

A publication of the Chinese Australian Historical Society

Website: <https://chineseaustralianhistory.org>

Email: contact.cahs@gmail.com

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President's Message

Welcome to the last CAHS newsletter for 2024. The principal event during the past few months has been the Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Incorporated (CHINA Inc) conference, which was held in Darwin from 20 to 23 September 2024. The conference was co-hosted by the Northern Territory's Chung Wah Society Inc. Some 26 papers were presented on a raft of Chinese Australian history and heritage topics from academics and family historians. CAHS was very well represented amongst the presenters for the two full days of the conference with some ten presenters being CAHS members.

With so many CAHS members present in Darwin for the conference and the excursion to the former gold mining centre of Pine Creek, the opportunity was taken to conduct the Society's AGM. In fact, two AGMs were held back-to-back – 2022/23 (deferred due to Malcolm Oakes' passing) and the 2023/24 AGM. Several members who did not attend the conference were able to participate via a video link. The new Management Committee that will guide CAHS over the next twelve months is:

President	Darryl Low Choy	Qld
Vice President	Kevin Tang	NSW
Secretary	Neville Jones	NT
Treasurer	Susan Leong	NSW
	Julie Lee	NSW
	Christine Grimwade	Qld
	Gordon Grimwade	Qld
	Noreen Kirkman	WA

A big welcome to our new Management Committee members: Julie Lee and Christine Grimwade, whose biographies are included in this newsletter. I'd like to thank outgoing MC member, Kam Louie who has stood down to do more travelling in the new year. Kam has successfully developed our joint Chinese Australian history seminar series in association with the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG). I'm very pleased to announce that CAHS member, Hilda Maclean, has agreed to take over the CAHS-SAG history seminar series for 2025 and already has some big ideas to continue the series' success.

The *Scattered Legacy* project continues to progress well and now has over 500 items in its database. As this project matures, under the leadership of Dr Michael Williams, we will be running online seminars and publishing guides to its use as a family history and academic history research source.

May I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, safe travels and all the best for a great 2025. Thank you for your support, it has been very much appreciated by myself and the Management Committee.

Emeritus Professor (Major General retd) Darryl Low Choy, AM, MBE, RFD, KCSJ, PhD
Darryl Low Choy, President

CAHS Values

Your Membership

The focus of CAHS is its members. By joining or renewing your membership, you strengthen the work of CAHS in advancing the study of Chinese Australian history. To join or renew, please complete the membership form on the [CAHS website](#). The account details for the direct bank transfer are on the form.

Future Newsletter Suggestions

CAHS encourages members to share their stories, research interests and events, such as new year celebrations, by submitting short articles and photographs, both historical and current, to the *CAHS Newsletter*. Please send your submissions to contact.cahs@gmail.com

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New Committee Members

Christine Grimwade

Christine is a registered nurse and an Anglican priest who also holds a graduate diploma in history. Christine became interested in Chinese history through assisting her historical archaeologist husband, Gordon, and is now involved with the Hou Wang Temple in Atherton and on the Executive of CHINA Inc.

Christine has undertaken research on North Queensland Chinese Australian servicemen and, is currently working on a biography of Bishop George Tung Yep. Trips to the Palmer River and Victorian goldfields have engendered a wider interest in early Chinese migrants. Christine is looking forward to contributing to the committee of CAHS.



Christine Grimwade

Julie Lee

Julie is a practising landscape architect, urban designer, Fellow of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA), and Adjunct Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, UNSW. Julie chairs the AILA NSW Advocacy Committee.

She is a second-generation Chinese from Guangdong Province, China. Julie is interested in the tangible and intangible heritage associated with the urban fabric that was occupied by Chinese, particularly the Haymarket district, Sydney where she was born. Julie is a member of the Chinatown Action Committee involved in the revitalisation of the Haymarket precinct.



Julie Lee

City of Sydney Chinatown Heritage Listing

The City of Sydney is proposing to list 50-54 Dixon Street, 90-100 Hay Street, and 75-77 Ultimo Road as part of a proposal to honour the heritage of Chinatown and revitalise the area. Heritage assessments prepared by Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok provided detailed information to support the local heritage listing of the three buildings based on their historical association and significance, social, cultural, spiritual value, aesthetics and rarity. Details of the buildings are below:

50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket, Goon Yee, Loong Yee and Loon Fook Tong building

The building at 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket, is located towards the northern end of Dixon Street and adjacent to the north Chinatown Gate. The three-storey masonry structure incorporates several architectural styles, including a classical pediment and Greek detailing completed in 1916. Its construction was jointly funded by the leaders of the Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) and Tung Koon (Dongguan) counties as clubhouses for the Goon Yee Tong, the Loong Yee Tong and the Loon



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Fook Tong. The Tongs played a vital role in the Chinese Australian community by offering services to assist with settling in Sydney or returning to China. It has been owned and used by the Tongs for over 100 years.

**75-77 Ultimo Road, Haymarket,
Kuo Min Tang building**

The Kuo Min Tang building is located in Haymarket's centre. Constructed in 1921 as the headquarters for the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuo Min Tang), it is four storeys of masonry construction and with distinctive fenestration under a single arch. The Kuo Min Tang continues to occupy the first, second, and third floors and leases the ground floor for retail.



**90-100 Hay Street, Haymarket,
Former Municipal Stores**



The building at 90-100 Hay Street, Haymarket, comprises two, three-storey masonry structures between Harbour Street and Dixon Street. It was designed and built in 1911 as a store for the neighbouring municipal markets and occupied by Chinese Australian firms that pioneered the processes of the banana and commercial vegetable growing industries in Australia. Today, various food, retail, and entertainment purposes occupy the building.

Source of photographs & text: City of Sydney, [Planning Proposal – Chinatown Heritage Items, Haymarket \(Attachment A\)](#), Sydney, City of Sydney, November 2024.

2024 Annual Prize in Legal History

[Sophie Couchman](#) and [Kate Bagnall](#), members of CAHS, have been awarded the 2024 Annual Prize in Legal History (Best Article or Book Chapter) by the Australian and New Zealand Legal History Society for the following article:

Sophie Couchman and Kate Bagnall, [‘Identification Photography and the Surveillance of Chinese Mobility in Colonial Australasia’](#), *Australian Historical Studies*, v. 54, n. 2, 2023, pp. 299–329.

The article brings together Sophie's work on Chinese Australians and identification photography, and Kate's research on naturalisation and the administration of immigration restriction.

One of the examples of identification photography included in the article was Chew Sing Chung's exemption certificate, issued on 20 March 1897 in Palmerston (Darwin), Northern Territory, with a photographic portrait, thumbprint, and signature.



Source: National Archives of Australia: MP56/12, 6.

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Writing on the Wall

A Tale of Chinese Market Gardeners' Huts

In the late 19th century and well into the 20th, Chinese men across Australia took up market gardening. Their “homes” on the fields became known as huts, though that term hardly does justice to some of these dwellings. *Scattered Legacy* has identified four remaining structures that could be called “Chinese market gardeners’ huts”—three in New South Wales and one in Queensland. Others no doubt still exist, but this is the count so far, along with images of many no longer extant.

Yet, of these four, only one is being carefully preserved, while the others fade into the past, inching closer to being forgotten altogether. The real question we must ask: **Do these humble huts deserve a place in Australia’s heritage?** Should they, as remnants of Chinese heritage in Australia, be preserved and cherished?

A Tale of Two Huts:

Of the four huts, two contain rare treasures: Chinese writing on the walls, each revealing something deeply personal about the men who lived there. These aren’t just forgotten names or faces—they’re voices from the past, expressing emotions that go far beyond the stereotypical “Chinese market gardener.”

The Lament of Mimosa

In Mimosa, near Temora, NSW, an isolated man poured his feelings into words on his walls. Two lines flank a doorway, where he describes listening to the sounds of chickens. But the story doesn’t stop there. Thanks to



Ely Finch and Stephen Li’s knowledge of the Taishan language, a double meaning has emerged: the writer’s loneliness and his longing for intimacy with a woman, desires expressed through vivid, cheeky puns. This isn’t just a melancholy man writing his loneliness; it’s a raw look at a man craving connection and companionship.

Betrayal at Numbaa

The second set of writings lies on the walls of a hut in Numbaa, a small town near Berry on the South Coast of NSW. Here, a man’s writing is laced with bitterness. His words—13 lines, each four characters long—reveal a painful betrayal, as he details losing his garden to someone he declares had “malicious” intent. The text suggests he may have returned years later to find his hard work lost, pouring his dismay onto the walls as a kind of silent testimony.



[For reasons of space, the full transcripts or translations are not given – all will be available on *Scattered Legacy* in due course.]

These writings, known locally for years, were even transcribed by heritage workers long ago, yet the fate of these huts remains precarious. Only Mimosa’s hut is in restorable condition, with local efforts underway to preserve it. Numbaa’s hut, on the other hand, is a ghost of its former self, gradually succumbing to time.

The Writing on the Wall

These huts tell a story that history books rarely do: of Chinese men who were more than nameless gardeners. Their huts might seem simple, but the lives they housed were rich, passionate, and often tragic. Yet, while local communities remember them, these buildings have largely slipped from national awareness. If we let them fade, Australia’s scattered legacy of Chinese heritage will shrink even further.

[Scattered Legacy](#) is building a national database of Chinese Australian heritage items of which these gardens huts are but a small example. For more information and a peek at the website to be launched in 2025 have a look at this [video presentation](#)

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Northern Gateways Chinese Heritage and History in Northern Australia Conference, Darwin, 20-23 September 2024

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first contingent of Chinese labour to the Northern Territory, CHINA Inc's 2024 conference, Northern Gateways, was held in Darwin in conjunction with the Chung Wah Society on 20-23 September 2024. The venue was the Chung Wah Society Community Hall, adjacent to the NT Chinese Museum. The official welcome and function included a performance by the energetic and enthusiastic Chung Wah Society Lion Dance Troupe and the launch of Allan O'Neil's *Midwives, Merchants and Miners: the Hang Gongs 1862-1944* (published by the Historical Society of the Northern Territory) and the opening of the Chinese Museum's Research Library.



Chung Wah Society Lion Dance Troupe, 20 September 2024

The conference comprised two stimulating days of presentations, including several by CAHS members. These papers included Marilyn Sue Dooley, *The Chinese Store as a Time Capsule in Australia's History*; Ely Finch, *Australia's Chinese-Language Place Names*; Natalie Fong, *Returning to Roots*; Gordon Grimwade, *Worshipping the North*; Neville Jones (with Dennis Low), *The Darwin Chinese Temple through a family history lens*; Noreen Kirkman, *Chinese faces on northern Australia's frontline: 7 Labour/Employment Company (Chinese) during World War II*; Darry Low Choy, *The 'Chinese Revolution' at Atherton*; Hilda Maclean, *At the end of their lives: repatriation of the Northern Territory's aged Chinese*; Allan O'Neil, *Hang Gongs: a North Australian family*; Kevin Rains - *Golden Gateways*; and Michael Williams, *The Scattered Legacy of Northern Australia*. Select papers will be

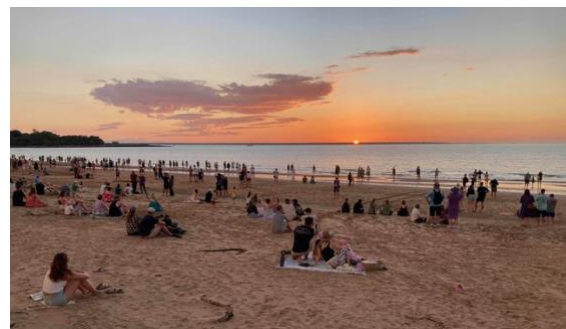
published in due course, details of which will appear in a future newsletter.

Field Trip to Pine Creek and Sunset at Mindil Beach



Eddie Ah Toy (extreme left) showing the group a pig oven at Pine Creek, 22 September 2024

Between the two days of presentations, drivers—Robin Lawrence, Terry Burns and Cliff Low (whose grandfather, Low Dep Chi, was prominent in the Mount Wells tin mine in the early 1900s)—took three mini-busloads of hardy souls to Pine Creek, 225 kilometres south of Darwin. Gold was discovered there in 1871, leading to one of tropical Australia's largest gold rushes. The first stop was at the Twelve-mile Camp, where a recent grass fire provided an ideal opportunity to view the archaeological remains of the settlement, including hut sites and a pig oven. At Pine Creek, long-time resident Eddie Ah Toy showed us a former temple site and a nearby pig oven before a museum tour. The Territory's 130 kph speed limit gave us time to catch the beautiful sunset at Mindil Beach, the night market and a convivial conference dinner.



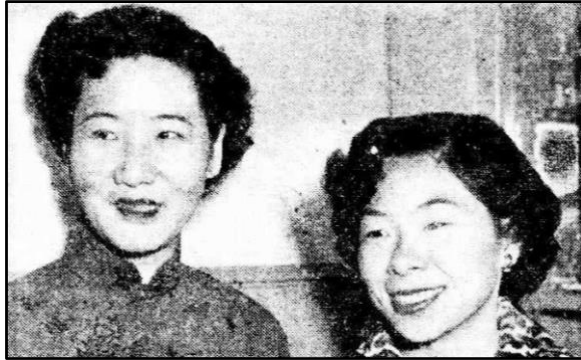
Sunset at Mindil Beach, Darwin, 22 September 2024

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Open Access Articles on Chinese Australian History and Archaeology



Phyllis Wang, newly elected President of the Chinese Women's Association of Australia with Marjorie Ting, Source: 'Around the Town', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1954, p. 21, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article248844319>

Mei-Fen Kuo, Lecturer in Chinese Culture and History at Macquarie University, has examined how Chinese women navigated the inclusion and exclusion of White Australia by leveraging their voluntary efforts in forming Chinese women's associations.

These associations, including the N.S.W. Chinese Women's Relief Fund, established in the late 1930s, and the Chinese Women's Association of Australia (CWAA), formed in 1954, conducted fundraising, cultural events, and community activities that empowered the women and strengthened relationships within the broader community.

The details of Mei-Fen Kuo's article are below:

Mei-Fen Kuo, "Girls doing a big job" in diaspora: cosmopolitan minority and making modern Chinese Women Associations in White Australia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, online, 13 June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2363520>



Burning towers, Chinese Cemetery, Cooktown (Photo: Gordon Grimwade)

Gordon Grimwade, an archaeologist and member of the CAHS Committee, published an article on Chinese grave markers of northeast Queensland c.1870-1930 in the *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*. His article evaluates grave markers from eight sites and considers the reasons for the diversity of the identification details. He concluded that the immediate need for burial and the remoteness of locations influenced the amount of detail included on the markers. Gordon also noted a progressive change in marker styles as migrant communities gradually adjusted to life in their newly adopted country.

The citation for Gordon's article is:

Gordon Grimwade, 'A Grave Situation: Burial Practices among the Chinese Diaspora in Queensland, Australia (ca.1870-1930)', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2024, pp. 295-329.

To access the article, follow this [link](#).

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Community History Award

Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc Heritage Team

The [2025 John Oxley Library Community History Award](#) was awarded to the [Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc. \(CADCAI\)](#) Heritage Team.



The Lit Sung Goong collection of religious artifacts, dispersed after the temple's demolition in 1966, was reassembled through donations and loans to the Cairns Historical Society. In 2003, CADCAI assumed custodianship of the collection, which encapsulates not only the cultural and historical legacy of the early Chinese community in Cairns but also is of national museum-standard significance.



Source: Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc

The Heritage Team comprises Mary Low, Heritage Coordinator, and Jacky Tam, Volunteer Conservator. Mary leads fundraising, promotion, and volunteer coordination. Jacky contributes his conservation expertise, including restoring the temple's altar and transcribing Chinese script. Mary and Jacky are devoted to preserving and sharing the cultural and heritage significance of the collection with the broader community.

For further information concerning the John Oxley Library Award to CADCAI, please follow this [link](#).

Exhibition

In Focus: Images of Bendigo's Dragons 1895-2024

23 November 2024 - 23 February 2025
[Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo](#)

As a fitting conclusion to the Year of the Dragon, the *In Focus* exhibition showcases the history of Bendigo's dragons recorded in images over the past 130 years. The exhibition of Bendigo's dragons comprises photographs, slides, videos, and illustrations taken by professional, amateur and family photographers.



Source: [Golden Dragon Museum website](#)

Events

Cao Fei in conversation

30 November 2024

English, 12:00 pm

Mandarin 1:00 pm

[Art Gallery of New South Wales](#)

Join Cao Fei, one of the most acclaimed contemporary multimedia artists, in a discussion with Yin Cao, curator of Chinese art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Presented on the opening weekend of the artist's retrospective *Cao Fei: My City is Yours*, this conversation provides an opportunity to learn more about Cao Fei's creative process and some of the works in the exhibition.

Follow this [link](#) for the English talk, and the Mandarin talk, see [here](#).

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The Ninth Tone

Sunday, 1 December 2024 7:00 pm -
8:00pm

Museum of Chinese Australian History,
Melbourne

Presented within the oldest continuous Chinese settlement outside of Asia, the Ninth Tone speculates the legacy of Chinese Music outside of China since the 1800s. First conceived in 2022, this iterative project uses intonation, materiality, memory, and echo to reimagine a Chinese Australian sonic history. The composer is Jasmin Wing-Yin Leung.

For further information and tickets, see [here](#).

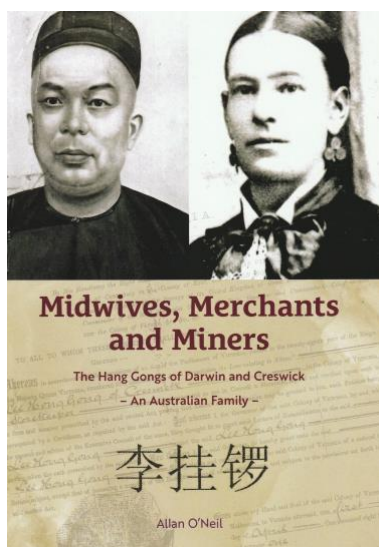


Source: [Chinese Museum](#)

New Books

Midwives, Merchants and Miners

Allan O'Neil



This book, written by CAHS member Allan O'Neil, is about a Northern Territory married couple –

Lee Hang Gong, born in China, and Sarah Bowman, a Londoner. They met and married in Creswick, Victoria, during the 1860s. The couple had seven children and moved to Darwin in 1880. Hang Gong became a businessman and miner, and Sarah became a successful Cantonese interpreter and midwife. Hang Gong died in 1892, and Sarah in 1911. Their sons carry on the family mining business. Remnants of the Lee Hang Gong mine remain on Channel Island in the Northern Territory.

Published by the [Historical Society of the Northern Territory](#), the retail price of [Midwives, Merchants and Miners](#) is \$25.00.

Gold & Chinese in Australia 1851-1900s

Derrick Stone

Gold and Chinese by Derrick Stone explores aspects of Chinese settlement across eastern Australia with particular reference to gold mining areas. Stone's Queensland explorations extend from Gympie and Rockhampton to the wilds of the Palmer River. The Northern Territory focus includes Pine Creek, Darwin, the mining entrepreneur Ping Que, and the 1880s railway to Pine Creek. The book identifies over 80 goldfields where Chinese gold-seekers ventured and where they worked, worshipped, and spent their leisure time.



The book, illustrated with over 960 images, includes snapshot histories and illustrations

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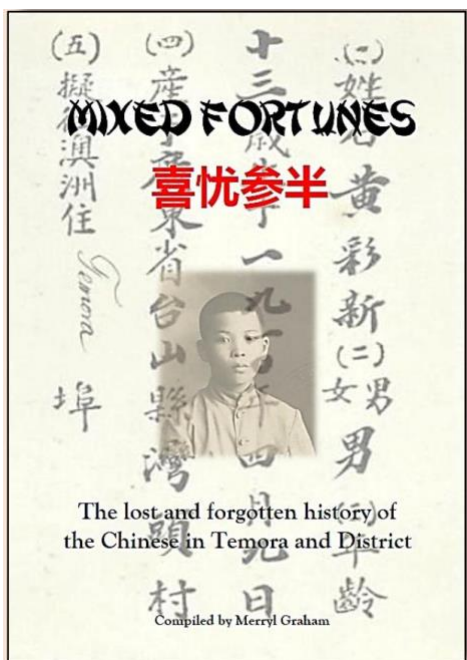
drawn from archival and museum sources. Historical and heritage items include costumes, artefacts, dragons, utensils, teapots and cups, chopsticks, and ginger jars. Photographs of mining relics include stacked stone shafts and water races.

Printed on quality gloss art paper, the retail price of *Gold & Chinese* is \$145.00 and \$15.00 postage within Australia. To obtain a copy, go to: <http://www.derrickstone.com.au>

Mixed Fortunes reveals the contribution the Chinese made to the district through their ingenuity in farming, dam building, land clearing, and market gardening skills. Many past Chinese residents have been uncovered; although not all were there for a long time, some stayed on and have continued to play a valuable role in Temora and the district.

This book is for past and present residents of Temora, families who have a Chinese connection in Temora and anyone who enjoys learning about what helps make a community.

Mixed Fortunes: the Lost and forgotten history of the Chinese in Temora and District



Mixed Fortunes is the result of research into the history of the Chinese element of Temora's past, which was almost lost. This book uncovers the racism, prejudices, poverty, adventures, intrepidity and determination of the Chinese in Temora and its district from the 1860s to 2024.

This book tells the story of the turbulent times during the gold rushes in the district and the hardships the Chinese would have endured, including the difficulties of living and working under the policies of white Australia. This book also examines how the Chinese lived, their beliefs and customs, and how they assimilated into the community.

To obtain your copy phone or email:

Temora Visitor Information Centre


(02) 6977 5921

or

tourism@temora.nsw.gov.au

COST

\$40 plus postage & handling \$15

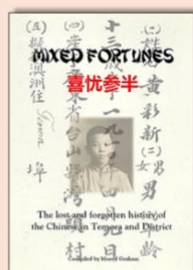


Book Launch

Finally, the book on the History the Chinese in Temora and district has been published!

On behalf of the Temora Heritage Committee, you are invited to attend the launch of **MIXED FORTUNES**
喜忧参半

The story of the lost and forgotten history of the Chinese in Temora and District



Saturday 30 November 2024
Start 2.00pm

Diamonds & Dust, 266 Hoskins Street Temora, NSW

Some refreshments will be provided

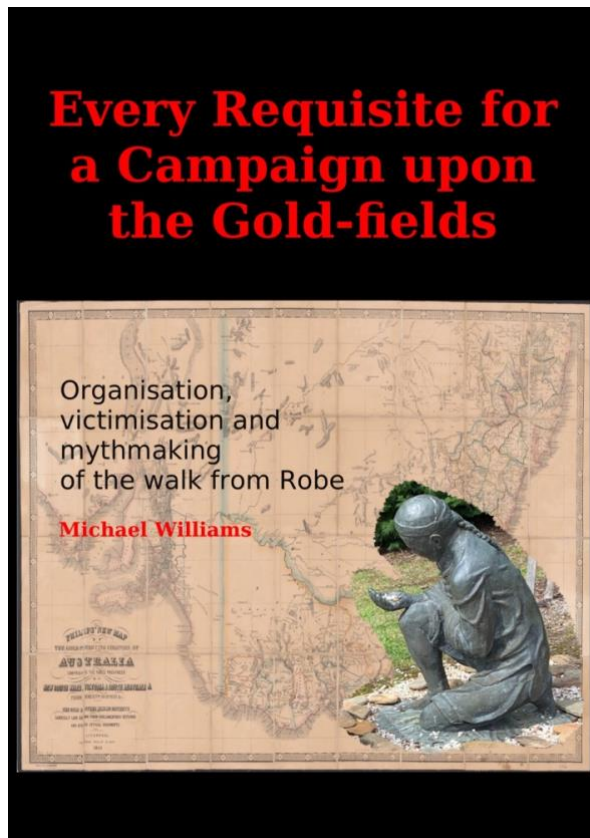
The book will be available for purchase

RSVP 28 November 2024 (Not essential, but would be appreciated)
Merryl Graham: 0407 037 806 or grahamoh1@bigpond.com

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Of the many episodes that make up the oftentimes exotic impression of Chinese Australian history the 1850s walk from the small port of Robe in South Australia to the goldfields of Victoria has repeatedly taken on epic proportions. Its 'long march' like length, tales of hardship and death, not to mention present-day outrage at the discriminatory tax the walk was designed to avoid, all combine to make the stuff of legends.

Yet remarkably the telling of this history has largely been left to local historians with their characteristic eagerness to retell every tale and make use of every allusion to their subject with little regard to plausibility, contradiction or even relevance. Thus, while the arrival of thousands of gold seekers from southern China in the mid-1850s at Robetown on Guichen Bay, South Australia, in order to avoid taxes imposed by the neighbouring gold rich colony of Victoria is well known, it is surprisingly little understood in detail.

[For a discussion of this work listen here](#)

Publisher
300 pages
Illustrated



To buy this first thoroughly academic study of the Chinese walk from Robe in South Australia to the Victorian Gold Fields.

COST

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