim Yuen Loy standing in the back yard of the fruit shop on Victoria Street, 1948
LOY FAMILY

RNZ has launched a documentary web series titled *Farewell Guangdong* that sheds some light on a little-known chapter of New Zealand’s history, and one which is relevant to Cambridge too.

In 1939, the New Zealand Government approved the temporary entry of 256 Chinese wives and a similar number of children, allowing them to seek

refuge amid the turmoil of war. Episode 1 of the documentary traces the journey of Lau Yuet Seen who fled China during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) to reunite with her husband in Cambridge, navigating immense hardship along the way.

The Loy family ran a popular fruit shop (now Volare) on Victoria Street until 1976. Their story is told in the gallery of the Museum and in a book in our library, kindly gifted to us by the family. The documentary can be viewed here: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/farewell-guangdong/story/2018971673/farewell-guangdong-episode-1-lau-yuet-seen>

Doing our Bit: The Home Front

Our team are currently preparing a new display for the Research Room which will explore how life changed in Cambridge on the home front during WWII. It will highlight contributions to the war effort, the impact of rationing, the role of women and the effect of war on Māori communities. If you have stories you would like to share, please get in touch.

Elizabeth, Karen and Kate





From Melbourne to Bendigo by foot

People choose many ways to be remembered. In George Couper's case, it was through his journal (CM2421/3). Back in June last year, we printed excerpts chronicling his journey by ship *Tippoo Saib* from Liverpool to Melbourne in 1852 ([click here](#))¹. We covered only his first few weeks at sea, but the journal goes on to describe his arrival in Melbourne, his walk to the diggings in Bendigo and what he experienced there.

Since publication, we have learned more about George through the valued assistance of a reader from Australia. She sent me a passenger list for the *Tippoo Saib* describing George as a 27 year old draper (a dealer in cloth) from Scotland.

She wrote originally asking me for a full copy of the journal's transcript, explaining that her ancestor Ruth Birkley aged 23 was on the same ship as George. Through George's journal, our reader was grateful to learn of the pleasures and hardships Ruth may have experienced on the *Tippoo Saib*.

This second part of the journal begins when the ship docks in Melbourne.

Wednesday 29 September. At 9 o'clock am got underway for Melbourne, one or two ships astern of us on their way up. Arrived at Melbourne about half past 4 o'clock pm. Went ashore with two or three more to see and get some place for our luggage, but did not succeed. Found the town in great confusion and uproar, and was very much disappointed in the mean appearance of the place and everything was selling at six times its value. Wages are good and employment ready got, and the diggings in full operation. But what is the most valuable of all, life and property is at stake. Several murders and robberies being daily committed and no order whatever. And thousands are flocking to the diggings and if there is not a fresh supply of flour soon, a famine will be the result. Came on board with a small boat at 10pm and cost 5/ a head. You get no change. A pound would not go so far as a crown at home.

Thursday 30 September. On board all day, lying at anchor, a great confusion in getting the luggage up, everyone regretting that they had nothing but a carpet bag along with them. One at a loss what to do, some wishing they had never left home. Sailors running away from their ships as fast as they arrive, everything packed up. Obligated to sleep upon the boards all night. That is the commencing of our hardships.

Friday 1 October. Waiting anxiously to get on shore all morning. About 12 o'clock [a] steam tug came alongside when there was a regular rush to get the luggage on board, which was thrown about in all directions, without the least regard for breaking boxes or anyone's head or legs. About a dozen of the sailors leaped on board just when the boat was leaving to run away, but the first mate and Carpenter got on board and put them all in irons and lodged them in jail. The crew are running away as fast as they come into the anchorage. Took all our luggage to a cart shade called a store and hung our hammock from one beam to another and slept there all night whilst the rats were running about in hundreds.

Saturday 2 October. Walked a good deal about the town. It resembles some of the manufacturing towns in England but [for] the smoke, but makes up for it by the dust that flies about, blinding one's eyes. It is not the town that I would like to live in long.

Sunday 3 October. Walked up to the flagstaff to see some of our *Tippoo Saib* friends that had pitched their tents. It is a rough way of living for those that have never been accustomed to it. Called at Mr Walker's at Collingwood where there are hundreds of little wood huts that has been rattled up for the accommodation of the thousands that are arriving here weekly, that has not a place to lay their heads. Lodgings you can hardly get. There are generally 50 or 70 people sleeping in a single room on a shake down. Walked out to the Government Gardens in the afternoon and enjoyed the walk very much. The garden is in its infancy but it promises to be a beautiful place soon. Came back and enjoyed a comfortable cup of tea – what I had not done for some time.

Monday 4 October. Having too much luggage, and some of it no use, advised to sell it. Commenced to do so upon the pier, and got rid of a good deal of it at very good prices. It is one great comfort here, one can do anything or go about in any dress. No one knows you or takes any notice of you.

Tuesday 5 October. Still busy selling off, but was stopped by the Police, but succeeded in getting everything off that I wanted.

Wednesday 6 October. Busy in making preparations for the diggings. Met some of the *Tippoo Saib* at night and arranged for starting on Friday.

Thursday 7 October. Got my luggage stowed away in [a] friend's house and had my traps put in order for the road.

Friday 8 October. Started at 11 o'clock from Melbourne for Forest Creek. About sixteen of the passengers of the *Tippoo Saib*, after being about 2 to 3 miles out of town, found that the very little clothing we had with us was far too much for us carrying. The roads also were very bad sometimes, going up to the knees amongst mud. Arrived at [an] Inn called Lady of the Lake, had tea, which cost 2/6, and nine of us slept together in a small room, like a cellar. Roof was ornamented with different figures done by a lighted candle. The bed also cost 2/6, and had always to pay beforehand. The most of them were annoyed by fleas, but under all the difficulties they slept pretty sound.

Saturday 9 October. Rose at 5am and proceeded on our way, with our bundle upon our backs for about six miles. Halted and got a fire kindled and made some tea and the biscuits we had with us, and we relished our breakfast, first rate. Shortly afterwards it came on to rain, but it cleared up about an hour afterwards. And we went on our journey for a little, and had to rest now and again until we came to Jackson's Creek. And walked on till we came to an Inn called the Diggers' Retreat. And had a glass of brandy to help us on our way, and was charged 1/6 for it. After resting a little, started again on our way. The country looks extremely well, some parts of it, and is generally thinly scattered with trees. After walking 17 miles, pitched the tent and had some tea again, and rested for the night. There were another five tents close to ours.

Sunday 10 October. Rose at 5am, made tea for breakfast and after getting all our traps ready, got on our way and walked on to

¹ Go to our website and search under Join In, Newsletters.





the Bush Inn about ten miles. And after getting a glass of rum each and cold water, encamped for the night in a hut made by a few branches and a couple of plaids over the top. We purchased half a sheep which cost ten shillings and bought two loaves which cost another ten shillings so we made a capital dinner and had a drink out of a running brook. The country has much the same appearance, and some parts of the road was very bad. There were a dray that had stuck in the road, and they had to remove the bullocks. Met a good many of the passengers of the *Tippoo Saib* and we all stayed by each other.

Monday 11 October. Rose at 5am and kindled a fire, had some chops and tea for breakfast and started on the road at 7am. Walked through Black Wood Forest. Most of the trees were stripped of their bark and every other tree there had been a fire at. Met a good many drays going down and also overtook some drays with eight and ten oxen in them on their way up, heavy laden. The roads were very bad – in some parts going up to the knees and other parts very good. We cooked a leg of mutton to carry with us for our dinner. After walking about nine miles, we had a piece of it and some bread and enjoyed our repast very well. After getting out of the forest, we met three bushrangers well mounted on horseback, but our force was too strong for them interfering with us. We walked another five miles with a party that we had encamped with before. And then came to halt, set to and built a little hut with branches of trees and covered the top over with a couple of plaids, and slept there for the night after having some tea.

Tuesday 12 October. Rose at 5am. Kindled a fire and prepared tea for breakfast and then started on our way. Passed through a village called Kyneton and settled for half an hour and bought a leg of mutton, then moved on again. Met a good many coming down, saw also a great many of dead oxen on the road. Walked on till we came to Coliban and halted for the night.

Wednesday 13 October. Up at 5am. The morning very cold and the grass quite wet with dew. Put a fire on and had breakfast, and then started on our way. Good many empty drays on the way down, also a number of people going to Melbourne. The country has much the same appearance all along. There seems to be no stations on the road. There is no want of wood for burning. Walked on till we came to Sawpit Gully and then halted for an hour. Got some mutton chops for dinner, which we cooked ourselves. Bread is dearer here than anywhere. It is now selling at six shillings the four pound loaf. Walked on for another four miles and then encamped for the night like the gypsies, alongside of a water. Rigged up a little hut with some trees, put a fire on and had tea for supper and turned in for the night.

Thursday 14 October. Rose at 5am as usual. The morning cold and blowy, got a large fire kindled and had breakfast and then started on our way to Bendigo. Walked on for a good distance through a pretty fine country but it is much the same appearance all the way along. Wood all the way. We have now walked 100 miles and there has only been 2 sheep stations on the road. Rested about the heat of the day, when we kindled a fire and had tea for dinner. After staying for an hour and a half, we walked on till we came to good water and then encamped for the night in our little branch house.

Friday 15 October. Rose at past 4am. Got the fire on and had tea prepared for breakfast. Afterwards made up our traps and

marched on our way, the morning fine and dry. Arrived at Bendigo about midday. Bought a tent for 70/ and pitched it alongside of a butcher's stall. It came on to rain very hard for an hour and wet us all through which damped our spirits a little. Went to the Commission and took out our licence as we are obliged to do so the moment you arrive. There are hundreds of tents for miles and the earth is completely turned up. There is so many holes that you have the danger of falling into some of them. At night there is nothing to be heard but the barking of dogs and the firing of guns and pistols², and the different fires all around that you would think it was a large army encamped. Turned into bed at eight o'clock which was merely a few branches of trees scattered over the earth. Kept no watch but composed ourselves to sleep for the night.



Bendigo 1852, from the diary of Edward Snell held at the Public Library of Victoria.

Saturday 16 October. Rose at six am after a good night's rest after our marching for the last week. Got the fire kindled and had breakfast. The water here is extremely thick and muddy, also brackish. Nothing very enticing for one to remain at gold digging, but it is the opinion of most of the diggers that the best of the gold days are gone. Purchased some spades and picks with washing dishes, second hand. They charge tremendous prices at the stores for anything that you require. Bread here is now selling at five shillings the four pound loaf, sugar 1/9 the lb, salt 2/, flour fifteen pound the sack. The only thing that is reasonable is the beef and mutton but man cannot subsist upon that alone. At night, the firing always commences and the barking of dogs, for every tent has two or three dogs. Went to our hard bed at 7 pm.

[This concludes Part II of George Couper's Journal.]

A little more about Ruth Birkley, who was mentioned in our introduction. (Warning: this isn't a happy story.) She was described in the *Tippoo Saib's* passenger list as a spinster from England travelling alone to Australia. The following year she was married to William Rolfe, an ex-convict. They had two daughters: Elizabeth born in Melbourne and Isabella born in the Sandy Creek gold field in the Dunolly area. At Sandy Creek, they lived in a tent with a stone chimney. William worked as a gold digger, often absent a few days at a time.

Ruth, according to the coroner's inquest, "hung herself in a fit of insanity" in October 1857 aged 28. Her youngest child Isabella was five months old. In 1859 skeletal remains were found and informally identified (by people who knew him) as William Rolfe's. Cause of death was a mystery, with no evidence of foul play. Isabella was adopted by friends and returned to England.

² Miners warned thieves they were armed by 'shooting off'; firing the day's round from a pistol before bedtime. The process was described by many as annoying,





A Day in the Life

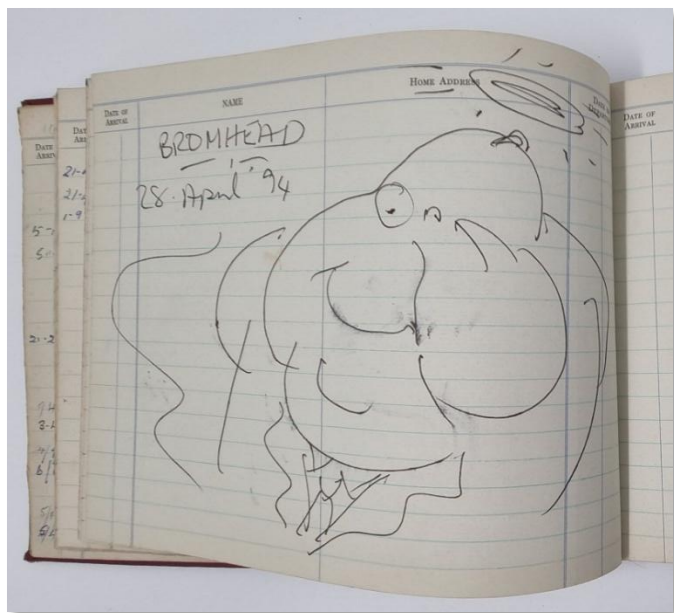
By Karen

We were accessioning a Visitors Book from Cambridge Lyceum House (CM4660/14). I asked Elizabeth for the dates of the first and last entries. Elizabeth duly read out 1944 to 1994, but then, visibly annoyed, said, "You know, there's always one, isn't there?"

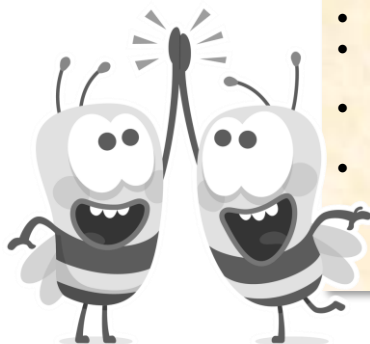
I asked her what she meant, and she pointed to a cartoon near the back. "Look at this. They've completely ruined the book."

As Elizabeth wasn't living in New Zealand at that time, she didn't realise that the cartoon was of Robert Muldoon. It was drawn by Bromhead who was described by Richard Long, former editor of *The Dominion Post*, "as probably the best pocket cartoonist operating in the British Commonwealth." Bromhead has received 11 awards for cartooning at the Voyager Media Awards, a NZ Order of Merit for cartooning, and is a Life Member of the Designers Institute of New Zealand.

If it wasn't for Elizabeth's honest response, we may not have realised we had this gem in our collection!



Page from Lyceum House's Visitor Book featuring Bromhead's drawing 28 April 1994. CM4660/14



Coming up

THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2025

Visit to Firth Tower Reserve and Museum

10am start at Matamata

Car shares available from Cambridge, please enquire.

\$5 per person entry to the Museum.

Visit one of New Zealand's largest farming museums and enjoy lunch at a local café with Friends.

Please RSVP to admin@cambridgemuseum.org.nz

by 5 March 2025.

SUNDAY 30 MARCH 2025

CARNIVAL DAY AND COMMUNITY STALLS, CAMBRIDGE AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Join us on the town piazza between 10am-2pm.

FRIDAY 23 MAY 2025

Talk by Matthew Gainsford, Marine Archaeologist

10.30am, Te Awa, 1866 Hamilton Road

Details to follow.

FRIDAY 22 AUGUST 2025

Talk by Craig Hoyle – *Excommunicated: Two centuries of complicated family history*

Craig Hoyle share stories from his book *Excommunicated*, which is a multigenerational memoir tracing 200 years of his family's history. He uses letters, records and interviews to explore how his forebears became associated with the Brethren movement, and the subsequent impact over seven generations.

Additions to the collection

- Photograph: West's IGA Cash Store in Grey Street, 1960s
- Book: *Hjorth Family History* by Beverley Bell and Carol Taylor 2024
- Book: *Four Generations of Bells*, by Beverley Bell 2024
- Book: *The Cambridge Star Redoubt* by Robert J McQueen (x2)
- Book: *Grid, the Life and Times of First World War Fighter Ace Keith Caldwell* by Adam Claasen
- Archive: Cambridge Lyceum House collection
- Blacksmith-made axehead
- Photographs of Cambridge in the 1970s taken by Susan Hague
- Book: *Tangent 7* by PAUA Architects
- Book: *A History of Leamington Dairy Factory* by Penny Pickett
- Archive: Clyde Haysmith collection of photos and archives
- Book: *Volunteer Voices*, Maungatautari Mountain Project
- Book: *Patu, the New Zealand Wars* by Gavin Bishop

