

TINUÍ MUSEUM COLLECTION



Overview and Significance Reports

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INTRODUCTION

The Tinui Museum Collection spans over 150 years of rural life in New Zealand. Housed in the former General Store and Post & Telegraph buildings the collection has long been without curatorial care or a complete inventory. I was brought in through the Victoria University of Wellington Summer Scholarship programme to begin to explore the extent and potential of the collection. In inventorying the collection themes emerged surrounding war and peace, city and country, work and play.

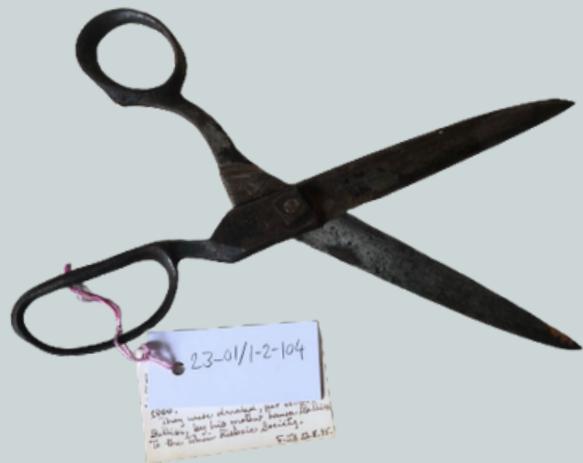


This report details the significance of ten items from the more than 900 in the collection. These items provide an insight into the makeup of the collection and the community. They allow us to assess the overall significance and imagine possibilities for display in the future. By prioritising those items with the most historical, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual significance we can tell a cohesive story.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #1

Peter Kelly's Scissors

A pair of heavy metal tailors scissors belonging to tailor Peter Kelly who worked in Tinui pre 1900. Donated by Allan Belliss, on behalf of his mother, Laura Belliss to the Tinui Historical Society in 1995. The scissors are in very good condition for their age with minimal rusting.



The old tailor's shop has since been destroyed and the scissors are the only item in the collection positively attributed to the shop. Therefore while similar scissors feature heavily in other museum collections they are unique in the Tinui collection.

They tell us something about the nature of rural life in the late Victorian period. While most clothing was still being made by individuals at their homes, tailors were in enough demand to set up shop in small rural communities. It speaks to the relative wealth of the community, who could afford to have their clothes made by a professional. The materials would have had to come from Masterton at the very least but were likely manufactured much further afield. Good clothes, for Sundays and holidays would have been sewn by Kelly, along with more humble clothes for ordinary life.

For a tailor good scissors are essential in producing quality garments that will last the test of time. They ensure accurate cutting and limited damage to fabric. Assuming their attribution to Peter Kelly is correct the fact of his employment adds significance to the scissors. In the attached notes and *Tinui Historical Society* accession book Kelly is described as 'deaf and dumb'. This outdated terminology does not provide a lot of insight into the extent or nature of his disability. What it does tell us is that he would have had difficulty communicating with his clients and others in the community. For a tailor, communication is vital, the designing of completely custom garments requires a great deal of discussion. His employment and inclusion in community life suggests a culture of understanding where Kelly could live a normal life and earn a living. His scissors then become representative of the spirit of a community.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #2

Knitted Child's Slippers

Knitted slippers with a green felt sole, worn and loved by two Tinui children in the 1950s. The attached note does not reveal the maker of the slippers but it is evident they were well used and cherished. They would have been worn indoors by a toddler perhaps in the days before the introduction of electricity in the early 1950s.



These slippers were hand made and their original sole was made from an old felt hat. In a rural community making garments by hand made both financial and practical sense. Rather than wait for the next visit to town to buy slippers it was quicker and easier to make them.

Much of the Tinui collection reflects the centrality of domestic labour in the function of a rural community. Objects related to cooking, cleaning, sewing, and child rearing make up a large portion of the collection. The hard work of rural life is not just early mornings milking cows or fencing in the hot sun. It is food three times a day, hot on the table. It's clean clothes, mended sheets, and a tended fire. It's hand knit slippers, made to fit the feet of a child whose other parent spends long days away.



The slippers are significant because they display this hidden labour, and love, of mothers and wives. Knitting was often a community activity for women, it allowed them to connect with one another while still being productive and not waste their precious daylight hours with idleness. Women's community groups, such as the local chapter of the Women Division of the Federated Farmers (WDFF), were an integral part of the Tinui community. Women and their labour are of great historic significance and cannot be overlooked in a collection like this.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #3

Post Office Savings Bank

A Post Office Savings Bank coin bank for school children shaped like a savings book. The red metal bank is the size of a paperback with a spine and seal on the front that reads "POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK". On the side there is a coin slot and a keyhole. The Post Office Savings Bank was a division of the Post Office between 1867 and 1987 when it became PostBank.



According to the attached note this bank was donated to the Tinui Craft Shop in 1997 and belonged to Ivan Ordish (1925 - 2011) of Dalefield, Carterton when he was a teenager in the early 1940s. School records from Wairarapa History Online record Ordish as having left school for college in December of 1940 at the age of fifteen. It was not possible to find whether he went to college or finished his time there but a copy of the New Zealand Gazette from the 28th of June 1944 lists Ordish as a farm hand on his family's farm. Due to Ordish's older age when he received this book he would not have had the chance to bring money to school every week to fill it like most children. Instead he may have kept his wages in it to keep them safe or simply kept it as a memento.

Production of these banks began in the early 40s and continued into the 70s. The banks could only be opened with a key held at the Post Office where the money would be deposited by the clerk into the child's savings account. The bank is significant because of its connection to banking, the postal service, children, and the Ordish family. The idea of saving money in childhood and the autonomy of possessing your own money show a culture that encourages independence and responsibility in young people. While more people were attending secondary school and university than ever before the banks made sure every child knew about the value of money at a young age. The bank is significant because of its connection to banking, children, and the post office.



SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #4

1908 Dance Card

Dance cards first became popular in the ballrooms of Europe in the 18th century and made their way into the dances of universities, towns, and social clubs. Women would fill out a dance card to reserve a particular dance with a particular gentleman. This example comes from 1908 where dance cards were at the height of their popularity. Given to attendees of the 'Tinui Bachelors Ball' on the 12th of June 1908, the decorative front and attached pencil are typical for dance cards of this period.



Written on the back is 'E.R Perry', and on the inside Miss Perry has reserved a variety of dances including a waltz with 'S.S' and a lancer with 'R.W.P'. A reasonable assumption made that 'S.S' is Mr. S. Schofield, who according to the back text was an eligible bachelor at the ball. This is supported by the Wairarapa Archives record that lists a "Schofield, Emmeline, Annie nee Perry 1888-1978" who married Sidney Schofield in 1914. She would have been twenty in 1908 and he would have been twenty three. Perhaps this dance was one of the first they shared, his name is on the very top of her dance card.

Dances allowed men and women to consider each other as potential suitors for the first time. The rigid formality of reserving a dance with someone on a dance card speaks the pre pre-war conservatism of the 1900s. While the young people who attended such dances would have undoubtedly known each other in other capacities the setting allowed closeness otherwise frowned upon.



The card also has great aesthetic value, the crimped edges and an embossed cover are beautiful and intricate. The attached pencil has been specially created for dance cards with its small size and metal end for string. The amount of care taken to create both card and pencil is evidence of the cultural importance of these events. The dance card is significant for its rarity, age, and connection to local families.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #5

Police Suspenders

Striped police suspenders with metal clips and leather fixtures worn as part of the police uniform. Their leather ends would have been attached to a button on the policeman's trousers. Unique within the collection, they are representative of police suspenders in the 1940s. Back reads "E.S. Belliss", this most likely refers to Ewen Scott Belliss (1918 - 2004), a lifelong resident of Tinui who was heavily involved in community life. His most notable contribution is his photography collection, housed in the Tinui Craft Museum. It is the most complete record of the early life of the community.



The suspenders were made in New Zealand and embossed text reads "Domo Police". Domo likely refers to the company that manufactured the suspenders. No records exist on Belliss's time working for the Police service. According to all accessible sources he was a farmer. Perhaps his time with the police was brief or during the Second World War, when rural record keeping wasn't a priority.

Under Belliss's name the suspenders also read "W.E.C.M.R", the Wellington East Coast Mounted Rifles. This is inconsistent with the identity of the wearer as the WECMR was absorbed into another unit in 1921, when Ewen Belliss was a very small child. If the suspenders did belong to Ewen Belliss then the reference to the regime was not about himself but instead about someone else. About his name in a thicker pen it reads "Carterton Camp". This is another mystery, there is no military or police camp in Carterton, nor has there ever been.



The closest is Trentham, just outside of Upper Hutt. The suspenders hold significance for their connection to a prominent local family, police and military service, and as a piece of fashion history. With greater community engagement and access to more records some of the suspenders mysteries may one day be solved.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #6

Leather Wallet with Shearing Tools and Dog tags

A leather shearing blade case with buckle closure and six pockets, two blades and a set of dog tags. The case is made of weathered brown leather with soft leather pockets. This case would have been owned by a shearer who took it with him as he travelled to different farms.

Dog tags became a formal part of military uniform after the unprecedented scale of the American Civil War.

Families were desperate to know if their loved ones were dead or alive and to repatriate their dead. They began sewing labels into their soldier's uniforms or sending them with belt buckles or badges with identifying information. This allowed aid workers to send crucial information to the families of both the living and the dead. This identification system became formalised in the First World War with names, enlistment numbers, and religious affiliations appearing on tags. These tags enabled identification of the dead and, if possible, proper funerals in accordance with the soldier's beliefs. They gave families a small peace of mind that they would know what happened to their loved ones, so far away from home.

The dog tags in the shearers wallet belong to a Private C. Clarke of the Canterbury Regime of the NZ Pioneers. Private Charles Clarke originally enlisted in the Otago Mounted Rifles but his residence was listed as "Tinui, Wellington". It is unclear why he was assigned to this regiment or why he later transferred to the Canterbury unit listed on his dog tags. Clarke was young and unmarried, his next of kin was his mother in Somerset, England. I was unable to track his life after the war but the last of a death record in official military archives suggests he survived and these dog tags were in his own possession rather than that of a loved one. The wallet and tags are significant for their connection to sheep farming, work, the early 20th century, and the First World War. They tell the story of one man, his fight for his country and his employment after the war.



SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #7

H.A Kelso Glass Bottle

A square glass bottle with thin neck and lip for stopper, embossed text reads “H.A Kelso Chemist Eketahuna”. This bottle would have contained medicine dispensed by Hugh Andrew Kelso. In a small community without a chemist of its own residents were forced to suffer for days or weeks until medicine could be brought from Masterton or another larger settlement. Therefore families likely purchase commonly needed remedies in large bottles like this so they could have some on hand. Popular remedies treated a range of common ailments such as asthma, dysentery, and influenza. Modern medicine was in its infancy in the early 1900s with dangerous medicines and medical practices still widespread. The efficacy of these remedies was therefore not always excellent but provided some relief.

Stoppered glass bottles like this were the most common way to store medicines until the production of plastic bottles began to gain prevalence in the early 1940s. This shape of bottle was most prevalent between the 1870s and the 1920s. A column of advertisements from the Wairarapa Daily Times refers to Mr Kelso as working in Eketahuna in April of 1904. Evidence of him working out of this location can be found for as early as 1902. An article in the Auckland Star from December of 1916 lists H.A Kelso as a stockist of Hearne’s Remedies. There he is listed as operating out of Matamata.

This gives us a closer estimate of the age of the bottle. It may have been produced in 1902 or earlier but cannot have been manufactured any later than 1916 as Mr Kelso had moved his practice to Matamata. The bottle is incredibly rare as it was designed for a specific chemist and while they were likely returnable after use in a rural community they would have been more likely to be disposed of. For Mr Kelso, having his name on his bottle was a kind of advertising and a reminder to customers that this was a medicine and should be handled appropriately. This bottle is significant for its rarity and its connection to health and wellness, a major concern in an isolated community.



SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #8

Cairn's Can Crusher

Cairn's Can Crusher is made of scrap steel bars and plating. This hand welded device was invented, designed, and produced by Mr. Cairns in the 1970s as part of an anti-littering campaign. The device is operated by lifting the handle, which is hinged at the base, and placing a can on the plate. The handle is then lowered and the can crushed.



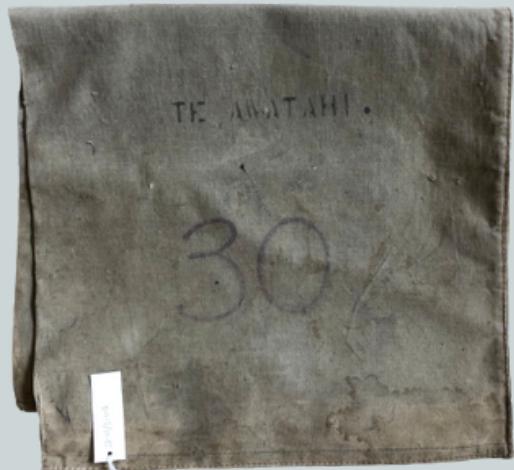
The “Be a Tidy Kiwi” anti littering campaign began in 1967 encouraging people to look after their environment and dispose of their rubbish. The sealing of the road to Masterton in 1962 opened the possibility of holidaying in the area to many more people. The proximity of Tinui to the tourist towns of Castlepoint and Riversdale created an endless stream of visitors. Littering along the roads and at campsites prompted Mr. Cairns to design a new way to crush cans to fit more rubbish in a bin. The can crusher is significant due to its rarity and connections to sustainability and the environment.

Environmentalism is often regarded as in direct competition with farming communities and their values. The can crusher proves farmers and rural people have wanted to “Keep New Zealand Beautiful” as much as anyone else for the last fifty years. This object opens up the potential for conversation about climate action and the role of individuals and communities in making a difference.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #9

"Te Awatahi" Mail Bag

A faded green mail bag with "Te Awatahi" stencilled on the front and "30" written on with a permanent marker. It has a buckle closure at the top and is made of sturdy canvas. For a post office that also operated as a bank, mail bags with padlocks were critical to protect people's money on the long journey to its destination. They give us insight into the day to day runnings of the Post Office and the volume of mail that was coming and going from Tinui.



The post office was central to the community. The lack of phone coverage on farms meant people could only make calls from the Post Office. It represented a link to the wider world, to loved ones, services, and news.

This mail bag would have been used to take mail from a homestead to the train where it would journey across the country to its destination. There are three of these bags in the Post Office but the writing on this one increases its historic significance. According to map data Te Awatahi is a farm near Gisborne, so how did its mail bag end up permanently in Tinui? Had it been delivered to Tinui shortly before the closing of the post office? Perhaps it was repurposed and used in the local community instead of at Te Awatahi. The mail bags would have been filled up by the postmistress before being collected and driven to Masterton for sorting and distribution. The bags would then be returned to Tinui, full of anxiously awaited mail for residents. This mail bag is significant for its role in the running of the Post Office, it represents the connection between town and country.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #10

Post Office Communications Testimonial

A letter from the Post Office in Wellington recognising the long service of one of its employees. It is significant as both a historical document and a piece of art. This framed letter was sent to Mrs. Alice Street in recognition of her time as postmistress at the Whareama Post Office. Mrs. Street began working in the Post Office after the death of her husband George Street in 1919. George had in turn worked for the Post Office since 1904, giving the couple a combined forty four years of service by 1948.

Across the top there is a landscape with a red van, steam train, and small plane. They represent the different ways mail travelled across New Zealand and the mail workers who manned those vehicles.

On the right there is a powerline, representing the increasing number of communications being conducted by telephone. Mrs. Street is referred to as a 'Telephonist' as well as a postmistress in the body of the letter. The letter is bordered with a brown and grey leaf design and overlaid with large pohutukawas. The pohutukawas are the only real indication that this letter relates to New Zealand, other than the dominion crest. The incorporation of official designs inspired by Maori artistic practice would not be widespread for another few decades.

Despite the official adoption of the Statue of Westminster that gave British dominions autonomy as nations on the 25th of November 1947 this letter, dated the 13th of April 1948 still uses the dominion name and letterhead. Assumedly this was in an effort not to waste the elaborate stationery such letters were printed on. A detailed design with many colours and an embossed stamp would have been costly and post war austerity was still in full effect. This letter highlights the high regard postal workers were held in due to their critical role in connecting rural New Zealand to towns and cities.



Those who live in farming communities but are not farmers themselves are often left out of conversations about rural life but they are incredibly important.

SIGNIFICANCE REPORT #11

Ancient Order of Foresters Certificate

This certificate recognises Rupert Gerry as a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters. The Foresters were an organisation that skilled workers, not just foresters, could pay for membership to. In return members would receive sick pay and their families would receive financial support from the order upon their death. Their motto translates to “Unity, benevolence, and harmony” and their mission was to provide a financial safety net to workers before the advent of employment benefits. While New Zealand pioneered many social services, including disability benefits and the old age pension, in the early 20th century unemployment still often meant destitution.



The certificate is signed by Gerry, the “Chief Ranger” R.J Munro, and the “Sub Chief Ranger” L.D. Cameron. This shows us that many local men were involved in the organisation. This precursor to loss of income insurance would have been appealing to men who worked in dangerous industries and feared what would happen to their families if they became ill or died.

The certificate itself is significant as a beautiful piece of art. The print is detailed and richly coloured, featuring two hunters with a dead stag, dog, and horn standing on a stone structure. Below each man is a woman sitting on pillars that read “Truth” and “Justice”. Truth holds a mirror and an open bible, symbolising critical self reflection and piety as activities that encourage truthfulness. Justice holds a scale and sword, akin to female justice figures seen in courts of law. Foliage snakes around the text and fades into mountains at the top of the composition where a disembodied eye watches the foresters. The elaborate nature of the certificate suggests it was designed to be displayed in the home, rather than simply be a registration document, kept in a drawer with letters and deeds. It suggests a sense of honour at being a member of an organisation that does good in the world and will in turn look after your family should you need it. This certificate is significant for its connection to social and work life in Tinui, along with the individuals and families associated.

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