

## A Word from Bruce

When you receive this newsletter, it will be near enough to mid-winter. While we would like to think the winter weather is half over, we all know that in many years the worst of it is still to come!

My advice is to stay warm and settle down with some good history to read or some family research to do when going outside is not a good option. Do not forget that the Museum has a large range of history books and family history material that you are more than welcome to consult for information to help in that endeavour. Call in and say Hi to your friendly Museum staff to ask for help.

We have been joined by local artist **Carole Hughes** as a volunteer recently, and she suggested she could use her journalist skills as part of a project to join with the *Cambridge News* in producing a monthly page in the paper featuring stories from the Museum collection. Many of you will have noticed the introductory page two weeks ago and then the first of the monthly pages last week. Carole's easy style in editing the scripts is notable and appreciated.

The viability of the feature is dependent on continuing advertising support, and I would encourage any members who can or know anyone who can, to contact the Cambridge News advertising team accordingly.

When Karen requests this report for each Newsletter, she sends me her proposed draft, and this month it took me some time to stop chuckling after reading the story of the colourful Mrs Murphy! I must say the standard of newsletter material and the research going behind it improves each month and I commend Karen on her work. Taking the time to read it will be well worthwhile.

The Museum staff have been carrying out some valuable planning work recently with respect to museum policy and the forward exhibition programme, which will be considered for formal adoption at the next Committee Meeting on 22 June. Watch this space!

**Bruce Hancock**  
President

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## Kathryn's Report

A few changes were made to the gallery in May. In time for NZ Music Month, Karen set up a Cambridge Quartet music clip to play throughout the month; Elizabeth completed a Waikato Mounted Rifles slideshow for the Military Room; and items from our "Sound" collection are on display. Come and see early cylindrical vinyl records, whistles and musical instruments. We also have a new display of toys in one of the old Calvert's cases (pictured).



In early June we enjoyed hosting two classes – 54 children – from St Peter's Catholic School. They had three activities: (1) a scavenger hunt and thoughts about what they would choose to display in the museum, (2) a study of old photos of Cambridge, and (3) handling items from the collection, playing detective as to their age and use.

Andrea Oosterwijk, our Saturday staff member is well underway with interviewing her first oral history subject about her childhood and early adulthood in Cambridge in the 1930s and 1940s. Volunteers have been doing their usual multitude of tasks. Our research files on Cambridge sports clubs have been put in order for easy viewing and are almost complete.

We are transferring photographer Reg Buckingham's collection of negatives from their old glassine sleeves into polyester sleeves, and cataloguing them in the process. If you are able to help with this project, please contact us.

Hannah is nearing the end of her work placement for University and amongst other tasks has been updating our guide to historical maps of Cambridge that are available online.

We are planning a hands on activity at the Museum for the July school holidays in association with the Cambridge Le Quesnoy Association. It is likely to have a toy-playtime connection!

**Kathryn Parsons**  
Museum Manager



## Mrs Murphy

**Most of the Cambridge histories in Victorian times concern men – their business interests, leisure pursuits, transgressions and good works. Victorian women, on the other hand, are difficult to research.**

Their roles were largely seen as supporting their husbands or male relatives. They are sometimes depicted as victims. This article is about a woman who took the lead in her own business affairs, dealt directly with men, and most certainly did not categorise herself as anyone's victim. Her name was Mary Teresa Murphy.

You will be hard-pressed to find Mrs Murphy's name in any history books on Cambridge. William Rout wrote an extensive history of Cambridge in the 1890s, and did not once mention her. Cambridge's definitive history *Plough of the Pakeha* makes a single reference to her husband Patrick when his carpentry shop burned down, but does not refer to her as the owner of the premises. After her death, you may see the occasional reference to the estate of M T Murphy – a block of properties in central Cambridge between Empire, Victoria and Alpha Streets. But once those properties were sold, all references to her cease.

If, however, you search for her in court documents and news reports during her lifetime, you get insights into her life and character.

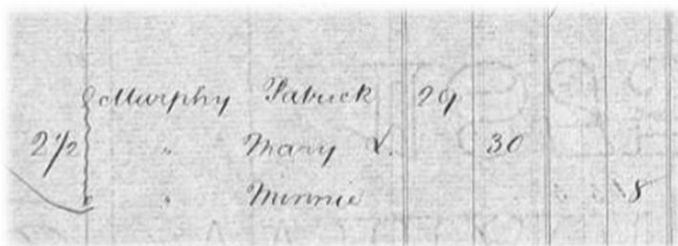


Figure 2: Passenger list entry on the 'British Empire'

She was born Mary Teresa Cronin in Limerick, Ireland in 1844. Her father was a cattle dealer. At the age of 20, Mary married a local policeman named Terrence O'Connor, and they had a daughter Minnie (Mary Catherine). Ten years later, Mary married Patrick Desmond Murphy, a local carpenter. On 11 July 1875, Patrick, Mary and Minnie boarded the 'British Empire' and emigrated to Auckland.

The family settled in Cambridge. They would have been attracted by the economic boom Cambridge was experiencing as a notorious court town, hosting the hearings of the Native Land Court. People were arriving

from all over the land to attend these hearings, and there was a sharp increase in flourishing businesses in Cambridge – especially in the hospitality industry.

Mrs Murphy, "a lady of proverbial enterprise"<sup>1</sup>, purchased a house and premises between Alpha, Brewery (now Empire), and Victoria Streets, possibly with money left to her from her first marriage. The family occupied a house there, Patrick set up a carpenter's workshop next door, and Mrs Murphy opened the Wharekai, a restaurant to cater for Māori who were accommodated in barracks hastily erected on the property where the Cambridge Town Hall now stands.

**"MRS MURPHY HAD BETTER NOT  
COME TO ME FOR A CHARACTER  
REFERENCE"**

Sergeant McGovern

On 1 September 1881, we get our first glimpse of Mrs Murphy's character as it appears in a *Waikato Times* article. She was charged with assaulting Mary Ann Teague by punching her and then striking her with a billhook, after accusing Mrs Teague of poisoning her fowls. Sergeant



Figure 1: Brewery (now Empire) Street. Mrs Murphy's properties can be seen at the far end of the street on the left – now the site of the old Cambridge Electric Power Board building.

McGovern who conducted the prosecution said that Mrs Murphy, when drunk, was a perfect pest to the neighbourhood. Mrs Murphy defended herself by making a long statement on her good character which she said was well known to the police. Sergeant McGovern said the accused had better not go to him for a character reference.

Although the assault was shocking, no-one can deny the humour of the exchange in the courtroom between Mrs Murphy and Sergeant McGovern. This was an introduction to a long-running series of court appearances, in which Mrs Murphy was undoubtedly the star, with occasional support from husband Patrick. As time went by, more and more townsfolk attended her court hearings knowing they were guaranteed a good show – with Mrs Murphy either the accused or the defendant. On several of these occasions, the public gallery was warned against excessive laughter.

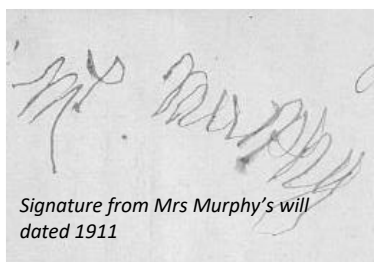
<sup>1</sup> *Waikato Times* 1/1/1885



Mrs Murphy's Wharekai was popular, but short-lived. It had a tarred roof and a large oven inside. In 1882, it burned down in mysterious circumstances. Some thought it was arson; others believed that a fire was left burning in the back of neighbouring butcher Thomas Hoy's premises; Hoy implied that the occupants of the Wharekai were "in no condition" to manage the heat from their large indoor oven.

In 1883, Patrick's workshop also burned to the ground. Cambridge had no reliable water supply and therefore no Fire Brigade. Wooden buildings were vulnerable to fire and expensive to insure. The focus was to prevent the fire from spreading rather than trying to preserve buildings that were already alight. As money was plentiful in Cambridge at that time, neither of these setbacks seemed to affect the Murphys. Mrs Murphy was now 47 years old, Patrick 43, and Minnie 21<sup>2</sup>.

In the late 1880s, Cambridge suffered an economic downturn. Mrs Murphy lived off the rent from her properties and also ran a store, selling various goods such as fish, tobacco products, ginger ale, cakes, etc. She never missed an opportunity to make money, whether it was

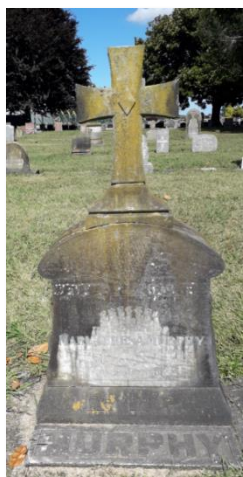


Signature from Mrs Murphy's will dated 1911

hiring out household furniture and fittings to her tenants or touting her wares in the street on Council meeting days. Every Sunday, she took her dinner at Hewitt's at the National Hotel.

Men enjoyed her company and would often buy her drinks. Occasionally she lived alone when Patrick was sent off to Mt Eden jail to serve time for various drinking offences.

Her court appearances continued regularly for over thirty years. She died in 1913 of pneumonia at the age of 69 and was buried in the Hautapu cemetery. By then she had a fortune in Cambridge property and left her beneficiaries Patrick and Minnie weekly allowances. Patrick was allowed to live rent free in their Empire Street home until his death. Minnie would live off an allowance for 21 years and then inherit the properties.



Mrs Murphy's headstone at Hautapu Cemetery. It bears a shamrock, harp and cross as requested in her will

Patrick did not cope well on his own. In his final years he was deaf, a chronic alcoholic and unable to look after himself. He had spent a year on Rotoroa Island – a Salvation Army-run rehabilitation facility for alcoholics, but relapsed almost immediately on return. When Sergeant Hastie suggested he be recommitted to the island, Patrick threatened suicide, saying he would "never come out of it alive." Patrick outlived his wife by five years, passing away on 22 June 1918 at around the age of 70. He is buried next to her in an unmarked grave.

**Next issue:** Mrs Murphy's court hearings.

### Mrs Murphy's daughter, Minnie

*Minnie (Mary Catherine) Hoare nee O'Connor*

The *Auckland Star* published the following birth notice on 30 August 1890: HOARE, - On August 17, at the residence of her mother, Mrs Murphy, Cambridge, the wife of Philip Hoare of a son; both doing well.

Mrs Murphy's daughter Minnie Hoare's story is an unfortunate one. When their child was four years old, Minnie's husband Philip Hoare died from suffocation, having fallen asleep with a coal fire next to his bed on board the cutter Tamaki Packet at Ngunguru. Although Mr Hoare bore a reputation in Auckland as a careful, steady man, he left his wife and son, also named Philip, destitute.



Fifteen years later, Minnie's son Philip Hoare was charged with failing to provide for his mother. Philip, a gambler, had been fired from his job and owed his previous employer money. He was ordered to pay his mother 5/ a week and advised to find farm work. He refused to do so, and was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment. Although he was described as a "wild youth" in the press, his impoverished childhood and pressure to provide for his mother made his rebellion almost inevitable. He lived in Newton, Auckland, a place well on the way to earning a reputation as a "haunt of many of Auckland's best-known crooks." [NZ Truth 4/3/1926]

Philip Desmond Hoare died of tuberculosis aged 23 in Auckland Hospital, only a few weeks after the death of his grandmother. Mrs Murphy's trustees had been searching unsuccessfully for 45-year-old Minnie, to fulfil the wishes of her mother's will, and it was reported in the *Waikato Times* that they hoped to contact her at her son's funeral. As Minnie's name is not recorded on Philip's death certificate, they may not have done so. We cannot find any record of Minnie after 1909, and her disappearance remains a mystery.

<sup>2</sup> Note that these ages are approximate. Various documents show different dates.





## Margaret Vosper

5 December 1931 – 18 March 2021

Margaret was born and bred in Cambridge. She was a long-time, loyal member of our Society, always keen to pass on her extensive local knowledge of Cambridge's heritage and the families who have contributed so much to making Cambridge the great place it is today.

Margaret served on the Society's Committee, enjoyed social activities, and for many years hand delivered the Society's newsletters around town – often remarking "I like to be a team member." Many members were her personal friends.

Margaret's grandfather, Archdeacon William Willis and his wife Mary arrived in Cambridge in 1878. Archdeacon Willis was the first resident vicar of St Andrew's Anglican Church. What a legacy for a family!

In 1990 Margaret edited a booklet *A Short History of Cambridge Churches* – ten churches in all. Very informative and well-researched.

Margaret's life was dedicated to family, St Andrew's Church, and the many community organisations that benefited from her participation.

In 2000, Margaret became a Companion of the Queen's Service Order, and in 2006, she received a Community Service Award from the Cambridge Community Board.

It has been a privilege to have had Margaret as a member of our Society and we will miss her.

**Bev Dean, CHS Committee**

## Te Ihingarangi

*Part 5 of a history of the Karapiro-Maungatautari area by Te Kaapo Clark and Lyn Tairi.*

## 1700

### KO NGATI RAUKAWA

During the 18th century the Maungatautari/Karapiro area was relatively peaceful and settled. Ngāti Raukawa dominated the Maungatautari slopes at the beginning of this period. One identifiable kainga of Ngāti Raukawa was Haowhenua (to the left of Luck at Last Road). Hape's descendants spread along the southern side of the Waikato River, while Haua's spread along the northern side and across to Matamata.

## 1800

### KO NGATI RAUKAWA, NGATI KOROKI, NGATI WAIRERE, NGATI HAUA

While no Pākehā had set foot in the Maungatautari/Karapiro region until the 1830s, their presence in Aotearoa was felt there in the 1820s. The introduction of muskets to the Nga Puhi caused a great upheaval in the settlement patterns of the North Island.

Te Rauparaha, whose mother was of Ngāti Raukawa, from Maungatautari, was driven from his home at Kawhia by Waikato and Ngāti Maniapoto after many battles with these tribes. In 1822 Te Rauparaha persuaded his Ngāti Raukawa kin from Maungatautari to join his migration south "because he needed more fighting men." Ngāti Kauwhata also went with their Ngāti Raukawa cousins."

**Next issue:** *The Battle of Taumatawiwi*



*Waikato River between Cambridge and the Waotu Rapids. Beere, Daniel Manders, 1833-1909 :Negatives of New Zealand and Australia. Ref: 1/2-096182-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23077211*

