

NEWSLETTER

- December 2019 -

The latest news and updates from CAHS



Wellington Times, 29 October 2019



Gathering Lilies: Glimpses of Margaret Yung Kelly's Life

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another year fast coming to a close and what a year it has been for me. No matter how old you are, and you all know how old I am as the editor surprised me by publishing details of my big birthday in the last issue, I look forward to learning something new each day. Thank you for electing me to lead you for another year and I look forward to working with the new committee, members, friends and other organisations.

When I review the last three months, in addition to our events, time and energy has also been devoted to the Museum of Chinese in Australia (MOCA) and to a heritage listing for 82-84 Dixon Street, plus visits to Wellington NSW and Wellington New Zealand.

At the beginning of September, I gave a talk to the Historic Houses Association on the battle to save the few remaining Chinese market gardens in Sydney. Thanks to Kira Brown for her wonderful 28 September presentation *Potstickers and Panning*, an account of several generations of her family history which drew a large and very appreciative audience.

The 25-26 October field trip to Wellington NSW and environs for the Fong Lees Lane Festival, plus an insight into the Chinese settlement and history of this area had special meaning for me as many of the Chinese who settled here are from my ancestral county of Jung Seng (Zengcheng). Thanks to Malcolm Oakes and Juanita Kwok for their meticulous preparation and notes that added to the success of this excursion.



Fong Lees Lane. Photo by Daphne Lowe Kelley.



Dr Stephen FitzGerald AO speaking at the AGM, 16 November 2019. Photo by Leong Lui.

The latest on the EOI that MOCA submitted for the building at 744 George Street which housed the Haymarket Library prior to its transfer to Darling Square is that MOCA is still in the running and we have fingers crossed. On 9 November, I was present at the official

opening by the Lord Mayor Clover Moore of the new library in the Exchange building (affectionately known as the Bird's Nest).

Another matter which is in our realm of interest is supporting the heritage listing of the building at 82-84 Dixon Street, the former business location for the Lee family's Kwong War Chong and the Hingara Restaurant. Several CAHS, MOCA and CHAA committee members appeared before the City of Sydney Council in support of a permanent heritage listing. Members can download the City of Sydney Heritage Report and the CAHS submission at: <https://chineseaustralianhistory.org/heritage/>

We had a full house for this year's Annual General Meeting, followed by lunch, on 16 November at the Marigold Restaurant. CAHS has three honorary patrons: Dr John Yu AC (2002), the Hon. Helen Sham-Ho (2007) and Emeritus Professor Mary Chan (2010). At this year's AGM, a resolution was passed confirming the committee's recommendation to elect Dr Stephen FitzGerald AO, Australia's first ambassador to the People's Republic of China, as a CAHS Honorary Patron. Dr FitzGerald gave a beautiful heartfelt acceptance speech describing some of his extended involvement with the Chinese Australian community and pledging to assist and support the Society.

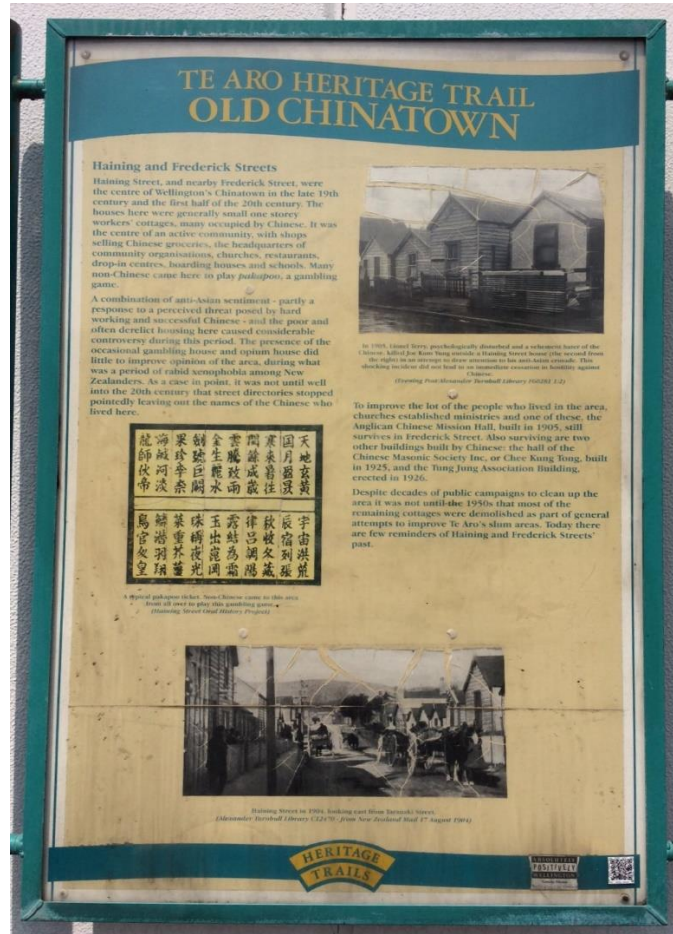
I have just returned from the Dragon Tails Conference, which was held in the city of my birth and childhood and at my alma mater, Victoria University of Wellington. CAHS was well represented with Ann Toy, Susan Leong, Malcolm Oakes, Juanita Kwok and other CAHS members present – please see the separate article in this newsletter.

While there, I also attended the Wellington opening, by New Zealand's Race Commissioner Meng Foon, of Phoebe Li's exhibition, *Being Chinese in Aotearoa: A photographic journey*. This exhibition, has already been exhibited in Auckland and Beijing and a book published under the title, *New Zealand Chinese in Historical Images*. So pleased to catch up with the recently appointed Race Relations Commissioner Meng Foon – his story goes from market gardener to Mayor of Gisborne for 17 years, to Race Relations Commissioner.

Little remains of Wellington's old Chinatown. A walking tour by Lynette Shum and Nigel Murphy brought back many childhood memories for me. All the wooden houses in Haining Street have been demolished and replaced by commercial buildings. An explanatory notice with photographs headed *Te Aro Heritage Trail Old Chinatown* is a reminder of where Wellington's early Chinese lived.

Best wishes for Christmas, New Year and the holiday season and may 2020 be healthy and happy, peaceful and productive. See you in the Year of the Rat.

Daphne Lowe Kelley



Wellington's Old Chinatown interpretive sign



Daphne with Phoebe Li and Meng Foon, NZ Race Relations Commissioner, who opened Phoebe's exhibition.

Photos by Daphne Lowe Kelley.

FROM THE EDITOR

New CAHS Committee

The 2019-2020 CAHS Committee elected at the 16 November AGM are:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| President: | Daphne Lowe Kelley |
| Vice President: | Michael Williams |
| Secretary: | Ann Toy |
| Treasurer: | Kerry Choy |
| Committee: | Andrew Barty-King, Peter Hack, Man-Yee Leanfore, Susan Leong, Malcolm Oakes. |

Book Giveaway

Here is the winning entry for a copy of Monica Tan's *Stranger Country*:

It was a trip to aboriginal Australia in 2007 that saw me leave Australia for Hong Kong and it was a long time since I came back to Oz. I think the experience was so profound as I stayed in southern China, my ancestral home place, for almost a decade. I have suggested others who are heading to Oz, go bush. The experience of nature and wilderness and of another life is something so distinctive to Australia that there is nothing quite like it, and I very much indebted to my indigenous companions and my ute (luckily, we had a spare tyre), that took me to places that are typically seen on Australian calendars and postcards. So, I would very much like to read and find out how other people (like Monica), experienced the outback - a place we hear about in school but still a place I think not many get a chance to visit.

Christopher Cheng

Significant Anniversaries

Another 80th has been celebrated! This time it was the Chinese Youth League of Australia founded in 1939. This anniversary was celebrated with a banquet for around 500 guests filling the Marigold Restaurant's 5th floor. (PS About the same size as the 1973 banquet in Sydney to farewell Dr Stephen FitzGerald.)

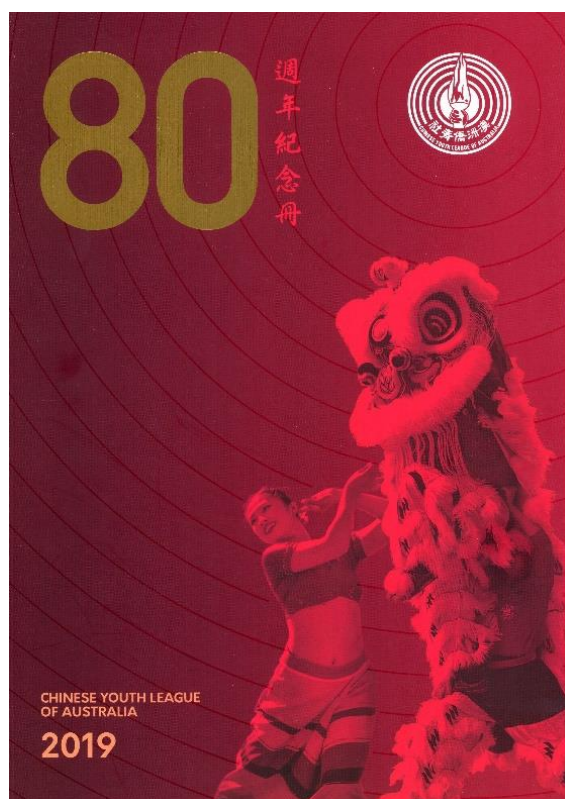
Today people may associate the Chinese Youth League with a variety of cultural and sporting activities – from lion dances, dragon dances and dragon boat races to Cantonese opera, Wushu, and Tai Chi. However, there were some far more serious issues to confront in 1939 when the League was established.

From the late 1930s into the early 40s, in cities around the world with large overseas Chinese populations, organisations were formed to respond to rising Japanese aggression and the all-out invasion of China by Japan in July 1937. Sydney witnessed the formation of the Chinese Youth League, the NSW Chinese Seamen's Union and the NSW Chinese Women's Relief Fund. These organisations responded to the call for help from the Soong sisters, Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Soong Mei-ling) and Madame Sun Yat-sen (Soong Ching-ling).

Concerts, fetes, picnics and Chinese opera were used to raise funds for aid sent to both Nationalist and Communist armies resisting the Japanese.

The Chinese Women's Relief Fund was established in September 1937, soon after the invasion of China. In two months, this organisation raised the funds to send medical supplies and equipment to China to support the war effort, worth in today's money \$57,000!

Two important figures in the Chinese Youth League of this time were Fred Wong and later Arthur Gar Locke Chang, both of whom have biographies in the 80th anniversary publication. Arthur Gar Locke Chang was President of the League from 1961-1974 - so he was President when the photograph was taken at the 1973 farewell banquet for Dr Stephen FitzGerald.



The Chinese Youth League 80th Anniversary Publication

One Million Stories – The Official Launch

If you have been to Melbourne in recent months, you may have seen the *One Million Stories* exhibition of the 200-year history of Chinese Australians. The exhibition will be travelling around Australia and China in 2020 to 2022.

Professor Kwong Lee Dow AO, Chairman of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, officially launched the exhibition on Thursday 28 November 2019. This was an opportunity to thank and acknowledge the many donors and sponsors that make a museum exhibition not only possible, but a success. Red tape was cut by many with gold scissors; and the lions danced to drum and cymbals through the museum to the third-floor exhibition.

Gathering Lilies: Glimpses of Margaret Yung Kelly's Life

Those members who attended the 31 August event, *In Conversation: Chinese Australian Memories and Stories*, may be interested to know that a coffee table book about the life of Margaret Yung Kelly has just been published and was launched at Meriden School, Strathfield on 30 November. Anyone who has heard Margaret speak about her life and that of her remarkable family would no doubt realise that one book could hardly contain all the details of her life. Many of the photographs included in the PowerPoint Margaret showed us at the August CAHS event are included in the book.



Margaret with the author of *Gathering Lilies*, Cheryl John

Some of the crowd at the launch of the book.

Peter Hack

Vale Senator Tsebin Tchen

The Chinese Australian community is shocked and saddened to learn of the death of the former federal Victorian Liberal Senator Tsebin Tchen in a car crash in South Australia on November 25. Mr Tchen was the first Asian migrant to win a seat in the federal parliament and served from 1999 to 2005. After politics, he was appointed commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission by the Labor state government in 2005. As the convener of several Chinese Community Council of Australia conferences in Melbourne, I appreciated Tsebin's wise counsel. A public memorial service will be held at the Melbourne Town Hall on December 18. On behalf of CAHS, our heartfelt condolences to Tsebin Tchen's family. RIP.

Daphne Lowe Kelley

UPCOMING EVENTS

CHINESE AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOTE: Copies of *The Poison of Polygamy* will be on sale at CAHS events in 2020 for the discount price of \$32.00. Copies can also be posted to you. An order form is at the end of this Newsletter. The cost including postage and handling is \$42.95.

Saturday 1 February at 12.30pm

Lunar New Year Traditions and Memories

CAHS has invited a panel of Asian Australian speakers from countries other than China, (namely Vietnam, Korea and Singapore/Malaysia) that also celebrate the lunar new year, to talk about the lunar new year traditions, customs and memories of their families and communities. Comparing and contrasting similarities and differences will result in a fascinating, captivating presentation. The speakers are: Mai Nguyen-Long, a visual artist; Min-Jung Kim, a curator at the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences; and Colin Lee, President of the Australian Malaysian Singaporean Association.

Date: Saturday 1 February 2020

Time: 12.30 pm

Venue: Mitchell Theatre, Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts,
Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney

Cost: \$10 members (including refreshments)

Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com

Saturday 21 March at 2.30 pm

Peter Hack – *The NSW Chinese Women’s Relief Fund (1937-1941)*

Peter will talk about a recently discovered file that was donated to the State Library of NSW by the Australia-China Friendship Society. This is a fascinating story about how a group of Sydney women responded to the all-out invasion of China by Japan in 1937. It is an amazing success story of how these women formed a charity and raised the funds to send shipments of medical supplies, food, clothing, even sewing machines to China to assist the war effort against Japan. Find out who these Chinese women were and the concerts, picnics, grand Town Hall fete and even a rather posh North Shore cocktail party that they organised!

Date: Saturday 21 March 2020

Time: 2.30pm

Venue: Mitchell Theatre, Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts,
Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney

Cost: \$10 members, \$15 non-members (including refreshments)

Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com

Saturday 16 May 16 at 2.30 pm

Megan Neilson - *A tale of two translators*

(More details will be provided in the next newsletter)

Also, please keep the following dates free:

- **Thursday 16 July 16 at 6.00 pm - Henry Chan Lecture** (to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 5 September at 2.30 pm - History Week Lecture**
- **Saturday 21 November 21 at 11.30 am - AGM**

CHINESE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

For the eighth successive year, the Chinese Heritage Association of Australia will present an informative, entertaining and illustrated talk on the Chinese Zodiac. Marilyn Sue Dooley will present **The Yin and Yang of the Rat** on Saturday 1 February 2020.

The Zodiac Cycle returns to the first of its twelve totems in 2020 - the Rat - from 25 January 2020 until 11 February 2021. In this Year of the Metal Rat, CHAA member Marilyn Sue Dooley will consider many rats from the "fire-rat"; an imaginary creature of ancient China, thought to live in volcanoes of the South China Seas to the so named "Ratty" of The Wind in the Willows.

The Yin and Yang of this year's Rat will be considered in aspects of literature, language and legend, myth, religion and society; in addition to its many faceted personality.

Date: Saturday 1 February 2020
Time: 2.30 - 3.30 pm
Venue: Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney

CHINESE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

As part of 2020 Chinese New Year Festivities, we are happy to be able to invite you to hear Dr Richard Wu introduce the historical content and illustrate the beauty of **Contemplations in Southern Song Art**. Richard will further discuss its influences on Japanese art and Zen culture. Southern Song (1127-1279 AD) was a politically tumultuous time, yet arts from this period flourished and forged new heights never seen before.



Date: Saturday 8 February 2020
Time: 12.00 for 12.30 pm
Venue: Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney
Cost: \$10 members; \$12 non-members.
RSVP: Phone Rose Wong 0418 838 737 or Marie Chan 0410 582 338.
Information: meilinyum@gmail.com
Note: Bookings are essential

THE FAREWELL BANQUET

The President mentioned the acceptance speech given by Dr Stephen FitzGerald AO upon becoming a Patron of the Society. In that speech, Dr FitzGerald referred to a banquet in Sydney hosted by the Chinese community to farewell him and his wife Gay just before they left Australia for Beijing in 1973. Below is an account of that banquet that Stephen recently read. And in return, we have a photograph provided by Stephen which was taken on that momentous evening.



L-R William Liu, Arthur Gar Locke Chang, unknown, with Stephen and Gay FitzGerald. The Mandarin Restaurant, 5 February 1973. Courtesy of Stephen FitzGerald.

The normalising of diplomatic relations with China was celebrated with a ten-course banquet at the Mandarin Restaurant in Sydney, hosted by the Chinese community to farewell Dr Stephen FitzGerald, Ambassador-designate to the People's Republic of China. In 1971, Gough Whitlam visited China and the following year re-established diplomatic relations with China.

"I was like a child, very happy," 80-year-old William Liu says in an interview. "Mr Whitlam is a great man. He has helped remove the old fear of China. It means China is respected and every person of Chinese blood can hold his head high again."¹

¹ 1973 Newspaper article by Peter Allen.

And as Stephen FitzGerald himself puts it:

[Whitlam] not only challenged the policy, he took on the fear: the fear of China, the fear of Vietnam, the fear of Asia that underlay the White Australia policy, and also the fear of being independent, of offending the United States, of taking issue with it on foreign policy.²

William Liu, 80 years old and seen as an “elder statesman”, was a member of the organising committee for the farewell banquet held on 5 February 1973. The Prime Minister was not able to attend but was represented by the guest of honour, Dr Stephen FitzGerald. Also present were Senator Doug McClelland, Minister for the Media, and Tom Uren, Minister for Urban and Regional Development, and a host of Australian and Chinese friends of China. In all, around 500 guests attended the great event which cost \$6 per person.

Admission tickets for the banquet could be obtained from the Mandarin Restaurant, 756 George Street, the Chinese Youth League, Eastern Foods Pty Ltd, Tung Sing Trading Co. or from Miss Lindy Decker at Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn Street.³

The banquet included beef and egg flower soup, chicken with ginger and shallots, fried sliced fish with sweet corn, sautéed king prawns, Mandarin pork ribs, deep fried duck with sweet and sour sauce, fillet steak with bean shoots through to lychees and dragon eyes.

Syd Clare, president of the NSW Branch of the Australia-China Society, the forerunner of today’s Australia-China Friendship Society, proposed the toast to Chairman Mao:

Chairman Mao Tsetung is the undisputed leader of the people of China and one of the greatest figures in human history.

Today, socialist China stands free and independent, politically and economically stable, free from inflation, with neither internal or external debt, and with its feet firmly planted on the path to prosperity.

China now stands as a bastion for peace in the world; she has diplomatic relations with more than 80 nations, based on Mao Tsetung’s five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence.

In 1971, China’s rightful place in the United Nations Organisation was restored to her. Since then China has brought to that body an entirely new concept in international relations – laid down by Mao Tsetung – that all nations, big or small, should be equal.

But these victories for the policies of Mao Tsetung – both inside China and in China’s relations with other nations were achieved in the face of the most bitter and continuous opposition. The people of China under the leadership of Mao Tsetung overcame all obstacles. Today Chairman Mao stands as the undisputed and beloved

² Stephen FitzGerald (2015), *Comrade Ambassador: Whitlam’s Beijing Envoy*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, p. 89.

³ William Liu’s papers, Mitchell Library, CY4242.

leader of his people – and no matter how much some people outside China might wish it were otherwise, China today is the China of Chairman Mao Tsetung.

Tonight we are celebrating the establishment of diplomatic relations with that China, thus beginning a new era which will bring great benefits to the Australian and Chinese peoples.

Let us then drink a toast to Mao Tsetung, great teacher and leader of the Chinese people.

Long live Chairman Mao Tsetung!⁴

The crowd of 500 erupted. There was prolonged cheering and clapping as the toast was drunk. By 1973, the West saw the Chairman as “a benevolent grandfatherly figure.”⁵ According to Jonathan Fenby, the West either swept under the carpet or did not know the full extent of the famines and tens of millions of deaths that followed the Great Leap Forward or the persecutions and massacres of the Cultural Revolution.

William Liu proposed the toast to Dr Stephen FitzGerald noting that this banquet was a “historical event” as indeed it definitely was:

On behalf of our Chinese community and friends of China, I am honoured to welcome Dr Steve FitzGerald and Mrs FitzGerald who are joining us tonight to celebrate and remember the New Year Joy of 1973 – the normalising of diplomatic relations between the people of our Commonwealth and of the People’s Republic of China. ...⁶

We are overjoyed that the People’s Republic of China and Australia have established diplomatic relations and are about to exchange ambassadors. We wish Dr FitzGerald well in his most important post.⁷

In reply, Dr FitzGerald said:

The establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Australia is the result of long and patient work by many people. This work will have to go on.

There have been misunderstandings in the past. Many of them have been swept away. Some still have to be swept away. My wife and I will go to China in the spirit of sincere and honest co-operation. We are sure a new era of friendship between the two countries has opened up.⁸

For some, the celebrations continued at the South Sydney Junior Rugby League Club until well after midnight. The Club was just down the road from William Liu’s home.

⁴ National Archives of Australia, William Liu’s ASIO file, Volume 7, pp.6-7: an article in *Vanguard* 15 February 1973.

⁵ Jonathan Fenby (2013), *The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power 1850 to Present*, 2nd Ed. p. 506.

⁶ William Liu’s papers, Mitchell Library, CY4242.

⁷ National Archives of Australia, William Liu’s ASIO file, Volume 7, pp. 6-7: an article in *Vanguard* 15 February 1973.

⁸ Ibid.

In a letter dated 28 June 1973, William Liu congratulated the Prime Minister:

You have done a [wonderful] job in clearing-up the nonsensical bogeys – ‘yellow peril and red menace’.⁹

William Liu kept copies of the many articles of the time written about this transformation. Brian McKinley opened his analysis with:

The month of April 1973 marks a watershed in the long history of relations between Australia and China. Within days of each other, the respective ambassadors in Peking and Canberra will have been credentialed, and a new era will have been opened. For Australians, as a people, it marks a special moment of truth. The moment when the oldest, most persistent, and nastiest of our national phobias is finally laid to rest is surely a rather special occasion, and one worth a little consideration.¹⁰



Dr Stephen FitzGerald AO, CAHS Patron, with former CAHS President King Fong (right) and CAHS member Douglas Lam (left). CAHS AGM, the Marigold Restaurant, 16 November 2019. Photography by Leong Lui.

Peter Hack

P.S. If you know the identity of the gentleman standing next to Stephen FitzGerald in the 1973 photograph, please send the details to contact.cahs@gmail.com.

⁹ William Liu's papers, Mitchell Library, CY4241.

¹⁰ Nation Review, April 28 - May 3, 1973 p. 856.

Mao has to call him 'Big Brother'

Eighty-year-old Mr Liu . . . "Chairman Mao has to call me 'big brother'."

"Under Chinese custom Chairman Mao has to call me 'Big Brother,'" beamed 80-year-old Mr Liu Kwong Fook.

"I'm older than he is, you see."

One of the Sydney Chinese community's most respected members, Mr Liu will have a place of honour tomorrow at a sumptuous 10-course Chinese banquet to celebrate nese banquet at the Mandarin restaurant to celebrate Australia's recognition of Peking.

Back in 1912 it was Mr Liu who hauled down the dragon flag of the Manchu dynasty and raised the five-barred flag of the Republic on the flagpole of the Chinese Consulate in Melbourne.

Mr Liu, who has met both Chairman Mao and the legendary Chinese leader Sun Yat Sen, makes no secret of his delight over Australia's new links with the Republic.

"I was like a child, very happy," he said. "Mr Whitlam is a great man. He has helped remove the old fear of China.

"It means China is respected and every person of Chinese blood can hold

By PETER ALLEN

his head high again," Mr Liu said.

Although Australian-born, with an English mother and Chinese father, Mr Liu has made seven trips to China, the first when he was six years old.

Mr Liu, who speaks with a distinct Australian accent — and is proud of it — said: "I remember I couldn't even speak Chinese. Then, when I came back to Australia nine years later I had to relearn my ABC."

Hardships

He was a clerk-translator with the Chinese consulate in 1912 when the Manchu dynasty ended.

"I never expected to live long enough to see China, in such a short time, get rid of its pre-1949 disorders," he said.

"Some of the European countries claimed they had greed and corruption in those days. But anything they had, China could better it."

He recalls during one China visit, in 1921, meeting Sun Yat Sen,



who asked him what he thought of China's progress.

"I began praising China and putting it on a pedestal until I saw his brow start to crinkle. I stopped talking. He asked me why, so I told him it was because he was frowning.

"He then told me what was wrong with China. He mentioned five sicknesses: bankruptcy, high illiteracy, too many unequal foreign trade agreements, Japanese intervention — they invaded us 10 years later — and corruption.

"I've never forgotten that," Mr Liu said.

Mr Liu met Chairman Mao in 1959 and says seriously: "Mao has replaced Confucius as the spiritual leader of China."

Mr Liu, a retired busi-

nessman and a founder of the Australia-China Society, finds no criticism of younger-generation Australian-born Chinese and their attitude towards China.

"It's all still a bit of a mystery to most of them. But they've grown up here, and you can't blame them."

FOOTNOTE (for gastronomers): The banquet menu will include chicken with ginger and shallots, fried sliced fish with sweet corn, saute king prawns and fillet steak with bean shoots.

Newspaper article by Peter Allen, 4 February 1973.

KIRA BROWN'S *POTSTICKERS AND PANNING* 28 SEPTEMBER 2019

This vivid presentation about the Cantonese antecedents of Kira Brown and their fortunes in the uncompromising physical and political realities of 19th century White Australia was drawn on an impressive array of documents, photographs and drawings from that era. Living testament of the triumph over adversity was present in the audience with at least three generations of different branches of the family in attendance.

What stood out in the talk was the engagement of two differing cultures to find common ground in a situation where there was a need to survive and thrive against negative public opinion. Chinese men were able to offer women from the colony a degree of stability and prosperity; all too frequently not available from the men of the colony at that time. In return, the women were able to contribute to their husband's efforts and businesses through their knowledge of the language and colonial systems. The harshness of the White Australia policy at the time as evidenced in some of the documents presented by Kira, such as dictation and racially biased certificates, were a stark reminder of the gross inequities suffered.

During the course of the talk we met many colourful characters, some of whom returned to the Chinese motherland for long periods of time to set up businesses there, and in some instances, secondary families. It was interesting to see some examples of cultural fusion, for example in a local Methodist church adorned with Chinese lanterns and banners

A key aspect of Kira's research seems to have been the quest for information and images of her Great Great Grandfather Chen Quin Jack, and much of the content of her talk was leading up to what she was eventually able to discover about him after successfully connecting many dots. Jack was born in China in 1837, arriving in Australia as a teenager in the 1850's and starting work in the Victorian goldfields. Some thirty years later he married Mary Ann Fuller from Brisbane, Kira's Great Great Grandmother.

The whole presentation was full of energy and passion, a true family saga with immense historical value to the community. I am certain all present on that afternoon felt privileged to have been there. The postscript, and twist, from Kira was that her husband's family is descended from arrivals on the First Fleet!

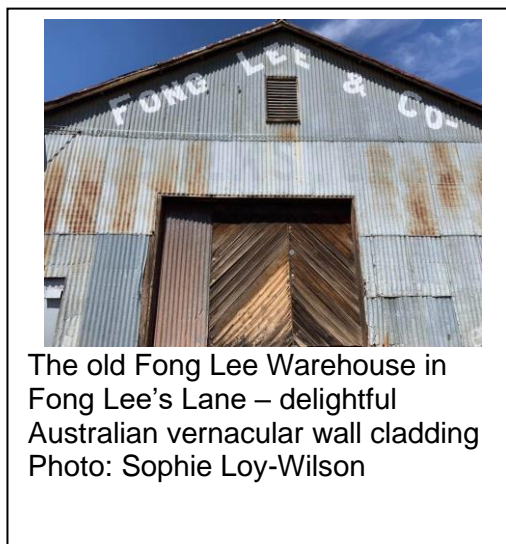
Andrew Barty-King

FONG LEE'S LANE EXCURSION REPORT

The excursion on 25 & 26 October 2019 to the 2019 Fong Lee's Lane Festival in Wellington NSW was led by Juanita Kwok and Malcolm Oakes and comprised a group of 17, most of whom travelled up by train, arriving Friday afternoon. Lunch was at the Cactus Café, which is housed in an old Catholic Infants' School building, the interior complete with 1960's religious paraphernalia. A charming period piece, possibly an iconoclast's paradise!

That was followed by a visit to the Oxley Museum, specially opened for us by Carole Gass and Dorothy and Neil Blake. Carole is a descendant of two big market gardening families in Wellington, the Ah Yooks and the Lou Sicks. The Museum has a complete "Chinese Room", largely decorated with Chinese clothing found in old suitcases in the Fong Lee Warehouse. Of great interest to your reporter was an old day-book of the Fong Lee business, written in Chinese. Day-books are now a thing of the past with modern computer accounting packages, so the document was interesting on two fronts – as a type of documentary record and that it was in Chinese.

Friday evening was the Fong Lee's Lane Festival itself – which went for about 3 hours. Fong Lee's Lane is a small lane of about 200 metres that housed, amongst other buildings, the warehouse for the Fong Lee Department Store, which was in a street nearby. Geoff Young relates that the Festival started off in 2018 with the local Arts Society getting permission from owners to paint street art on the rear of their premises which abut the Lane. It was then decided to exhibit the street art and a decision was made to name the exhibition after the lane, which required delving into the history of the Fong Lee Department Store in



The old Fong Lee Warehouse in Fong Lee's Lane – delightful Australian vernacular wall cladding
Photo: Sophie Loy-Wilson



Street art in Fong Lee's Lane
Photo: Sophie Loy-Wilson

Wellington. Thus was created the Fong Lee's Lane Festival. A couple of hundred were expected in 2018; about 2,000 turned up! A similar number attended this year's Festival.

The Festival has led to a rekindling of interest in Wellington's Chinese history. The Society supports such regional initiatives. But the Festival was much more cross cultural, being opened with a Welcome to Country by local Wiradjuri Elder, Paul West, performances by various local dancing groups,

including an aboriginal group, drummers, lucky dragon and lantern parades and various singers. The Festival spills into the backyards of premises along the Lane and into the schoolyard of the old Catholic Infants' School. It is not a sit-down entertainment, although there are places to sit down. Rather you move along the Lane and throughout the various backyards, sample the food stalls and listen or watch the various entertainers as you choose.



Part of the stonework supporting the water race which is fully submerged when the dam is full
Photo: Gilian Oxley

Saturday was our archaeological day. An early start to drive to Lake Burrendong, which this year because of the drought was at 4% capacity, thus exposing the remains of a water race which had been built to shift water from its source to where gold bearing dirt was being sluiced. The water race was estimated by a local ranger to have been several kilometres long, although only parts carved into hillsides or retaining walls built on the schist remain. Other portions are thought to have been hollowed logs supported by trestles. The water gutter itself was not all that large.



Close-up of stonework supporting the water race
Photo: Kira Brown

It has not been conclusively established that the water race was built by Chinese goldminers; research on this is a work in progress. But the strong pointers which suggest it was are that Chinese were the majority of the gold mining population in the area during the alluvial gold mining period; the type of construction was similar to other known Chinese built water races, and the work involved would have required a team co-operative effort for which Chinese goldminers were well known.

The return trip from the water race site involved a stop at Stuart Town where we viewed the facade of the old Yee Lee General Store, which has not been painted out. Gwenda Bau, one of the group members, is Yee Lee's granddaughter, and her mother was born in the store. Who knows what the present occupiers thought when a convoy consisting of a mini-bus and two cars stopped outside their house, members of which proceeded to take numerous photographs. But we will never know because they never appeared! Stuart Town was formerly known as "Ironbark" and was the inspiration for Banjo Paterson's famous poem "The Man from Ironbark", written in 1892. The town name was changed in 1889 because of the rough reputation of the place.



Yee Lee Shop Façade Photo:
Sophie Loy-Wilson

During that journey we passed several clumps of sisal plants. These were planted near Cobb & Co coach houses to create a supply for rope making, although nothing seemed to remain of the old coach houses other than the clumps of sisal still quietly growing away.

Then a visit to the Chinese section in the Wellington cemetery where local identity Tim Sing Lee spoke about various Chinese families buried there. A number of group members had relatives buried there, so it was time for some quiet reflection for them. Most of the visible graves are post the Pacific War because prior to the Pacific War the practice was to exhume remains after a period of interment and then repatriate the bones to China for reburial. Trivia question. How many bones are there in an adult human body? Those conducting the exhumations had to be sure to get the exact number, or there was trouble!

After that, Tim Sing Lee took us to his property on the Bell River flats outside Wellington, which has been cultivated by Tim and his forbears for over a century, first as a market garden, later for tomatoes and beans for Edgells, and latterly for lucern for hay. Nothing was being cultivated this year because of the drought. But we weren't there to look at bare earth.



Top of pig oven at Bell River flats (ignore unconnected agricultural refuse) Photo: Malcolm Oakes

A Chinese pig oven was constructed on the property in about 1913 by Tim's father, Say Joe Sing Lee.

Chinese pig ovens are substantial pieces of construction. About 90 have so far been identified across Australia. The Bell River flats oven is vertical and big enough to lower in a whole pig for roasting. The oven is constructed of brick. At the bottom it had a draught vent which doubled as an opening to the ash pit for scraping out the ash. Above that was steel mesh to hold the burning logs and allow the ash to fall through. Tim Sing Lee explained that the dressed pig carcass was marinated at least overnight in a mixture of salt, spice, homemade spirits and saltpetre (presumably sodium nitrate) (other reports from other places refer to Chinese Allspice and Chinese whisky and yet others to garlic, ginger and soy sauce). The pig was then hung

up to dry before roasting. It took a ton of wood and 4 hours to heat the oven. The ash was then scraped out of the bottom and the draught vent covered up. A camp oven filled with water was then lowered into the pig oven from the top onto the steel mesh to catch dripping fat so that it would not catch fire and smoke the carcass rather than roast it (reports from other places refer to using an old wok for this purpose). Then the pig was lowered in using a gantry erected across the top opening and roasted for another 4-5 hours. The pig had pointy ended steel rods inserted in it or pig hooks to hold the pig together during roasting and to allow the escape of fat. Tim said the top rim of the oven was then covered by dampened bags to create a type of seal, corrugated sheeting placed on top and rocks on top of the sheeting. (Reports of pig oven usage in other places have the top of the oven first covered with corrugated iron sheeting and that in turn was covered by dampened bags). The idea of the corrugated iron sheeting was to allow steam to escape so that the meat was roasted and not steamed. The idea of the dampened bags was to assist in retaining the heat within the oven.



Pig roasting hooks
 Photo: Juanita Kwok

Several families would contribute to the cost of the pig and lots would be drawn for portions based on the number of males in the family. Pig roasting mainly occurred on autumn and spring festivals. Tim said the pig oven had not been used since he was a teenager. He is now over 80.

Tim also showed the group some old agricultural machinery, a potato planter and a harrow, which he proposed to donate to the Oxley Museum.

After that we swung by the former location of market gardens on the river flats within Wellington, now mostly occupied by housing and then to Hermitage Hill for the Excursion Closing Lunch, attended by members of local Chinese families, the Sing Lees and the Coons.



The group at Lake Burrendong in front of part of the water race
 Photo: Wendy Ambachtsheer

Malcolm Oakes

DRAGON TAILS 2019

How could I not go to Dragon Tails when it was being held in the city where I grew up and at my alma mater, Victoria University of Wellington. Having left these shores over 50 years ago and only having made visits back to see family and friends, returning to the scene of my student days, brought back so many memories. Conference convenors Dr Grace Gassin and Dr Karen Schamberger are to be congratulated for putting together a comprehensive program of sessions and speakers – for details, go to www.dragontails.org.au

The highlights for me included:

- My surprise at seeing my brother Phillip's wedding invitation to Peggy displayed in the Alexander Turnbull Library.
- Chairing the plenary session on *Market gardening and fruit shops* – having spent the first 21 years of my life in fruit shops and my first marriage proposal from a market gardener, this session had special significance.
- The loss of many of my childhood haunts in the disappearing Chinatown.

Daphne Lowe Kelley



The former Tung Jung Association building in Frederick Street, Wellington is now a private residence. Photo by Daphne Lowe Kelley.



Wedding invitation of Phillip Lowe to Peggy Daphne Joe 26 August 1972. Photo by Susan Leong.



Barbara Lyon, Curator Ephemera, Alexander Turnbull Library, with Daphne's brother Phillip's wedding invitation. Photo by Susan Leong.

82-84 DIXON STREET
DERELICT BUILDINGS OR HERITAGE TREASURE

19 頁九十第 The Chinese 報華益廣 Australian Herald. February 12th, 1910.

Kwong War Chong & Co.,
號 昌

84 Dixon St., Haymarket, Sydney.
和 廣



啟者本號原設在雪梨正埠步街第四十
六號門牌不久遷至迪臣街八十四號專辦
唐山茶米油糖京菓海味雜貨各款絲巾綢
緞磁器漆器俱全價極相宜貴客賜顧遠近

付到並代辦菓子菜蔬快捷無誤及代梓友
付金信回家包派到府立取回音貴客光
願祈照英字門牌來信便得收代理金信
香港連姓棧石歧連姓棧合併表明希爲留
心是荷端此佈聞
司事人李春謹啟

Advertisement for the Kwong War Chong store at 84 Dixon Street with a photograph of the two buildings.
Trove citation: Guang yi hua bao = The Chinese Australian Herald (Sydney, NSW: 1894 - 1923), Saturday 12 February 1910, page 18. Trove link: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/15331576>
Source: State Library of New South Wales

Recently I have heard some people talking about the buildings at 82-84 Dixon Street and referring to them as dilapidated and of little or no heritage value - better demolished and replaced with something modern. I was initially surprised, but shouldn't have been. I want to tell you honestly what I think, as an interested person, not as an expert. My interest in heritage architecture started only recently; and it didn't start in Sydney, it started in Shanghai - a place filled with dilapidated architecture by the 1980s, but dilapidated architecture of great heritage value.

I do not dispute that the buildings at 82-84 Dixon Street are "dilapidated". New York's Lower East Side Tenement Museum has been mentioned as a model for the future of the Dixon Street premises. The Tenement Museum was founded in 1988 when historian Ruth Abram and social activist Anita Jacobsen discovered "a dilapidated tenement building that had been shuttered for more than 50 years". Have a look at the website: <https://www.tenement.org/>

So, are the dilapidated Dixon Street premises of heritage value and what does that mean? To me, a building can have heritage value because of its historical or architectural significance; or because of its importance to a culture, a community or a religion. The experts may express this differently or may have other criteria too. The importance of getting permanent heritage listing for a derelict, dilapidated, abandoned building that meets such criteria is initially to prevent demolition by developers, simply because such a building is too important to be demolished.

Despite all the inappropriate or misguided alterations and additions made over many years, the restoration of such buildings is not impossible, costly maybe, but not impossible. This is not the only approach. A heritage building may be preserved “as found” and its history interpreted for the public. Some heritage buildings have had the luxury of being lovingly maintained; others have been meticulously restored. When you see and enter that type of heritage building, can you tell the difference? What about the building below?



Lovingly maintained?



Or meticulously restored?

Well the correct answer is meticulously restored and sympathetic compliance with modern requirements (such as access, for example). And here is the dilapidated, abandoned building before restoration:



This picture of dilapidation is the Police Station at Tai Po, Hong Kong, built in 1899. It has been restored with a grant from the Kadoorie Foundation, as seen in the photographs on the previous page. It is not much older than the Dixon Street premises and you can easily see the additions and alterations. Unfortunately, enclosing verandas or balconies to make more office or classroom space is a common “alteration” with some heritage buildings.

The Edwardian shopfront of 84 Dixon Street is a rare survival in Sydney. There are some other surviving examples around the world which can be found on Google Images. I have seen a few similar Edwardian shops in London and I now wish I had taken photographs. But I couldn't tell whether they had been well maintained for over a century or recently restored.

Looking at the dilapidate premises of 82-84 Dixon Street, we must dare to see a vision of what should be. I hope the premises are restored and that whatever their future uses, as museum or function spaces, the stories of the buildings' past as the Kwong War Chong store and Hingara Restaurant and the stories of the extraordinary family that established them in 1910, are displayed and told in situ. One day, tourists may look at two buildings in Dixon Street and never guess that they had been meticulously restored.

The Chinese **報 華 益 廣** Australian Herald.

工告竣自用一座現租一間與滿香棧酒樓聞他買此地後不久即有別家肯照原價另加銀半千磅求他相讓而李春兄雖知有利可圖仍志滿自守不悅貪求可見其主持之有道也又昨歲尾旬本埠爹路架喇扶洋報聞華人新年將至亦將李春兄弟婦兒女尊容刻於該報之上華友見此多覺大沾其光也



李 春 兄 春 李
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受 公 推 為 主 席 至 光 緒
梓 友 設 立 博 文 書 社 亦
堂 值 理 且 數 年 前 隆 都

○品才並美 雪梨埠廣和昌寶號李春兄乃香邑隆都人也在本埠梓友設立博文書社亦受公推為主席至光緒三十三年李春兄為五十一歲之壽辰各梓友紛紛踵門祝賀此皆平日之得人和而致也李春兄舊歲得開遷建街市之議已成即在街市旁邊之臣街購買地所連建舖戶兩間全

Article with portrait of Phillip Lee Chun. Trove citation: Guang yi hua bao = The Chinese Australian Herald (Sydney, NSW: 1894 - 1923), Saturday 12 February 1910, page 17. Trove link: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/168078440> Source: State Library of New South Wales

Peter Hack

MEMBERSHIP

Membership News: Welcome to:

- new life members Mathew Blampey and Lesley Heath
- new members William Brown, Heidi Yaqi Han, Marc Rerceretnam, Christine Williamson and Richard Woo
- renewing members Nola Bramble, Susan Carter, Chris Cheng, Kerry Choy, Cheryl Cumines, Margaret Cumines, Ely Finch, Ella Hong, Sybil Jack, Kiko Ko, Barry Li, Janis Wilton and Wing Fai Wong.

We look forward to seeing you at our events and to your active participation.

Membership Renewals: The membership year is the same as our financial year, 1 July to 30 June. Membership renewals for 2019-2020 fell due on 1 July 2019. Members joining in the first six months of 2020 will have their membership extended to 30 June 2021.

The membership form can be used for membership renewals and also for enrolling new members: <https://chineseaustralianhistory.org/join-us/>

Twentieth Anniversary of Incorporation of the Society Call for documents

The Society was incorporated with its registration on 4 September 2002.

The Committee is keen to prepare a short history of the Society's first 20 years and to that end seeks any old documents relevant to the Society's activities, particularly those from the early years, with a view to creating an archive.

The types of documents we have in mind include:

- Newsletters
- Minutes of Annual General Meetings
- Minutes of Committee meetings
- Treasurer's Reports to AGMs or Committee Meetings
- Copies of correspondence to and by the Society
- President's Reports to AGMs
- Photographs of activities undertaken by the Society
- Details of presentations or addresses made to the Society.

If you require assistance with scanning, let us know and we will borrow what you have and return it. Or if you no longer want the documents, we will happily take them off your hands!

Contact Malcolm Oakes
SMS or ring 0419 249 697
oakes@tenthfloor.org

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in articles published in the *Newsletter* are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Chinese Australian Historical Society.

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