Lunch with Michelle Cooper,
Wednesday 21 February

Fighting extinction: A zoo-based approach to conservation

When you hear the last ever recorded call of a species lost forever, it gives you goose bumps. Especially if you know that something could have been done to prevent such a tragedy. Extinction may be a natural process, but as humanity continues to live beyond our ecological boundaries, the impacts are being felt across the natural world. There are countless organisations working towards saving those species most impacted by the current ecological epoch recently termed as ‘the anthropocene’, but many don’t think of zoos as a player in this space. Zoos have traditionally set themselves up as important cultural institutions across the globe. Walk through their gates and elements of the natural world are on display before your very eyes – exotic creatures and new sounds and smells. It has been a place of wonder from which most will have cherished childhood memories. Today there are over 700 million people visiting zoos and aquariums on an annual basis. To stay relevant and retain their social license to operate, a zoo’s mission must be relevant to the times and support the needs of the world’s most threatened species. Come on a journey and find out how a clear vision and strong narrative have changed the way zoos think about conservation, as well as how Melbourne-based Zoos Victoria is influencing the rest of the globe in this space.

Since completing her BSc in Animal Biology from the University of Melbourne in 2003, Michelle Cooper has worked across zoos and aquaria, spanning a range of roles from zoo keeper to educator, interpretation manager and grants manager. In 2015 she was the first zoo-based applicant enrolled in the MPhil in Conservation Leadership at the University of Cambridge and completed her thesis with BirdLife International on the application of cultural values to support campaigning for threatened species recovery. Since returning to Melbourne she has been Acting General Manager Threatened Species for the past 12 months at Zoos Victoria. She loves engaging people in the plight of our lesser-known species and is currently seeing out the development of Zoos Victoria’s next Wildlife Conservation Master Plan – a five-year strategic investment plan worth over $30M that will encompass both biological and social aspects of conservation to secure a future rich in wildlife.

This will take place at the Savage Club in Bank Place at 12 noon for 12.30pm. The Club is at 12 Bank Place (off Collins Street) in the City. Cost is $55 including drinks. All guests are most welcome; the more the better. Would you please advise Peter Baines at lunches@cambridgesociety.org.au or on 9820 2334 by latest Monday noon, 19 February, if you will be coming (and dietary requirements). Those emailing their intention to attend should ring Peter to confirm if they receive no email confirmation from him within 24 hours of booking.

Golf

The autumn event with Oxford is to be held at Devil Bend Golf Club in Mooraduc on Sunday 18 March. Anyone interested in winning their belated light blue is asked to contact Peter Adams at golf@cambridgesociety.org.au

Diary dates

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>18 Mar</td>
<td>Golf with Oxford at Devil Bend</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Mar</td>
<td>Lunch with Jeremy Black</td>
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<td>20 Apr</td>
<td>Boat Race dinner</td>
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News of members

We are sad to advise of the recent deaths of two of our oldest members: George Dixon and Anthony Bailey. George's obituary features in this newsletter, and Anthony's will appear next month.

A public memorial service for Anthony Bailey will be held at 10.30am on Friday 16 February at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne. Cambridge Society members are most welcome to attend.

We also extend our sympathies to society member Ronald Francis, whose wife Gloria, a regular at many society events, also died recently.

Last month

AGM and Varsity Match, Wednesday 13 December

Minutes of the AGM and the Treasurer and President’s reports may be found on our website under ‘About us’.

President: Chris Briggs
Past President: Antara Mascarenhas
Vice-President: Janelle Ward
Secretary: David Rees
Treasurer: Jerry Platt
Lunch Secretary: Prof. Peter Baines

Other committee members are Peter Adams, Fabrice Boucherat, Trish Gowrie, Raul Sanchez-Urribarri.

The AGM was followed by a showing of highlights of both mens and ladies rugby Varsity matches, where we are pleased to report the Light Blues as winners of both encounters.

Commercials

Society auditor wanted

Anthony Bailey was our auditor for many years and following his death we are now looking for a replacement. Would any member with reasonable financial literacy be interested in filling this less than onerous role? If so please contact the Secretary at secretary@cambridgesociety.org.au

Clare’s Reddaway Fund for the Teaching of Economics

Many members may remember Prof Brian Reddaway, economist and Fellow of Clare College 1938–2002, and frequent visitor to Melbourne.

Some members may have met Lawrence Reddaway – member of our society, living in Melbourne, and son of Brian. Lawrence is working hard to raise funds for Clare’s Reddaway Fund for the Teaching of Economics; and anyone who would like to learn more, or even to contribute, should consult Clare College (Camille Chabloz at esc64@cam.ac.uk) or Lawrence (0400 584 863 or reddaway@bigpond.net.au). The ambitious aim is to increase the fund from £1.5m (November 2017) to £2m by March 2018.

Sixth Oxbridge Alumni Forum in Fiji, 15–20 September, 2018

We’re on again with our sixth annual gathering of Oxbridge alumni for a lively, fascinating and fulfilling five days of thought-provoking talks and discussions, interlaced with informal dinners, quiz nights, village visits and relaxing in the glorious warmth of Fiji, hosted at Daku Resort by two Oxbridge alumni, John and Delia Rothnie-Jones.

- Talks and discussions in the morning
- Excursions and relaxing in the afternoon
- More discussion over a four-course dinner and several bottles of wine in the evenings.

You speak on a subject of your own choosing – most people choose their own specialist field or an area where they have a real passion and interest. Over the years, we’ve had an eclectic mix including: scenario planning in the energy industry, working with youth in crisis, playing a violin in a professional city symphony orchestra, the fate of New Orleans, nurturing intelligence, suing the US Treasury for lying about the greenback dollar.

Once we leave college, many of us become immersed in our chosen fields, and to hear about ideas and development in totally different fields is surely what intellectual growth is all about.

Price: Au$1300 for a single room. Au$650 only for a spouse / partner / friend to share.

That includes:

- Five nights accommodation at Daku Resort in traditional bures with private facilities
- Breakfasts, lunches and dinners with wine
- Excursions as indicated
- Airport transfers from Savusavu Airport to Daku Resort by road (approx 10 minutes).

If you have an offer, message or request of a personal or not-for-profit nature that you would like us to include in this section, please contact the editor at newsletter@cambridgesociety.org.au.

Obituary: George Ware Dixon

Like so many members of the Cambridge Society of Australia, George Dixon had a varied and fascinating life. He died on 12 December aged 93 at St Vincent’s Palliative Care Unit, shortly after a visit from Lola, his partner of seventy years.

George was a member of Fitzwilliam House (later College), Cambridge, where he read English and was admitted into Bachelor of Arts on 21 June 1950. Back in Australia his mother was so delighted with this achievement that she telephoned the *Argus* to report the fact, and that her son George had also served as an air-gunner in the Islands during the war, won a Ballarat art-show prize with a sketch of Winston Churchill done during weekend leave, taught English to an Italian priest on the ship to Britain after the war, taught in German schools during a hitch-hike tour of Europe in the University vacation last year (*The Argus*, Friday 30 June 1950: 6).

George Ware Dixon was born on 9 September 1924, the second son of Joseph and Muriel (née Ware) in the Victorian goldfields city of Ballarat. When Joseph retired in 1928 the family moved from Mill Street, Ballarat, to the seaside town of Queenscliff following medical advice that it would alleviate George’s asthma and bronchitis. Although the family were Anglican, George attended St Aloysius Catholic Primary School, where he remembered his first opportunities to act; on one occasion, he had a lead role in a play performed in front of his aged father and Archbishop Mannix, no less. George attributed his love of English to the teaching of the nuns of St Aloysius.

Secondary schooling was undertaken at Geelong Grammar School where Dr (later Sir James) Darling had recently become headmaster. At Geelong Grammar George remembered a growing interest in human origins, something that would later influence his decisions. Soon after his eighteenth birthday and before completing the Matriculation exams he joined No. 1 Air Cadet Squadron, Prahran, and went to Lord Somers Camp to train at No. 1 Initial Training School for the Royal Australian Air Force, part of the Empire Air Training Scheme. After further training at Ballarat (radio), West Sale (bombing and gunnery), Cootamundra (navigation), Wagga Wagga and Tocumwal (operational), on 19 December 1943, he was posted to RAAF No. 22 Squadron as a WAG (Wireless Air Gunner) flying in Boston Bombers based at Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands. George was the last World War II member of No. 22 Squadron to die.

Near the end of the war he was posted to West Sale to teach recruits navigation and to conduct training exercises in Anson aircraft. He was demobbed at Sale in late 1945, he then attended Taylor’s College, passed the Matriculation examination and enrolled at the University of Melbourne to study English and Latin. There he met a young lady, Lola Russell, who was also completing an Arts degree. She became the love of his life and when in 1948 she went to London to pursue her theatrical ambitions, he followed her and enrolled at Cambridge. George did not have a scholarship, so he needed part-time employment to support him while studying.

After graduating, George joined Lola in London and worked in local government, the London City Council and the Middlesex County Council in Supply Teaching. While in London he studied European Prehistory at the Institute of Archaeology, London, where he attended lectures given by Professor V. Gordon Childe, Professor Wheeler (later Sir Mortimer), Miss Kenyon (later Dame Kathleen), Professor Mallowan (later Sir Max), the husband of Agatha Christie.

In fact, it was after a Cambridge Society lunch in February 2017 when I spoke about Agatha Christie and archaeology that George told me of his archaeological background. After several
interviews and the reading of his well-kept lecture notes, a paper about George’s archaeological experiences in England and Australia has been prepared and will be published later this year in The Artefact, the Journal of the Archaeological and Anthropological Society of Victoria.

George and Lola left England on 23 December 1955. In Australia they took up residence with Lola’s parents in the heritage-listed 1850 house on the corner of La Trobe and King Streets, Melbourne; the house had been in Lola’s family since 1900. Lola’s parents ran a convenience store-café on the premises, something that Lola and George continued to do until late 2017 when their health and some structural issues with the building intervened (http://melbournewalks.com.au/gold-rush-cottage-tour/ accessed 24 June 2017).

On returning to Australia, George first worked for the ABC as a producer during the 1956 Olympic Games and for Schools Broadcasts, but his creative ideas were not appreciated. He then taught at the Junior School of Swinburne Technical College and from 1961 until his retirement in 1987 he taught humanities, including Russian, at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Meanwhile Lola secured teaching positions in secondary schools.

While both George and Lola often taught drama and produced plays in their respective educational establishments, it was the theatre in Melbourne that commanded their main attention. Both produced plays, sometimes through Lola Russell Productions, and they took many lead roles. George began his Melbourne acting career in productions by Irene Mitchell at the Little Theatre (later St Martins) South Yarra. He went on to play Macbeth at the Alexander Theatre, Monash University, Hamlet at Union Theatre, Melbourne University and he played King Arthur in the musical Camelot amongst a myriad of other leading roles. According to Lola he made a magnificent King Oedipus in Oedipus the King.

There was some film work; George had the title role in Clay, a 1965 film by Italian-born producer Giorgio Mangiamele. It was screened at the Cannes International Film Festival and won the Silver Palme, George was interviewed as the star of the film and was present for the screening and awards. He again took the lead role in Mangiamele’s 1970 film, Beyond Reason. Australia in the 1960s was not a place to enter the world of films and the success of Cannes did not bring further opportunities.

Television work came through Dorothy Crawford Productions. Homicide and Division Four were two regulars and there were numerous commercials. More details of George’s many theatrical and television experiences may be found in his wife’s autobiography, Lola Russell City Kid (Creative text, Melbourne 2016).

George’s papers comprise his photo albums, notes, sketches, artwork, poems and unpublished plays. He resisted the publication of his poems fearing it would be a ‘full stop’; he always had more ideas to chase. George was a complex character with a marvellous voice. He and Lola visited Russia on many occasions and experienced Russian theatre, Nikolai Gogol and Anton Chekhov, films and ballet. His teacher at the Institute of Archaeology in London, Professor V. Gordon Childe, was strongly influenced by Marxism and was at home in Eastern Europe. While George was certainly not a revolutionary as such, neither was he comfortable being mainstream. He was drawn to people who thought outside the box, such as the Hungarian-Australian archaeologist Alexander Gallus, and who could offer intellectual stimulation.

George is survived by his wife, Lola, brother Henry and many nieces and nephews. He and Lola had a long-standing association with St James Old Cathedral: many plays were rehearsed in the kindergarten hall, George and Lola were married there, the funerals of Lola’s parents were conducted there, and it was there that many of us gathered to remember George on 21 December 2017. He was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

– Christopher J. Davey