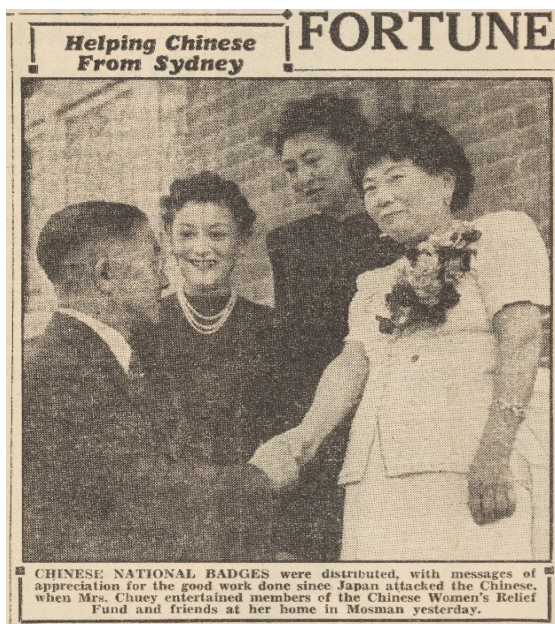


NEWSLETTER

- March 2020 -

The latest news and updates from CAHS



Truth, Sunday 10 May 1942, page 19.



Peach trees at Tet flower market in Hang Luoc Street, Hanoi, 1994; Photo: Nguyen Kim Long.

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- Upcoming Events
- Agnes Lumbewe
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- Update on the life of Wong Shee Ping, author of *The Poison of Polygamy*
- Membership update

WELCOME TO 2020

Welcome to the Year of the Rat and our first newsletter for 2020. I was delighted to see so many present, both familiar as well as new faces, for our Sydney Lunar Festival associated event – *Lunar New Year Traditions and Memories*. Special thanks to our three speakers; Mai Nguyen-Long, Dr Frank Alafaci and Colin Lee for their insights, both cultural and personal, on how the lunar new year is celebrated by Vietnamese, Korean and Malaysian families and communities. Wonderful to see so many animated conversations as attendees enjoyed the special afternoon tea.



Daphne Lowe Kelley with Dr Frank Alafaci, Mai Nguyen-Long and Colin Lee. Photo: Michael Williams, 1 February 2020.



Mai Nguyen-Long speaking at *Lunar New Year Traditions and Memories*. Photo: Michael Williams, 1 February 2020.

Breaking News

Shortly after you receive this newsletter, the City of Sydney should be announcing the exciting news that MOCA is the preferred tenant for the former Haymarket Library building on the corner of George and Hay Streets.

A substantial amount of money will have to be raised, in order to convert this building into the Museum of Chinese in Australia. Tax deductible donations to MOCA can be made at:

<https://australianculturalfund.org.au/projects/museum-of-chinese-in-australia-moca/>

Daphne Lowe Kelley
PRESIDENT



Historic Haymarket building soon to be Museum of Chinese in Australia

MRS FABIAN CHOW

Recently the Cinema & Theatre Historical Society of Australia Inc. (CATHS) contacted us about the Chinese film industry career of **Miss Alice Lim Kee**, later known by her married name, **Mrs Fabian Chow**. It just so happens that I will be mentioning the same Mrs Fabian Chow in the presentation on the *NSW Chinese Women’s Relief Fund 1937-1941*.

Miss Alice Lim Kee was born in Rutherglen, Victoria in 1900. She moved to Shanghai in the early 1920s where she pursued teaching, broadcasting, journalism and acting. She used the name **Wu Ai-lien** and as the first women in Asia to host a radio program, she was known as “Little Miss Shanghai”. Mrs Fabian Chow returned to Australia during the 1930s and 1940s. These visits were widely reported by the Australian press and her sons, Cecil and Colin went to school in Sydney in the 1940s. However, CATHS have been unable to find any details of this Chinese-Australian celebrity’s work in the film industry.

By 1938, Mrs Chow’s father, Charles Lim Kee, and sister, Mrs B. F. T. Pon, were living in Sydney. Perhaps another relative, Miss Hilda Pon was one of the secretaries of the NSW Chinese Women’s Relief Fund. If you have any information about Miss Alice Lim Kee/Mrs Fabian Chow, or know of any of her family in Australia, please send an email to contact.cahs@gmail.com. We will pass on the information to CATHS.

Peter Hack

UPCOMING EVENTS

Chinese Australian Historical Society

Invites you to

The NSW Chinese Women's Relief Fund
(1937-1941)

紐修威中國婦女慰勞會



In this presentation, Peter Hack 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 lavish North Shore cocktail party that they organised. Listen to Madame Chiang Kai-shek, First Lady of the Republic of China (narrated by Gabrielle Chan), report from the Shanghai front; and hear the reaction of Mrs James Chuey, President of the Relief Fund (narrated by Susan Young).



A cheque for £160 to purchase medical supplies for the relief of suffering in China being handed to Mr. H. L. Pitt, superintendent of the New South Wales division of the Australian Red Cross Society, by executives of the New South Wales Chinese Women's Relief Fund. The women executives from the left are: Mrs. M. Kew, Mrs. J. A. ... and Mrs. T. ...

Date: Saturday 21 March 2020
Time: 2.30 pm
Venue: Mitchell Theatre,
 Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts,
 Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney
Cost: \$10 (including refreshments)
Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com
 or 0417 655 233



Mrs. Fabian Chow and Mrs. Elsie Lee Song, who raised thousands of pounds to send medical supplies for war refugees in China.

會勞慰女婦國中威修紐

N.S.W. CHINESE WOMEN'S RELIEF FUND

(REGISTERED UNDER THE N.S.W. DOMESTIC CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS ACT, 1984.)

TELEPHONES: (02) 9551 112

DAKING HOUSE,
 499 PITT STREET,
 SYDNEY.

歷史協會
 澳洲華人
 CHINESE AUSTRALIAN
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY inc

Designed by Michael Quan

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 16 May 2020 at 2.30 pm

Megan Neilson - *A tale of two translators*

When she set out to solve a family puzzle, Megan never expected to fall headlong into Chinese-Australian history. The puzzle concerned her great-grandmother Matilda Jane Millar who in 1852 had arrived in Victoria from England, only 11 years old and seemingly unchaperoned. On the Ballarat goldfields, Matilda Jane was later to marry Megan's Chinese great grandfather Chin Kit, a court translator. There was a romantic family myth about how they had met but the records said otherwise. The unravelling of the true story involved Robert Bell, the "eccentric Englishman" responsible for the publication of the first Chinese-Australian newspaper. This is the basis of "A Tale of Two Translators".

Date: Saturday 16 May 2020

Time: 2:30 pm

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

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

Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com

Thursday 16 July 16 at 6.00 pm - Henry Chan Lecture (to be confirmed with full details in the June Newsletter)

Saturday 5 September at 2.30 pm - History Week Lecture

This year's theme is *History: What is it good for?* Darryl Low Choy will be giving a presentation about his ancestor, the Sydney merchant Sum Kum Tiy.

Date: Saturday 5 September 2020

Time: 2:30 pm

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

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

Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com

Saturday 21 November 21 at 11:30 am - AGM

CHINESE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

The Hon. Dr Helen Sham-Ho OAM JP was the first elected Chinese Australian Member of the NSW Parliament in 1988. She served 4 terms of Office in the NSW Parliament until 2003. Helen is our guest speaker and we look forward to hearing experiences she has had during those years, and something of her life story to this point.

Date: Saturday 14 March 2020

Time: 1:30 to 3:30 pm

Venue: Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney

Cost: \$8 members; \$10 non-members.

RSVP: Phone Rose Wong 0418 838 737 or Marie Chan 0410 582 338.

Ageism against older people is stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment based solely on age. There is a lot more ageism in Australia than most people may realise. Our guest speaker from Every AGE Counts, will try and enlighten us. Every AGE Counts is a grassroots campaign aiming to tackle ageism faced by older Australians. Come along and hear more about this interesting campaign.

Date: Saturday 18 April 2020

Time: 1:30 to 3:30 pm

Venue: Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney

Cost: \$8 members; \$10 non-members.

RSVP: Phone Rose Wong 0418 838 737 or Marie Chan 0410 582 338.

CHINA INC CONFERENCE

The Chinese Heritage In Northern Australia Incorporated (CHINA Inc.) is organising the 8th "no fuss" Conference in Cairns with a pre-conference tour of Cooktown. More information will be published on the CHINA Inc website at: <http://chinainc.yolasite.com/>

Theme: Northern Links: Chinese Top End Tales

Dates: 11-12 July 2020

Venue: Cairns Sheridan Motel, Cairns

CHINESE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



Portrait (Mulan)

Ink and colours on silk British Museum (Public Domain)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=61949893>

Discovering the Real Mulan: In 1998, an animated version of the story of Fa Mulan appeared on our cinema screens, inviting us into the tale of a young girl who disguises herself as a boy to take her father's place in the Chinese army. Join CHAA President Cheryl Cumines as she investigates Mulan – a shadowy legend, a real historical figure or a cartoon image for the twenty-first century?

Date: Saturday, 4th April, 2020

Time: 2:30 – 4:00 pm

Venue:

Mitchell Theatre, Sydney,
Mechanics School of Arts, 280
Pitt Street, Sydney

Cost: \$10

Bookings: Kathie Blunt – 4861
3078 or

blunt@bigpond.net.au

Light refreshments included

AGNES LUMBEWE

I really didn't see all that much of my Lumbewe grandparents as we lived in country Queensland, but I do remember Nannie Agnes as being loving, warm and outgoing. She taught me to play the piano, and enjoyed a sing along. A common practice back then!

My mother Junnie (Lai Jun) and my aunt Jean Lumbewe told countless stories of their life growing up surrounded by family - brothers Ted and Keith and their friends. The young Chinese Community that they mixed in was close knit, and my grandmother Agnes encouraged them to gather socially at their home in Kensington or picnics on Coogee Beach in the late 1920s and early 1930s. I mention this only because Agnes loved nothing more than being involved in causes and events to do with the Chinese Community.

It was only by accident that I found letters among my Aunt's possessions written to Agnes in her capacity as joint Honorary Treasurer of the N.S.W Chinese Women's Relief Fund a position she shared with Miss Kiss Young Wai.

Reading down the list of Office Bearers of the N.S.W Chinese Women's Relief Fund, I was surprised and pleased to note my Aunt on my father's side, Miss Ida Yum (later Mrs Fonce Nomchong) was on the Committee, and several other names that my parents mentioned over the years. I've looked at all the photos of Agnes surrounded by all those debutantes and wished I knew who they were!

Agnes died when she was only 58 which was far too young by today's standards, but medical support was not like it is now.

Mei-Lin Yum



Dragon Festival Ball, 17 June 1941. Agnes Lumbewe and debutantes. Photo: courtesy of Mei-Lin Yum.

In the *Newsletter* this year, I intend to include short reminiscences from relatives of the women who established the NSW Chinese Women's Relief Fund. You have just read the first by Mei-Lin Yum about her grandmother.

Agnes is referred to as Mrs. T. Lumbewe in the file of the NSW Chinese Women's Relief Fund. The "T" is for Tart, the first name of her husband. After his death, Agnes was referred to as Mrs. A. or Agnes Lumbewe. This was the custom of the time. Similarly, the President of the Relief Fund was known as Mrs. J. Chuey. The "J" was for James; her first name was actually Rose.

Agnes was an honorary Treasurer of the Relief Fund, a position she shared with Miss K. Young Wai, an aunt of CAHS Patron, Dr John Yu AC. Her first name was Keziah, one of the daughters of Job in the Bible; but her nickname was "Kiss".

If you have information you would like to share about the NSW Chinese Women's Relief Fund, including any documents or photographs, please contact me at:

enquiries@peterhack.com.au

Peter Hack



An older Agnes with another group of debutantes. Photo: Courtesy of Mei-Lin Yum.

82-84 DIXON STREET

On Thursday 6 February, the Society was informed by the City of Sydney Council that the Development Application recently lodged by Keeyuen Design Pty Ltd to carry out a series of internal and external repairs to the buildings at 82- 84 Dixon Street had been withdrawn.

This development proposal was premature and inappropriate considering that the building was the subject of an Interim Heritage Order (NSW Government Gazette 22 March 2019) and the City of Sydney Council was still finalising the building's permanent heritage listing on the Sydney Local Environment Plan.

The proposed works had the potential to seriously impact the intact historic interiors, a major feature of the building's heritage significance. The Heritage Impact Statement supporting the Development Application was cursory and failed to document any measures to ensure the protection and conservation of original building fabric, interior finishes, extant collections and fittings.

CAHS is grateful for the shared concerns and prompt actions of the Chinese Heritage Association of Australia, the Museum of Chinese in Australia, the National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) and the many people in the Chinese-Australian community who sent in submissions opposing application.

Architect Daniel Ma, in one of the many public submissions supporting the proposed permanent heritage listing of 82- 84 Dixon Street, wrote:

It is probably the only surviving shopfront in that street that was built in the early 20th century, and the building itself has a significant background. Built in 1910, the building is an example of the Edwardian-style buildings that were in Dixon Street long before it was converted into a pedestrian mall, and "Chinatowned" as it were.

Almost every other building in the street has had major renovations done or have been demolished, and there is little left to show the rich and diverse beginnings of this area of Sydney.

Kwong War Chong, as it was known, was a meeting place and a centre for distributing imported goods such as herbal medicines and it contributed much to support the Chinese community, providing a meeting place and even dormitories for market gardeners.

I spent my childhood in the Haymarket and remember the building well. It always had a large range of exotic foods and smells and there was often the subtle fragrance of incense wafting through its doors when one walked past. I recall being fascinated by a wall full of beautifully constructed tiny timber drawers that contained all kinds of medicines, herbs, dried roots and other exotic delicacies.

That "old" Chinatown doesn't exist anymore, and many of the buildings have gone. Kwong War Chong is therefore unique and should be preserved. Previous attempts to keep part of the history of the area have resulted in retaining facades (e.g. Market City or UTS) and building high rise apartment blocks or shopping centres behind or

above them. Here is an opportunity to retain a little of Dixon Street's history and I sincerely hope that the listing will be approved.



The original Edwardian shop fronts at 82-84 Dixon Street.

The Chinese Australian Herald, Saturday 12 February 1910, page 18.

Daniel's memories of Kwong War Chong and his personal experiences of the people, daily life and businesses in the Haymarket area resonates with some of my own childhood memories of shopping with my family in Little Bourke Street in Melbourne. Peoples' memories, personal experiences and social practices form an important element of the intangible cultural heritage of this site for the generations of the Chinese diaspora community and their descendants in Sydney and other parts of Australia. Recording these individual memories, in particular, the oral histories of the descendants of the Lee family, their former business associates, employees and customers and the owners and families of neighbouring Dixon Street businesses will help to document and interpret the histories embodied in the building's physical fabric.

The Society would be pleased to hear from anyone with additional information, relevant photographs and ephemera (e.g. bills, menus, newspaper advertisements) to document the history of the site, the owner Phillip Lee Chun and his family, the history of Kwong War Chong, the various Chinese commercial

businesses including the Hingara restaurant at 82 Dixon Street and memories of former associates, employees and customers. Please contact the Society at:

contact.cahs@gmail.com

Ann Toy

Thanks to **Daniel Ma** for his permission to quote extracts from his submission to the City of Sydney Council, 7 November 2019.

WONG SHEE PING 黃樹屏 (WONG YAU-KUNG 黃右公) c.1875 - 1948

The discovery of a report of the death of Wong Shee Ping, author of [The Poison of Polygamy](#), allows his biography to be updated by historians, and a moment for a few musings on a life.

Wong Shee Ping devoted most of his adult life to the modernisation and betterment of China and her people across two nations. He was in Australia from 1908 to 1923 and, as is the Australian way, we can claim him as an Australian.

（本報厚山專訊）中國革命助績同志會會員黃右公，現年七十餘歲，乃開平三區厚山鄉人，前致力革命工作數十年，為黨國而破家，前曾任國民政府僑務委員會委員，博羅縣長及厚山鄉長等職，為人和藹忠實，黃同志不幸於數月前在鄉病故，身後蕭條，孤寡無依，殊難度活，本邑革命助績同志關照國，周瑞厚，周瑞

黃右公身後蕭條

關照國等聯名印發訃告
額請中央同志洽商撫卹

培等以彼家人生活困苦，請求援助，然惻隱之心，人皆有之，且以最忠實同志遺眷到請，尤難坐視，昨關照國同志等乃聯名代印發訃告，

分呈中央僑務委員鄧川山謝公木等同志代為面呈中央委員會洽商，懇求從優給卹金，而利濟之急務云。（作）



STARK CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE WAKE OF WONG YAU KUNG'S DEATH

Montage: Kwong Yit Poh newspaper image
(source: Natl. Library of China,
<http://bz.nlcpress.com>); photo 1921 (Mar family);
translation of headline by Ely Finch

In Australia he was a teacher, preacher, newspaper editor, writer, playwright, republican, political party organiser, public speaker and activist against the White Australia Policy. In all

these roles, he strove to make a difference in an era when China was in flux at the end of imperial rule and centuries of stagnation, and facing the question of how to revitalise the country as a twentieth century nation. He did this by engaging with and mobilising his local Chinese-Australian community in his various roles.

Like many republicans of his time, he believed China and her people should adopt the best of Western ideas, for example equality for women, while keeping core cultural heritage such as the Chinese language. He probably would have been closely aligned to Republican leader Sun Yat-sen who was also influenced by periods living in the West.

Wong Shee Ping returned to China in 1924 as Australia's representative to the first National Congress of the Kuomintang (KMT - Chinese Nationalist Party) in Guangzhou, following which he was appointed by Sun Yat-sen to the KMT's Propaganda Committee. Whether he had intended to return to Australia but changed his plans due to this appointment we do not know. Sun Yat-sen died from illness in 1925.

In any case, he held various roles in the Nationalist government up to about 1930, and now a 1948 newspaper report indicates he was "mayor" of his home group of villages - perhaps this was a role he had in semi-retirement in his later years.

Wong Shee Ping co-founded the Young China League in Melbourne in 1912 in support of Sun Yat-sen, and was instrumental in establishing state branches of the Kuomintang by 1919-1921. Earlier he had written the first Australian-Chinese novel [The Poison of Polygamy](#) originally published as a serial in 1909-10 in *The Chinese Times*, of which he was editor for periods from 1914.

Prior to coming to Australia, he benefited from a good education in China, perhaps due to family wealth as his father Wong Pang Tak 黃鵬德 was a notable merchant in Melbourne in the latter decades of the 1800s.

Shee Ping's family life is of particular personal interest (due to his being my grandfather). We speculated whether he left a Chinese wife when he came here in 1908, and now the report of his death relates the existence and sad circumstances of a wife and child (one or more) at the time of his death back in his family village, suggesting this family started sometime in the mid to late 1930s. In Australia he married my grandmother in 1923.

So, we have his life story but to some extent what we have is a story with many missing episodes and lacking direct insight to the character's inner thoughts and daily life apart from the glimpses recorded and what we can imagine. We can hope he died with a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment, notwithstanding that the hopes he had for China back in the 1910s and '20s were not realised in his lifetime. We can hope he had some comfort in his various family lives despite leaving at least two families behind - one by ship from prosperous Australia, the other by dying in poverty in uncertain times in China, according to the 1948 report. We hope his family in China survived the period following his death.

As in his novel [The Poison of Polygamy](#), his life illustrates how the history of the nation intersects with personal stories, and how fiction can intertwine with fact both from the past and from one's future fate.

We are thankful to be the lucky recipient of what we have of his story, thanks to Wong Shee Ping himself and all who have brought it to light: Ely Finch, Michael Williams and Mei-fen Kuo.

The story of the final years of our author Wong Shee Ping's life had been a complete mystery until Dr Mei-fen Kuo discovered a report of his death in a newly launched [China] newspaper database. Here is an edited version of Ely Finch's translation of the 1948 report of his death from the Facebook page [The Poison of Polygamy](#). This report was published in a local Taishan newspaper in 1948:

“STARK CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE WAKE OF WONG YAU KUNG'S DEATH: [His comrades] jointly signed and sealed obituaries calling on their central-government comrades to consider the bestowal of a compassionate gratuity [or gratuities].

Member of the Order of Meritorious Chinese Revolutionary Comrades, Wong Yau Kung was a native of Hau Shan Locality, in Hoi Ping [Kaiping], in his seventies, who had devoted his energies to revolutionary work over several decades, exhausting his family's wealth in the cause of the party and the nation.

He was a man who was amiable and faithful, and who previously occupied such roles as Commissioner of Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, County Head, and Head of the Locality of Hau Shan [his family home district].

Comrade Wong unfortunately died of illness in his native place several months ago. Circumstances in the wake of his death are stark, his wife and children [or child] having nothing on which to rely and experiencing great difficulty in providing for themselves.

Further to a request for support from his family in their straitened circumstances, fellow meritorious revolutionaries [in Kaiping] in the spirit of empathy that is universal to all mankind, and out of an inability to be indifferent in the face of a request from the surviving family members of a most faithful comrade, [have requested that certain officials] make face-to-face representation[s] to the Central Committee, that consideration be given to the bestowal of a generous compassionate gratuity [or gratuities], given the pressing need for financial relief.

Glenn Mar

Translation of newspaper article – Ely Finch

Dear members of CAHS and readers

We would welcome your contribution to the *Newsletter*. We are very happy to publish material written by you that is related to the history of Chinese-Australians. I am grateful for the contributions of Mei-Lin Yum, Ann Toy, Daniel Ma, Glenn Mar and Ely Finch in this issue. If you have something that you would like to contribute, please send an email to enquiries@peterhack.com.au

Peter Hack
EDITOR

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to:

- New members: Anne Colubriale, Gerald Mah, Rosemary Elliott and Lok Yee (Alan) Tang.
- Renewing members: Michael Quan, Dr Frank Alafaci and Bernard Yen.

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 2020-2021 fall due on 1 July 2020. 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.