

A publication of the Chinese Australian Historical Society

Website: <https://chineseaustralianhistory.org>

Email: contact.cahs@gmail.com

In this Newsletter

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- 'Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia' Podcasts.



Julie Lee, CAHS President

About the New President Julie Lee

Julie is a practicing 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, and is interested in the tangible and intangible heritage associated with the urban fabric 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.

President's Message

I am honoured to serve as your incoming President and extend my sincere appreciation to Darryl Low Choy for his leadership during his tenure as President. I am delighted to welcome Irene Poon and Hilda MacLean to the committee and look forward to the fresh perspectives they will bring. At the same time, I wish to acknowledge and thank Kevin Tang and Noreen Kirkman for their significant contributions. Noreen will continue to provide exceptional support through her work on the newsletter and behind-the-scenes.

Committee Actions for 2026

The year ahead will focus on key initiatives to strengthen the Society and its reach:

- Update the website and enhance our social media presence to improve engagement and accessibility.

- Complete the Scattered Legacy Project, ensuring its successful delivery and impact.
- Increase membership by promoting the value of our work and encouraging participation.
- Strengthen our network of aligned associations to build collaborative partnerships across Australia.
- Promote research into Chinese Australian history, supporting projects and collaborations that advance knowledge and preserve heritage.

Get Involved

We invite all members to play an active role in these initiatives. You can:

- Share ideas and feedback for our website and social media updates.
- Contribute by volunteering your time or expertise.
- Help us grow our membership by introducing friends and colleagues to the Society.
- Connect us with aligned associations to expand our collaborative network.
- Participate in and support research projects that deepen understanding of Chinese Australian history.

Looking Ahead

As we enter the Year of the Horse, a time associated with progress and vitality, we look forward to building momentum on our shared goals. With your support, 2026 will be a year of tangible achievements, stronger connections, and continued commitment to preserving and promoting Chinese Australian history.

**Julie Lee FAILA RUDA
President**

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CAHS Committee 2025-2026

At the CAHS AGM held on 22 November 2025, the new Management Committee was elected to guide CAHS over the next twelve months.

President	Julie Lee	NSW
Vice President	Darryl Low Choy	Qld
Secretary	Neville Jones	NT
Treasurer	Christine Grimwade	Qld
Public Officer	Susan Leong	NSW
	Gordon Grimwade	Qld
	Hilda Maclean	Qld
	Irene Poon	Vic

Hilda Maclean



Dr Hilda Maclean is a professional historian, genealogist, and archival researcher with over twenty years' experience researching north and central Queensland family and pastoral histories. Since 2012, the University of Queensland Culture and Heritage Unit has engaged Hilda to conduct genealogical and historical research on Indigenous/Chinese families in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland, while she completed her PhD on colonial-era burial practices. Hilda regularly presents workshops on genealogical and archival research methodology and has presented at international conferences on allied topics.

Hilda is the Local Studies Specialist with the Logan City Council. She gained her PhD from the University of Queensland and holds a Diploma in Family History Studies, as well as other qualifications. Hilda is the past president of the Friends of Toowong Cemetery Association and is a life member of the Queensland Women's Historical Association, the Association of Gravestone Studies, and the Queensland Family History Society.

New Committee Members

Irene Poon



Irene has been a volunteer (and continues to be) at the Museum of Chinese Australian History (MCAH) since accessing oral histories there in 2016. She is also a member of the Chinese Australian Family Historians of Victoria (CAFHOV), serving as Secretary from 2017 to 2022.

In 2022, Irene completed the University of Tasmania's *Diploma of Family History*. While family history is her primary passion, the overall/general history of Chinese Australians and their lives in Australia is also of great interest.

CAHS Values Your Membership

Members strengthen the Society's work in advancing the study of Chinese Australian history. To become a member, please [email](mailto:contact.cahs@gmail.com) CAHS (contact.cahs@gmail.com) to request the 2025-2026 membership form, which includes the direct bank transfer details. The annual fee is \$22.00.

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Members' Corner

Discovery through context

Jenny Wright

jenawright27@gmail.com

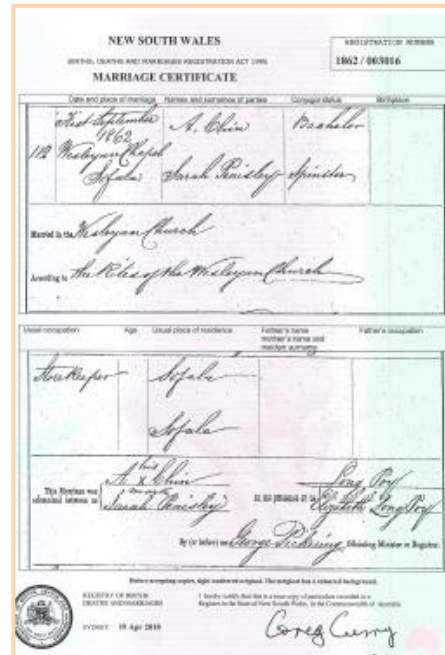
Unwrapping the layers of my great-great grandparents' story has taken 14 years of extensive research (so far). As readers of this newsletter would know, the story can be well-buried when an ancestor is Chinese. The knowledge I gained from researching public records and newspaper reports, visiting the places they lived, and learning from local and family history groups enabled me to develop a framework.



Sarah Gale married Ah Chin in 1862 in Sofala, New South Wales. There was rich detail in official records about Sarah's convict parents, but Ah Chin's background was elusive. Limited documentation in marriage and children's birth records did not show his name in Chinese characters or his village of birth. There is no known gravestone for him.

However, I have found much more by reading the history of the times and exploring the lives of the people around them.

The history of the arrival of the Chinese gold seekers into Australia in the mid-nineteenth century matched with documentary sources, led me to the theory that Ah Chin arrived in Sydney in the early 1860s and that he initially went to the Lambing Flat goldfield - before escaping to Sofala after the 1861 riots.



A. Chin & Sarah Gale [known as Sarah Peaisley], Marriage Certificate, 1 September 1862, Sofala, Births Deaths & Marriages New South Wales (BDM NSW), 3016/1862.

I was interested in reading Juanita Kwok's account of the 1864 Tuena petition signed by the Chinese men who sustained losses in the Lambing Flat riots.¹ In the list of signatories, there were several men named Ah Chin. Our Ah Chin's location was relatively close to Tuena - in Sofala, where their first child Emily was born in June 1863 - and subsequent travel to Nerrigundah where Martha was born in April 1865, meant he could have been one of those men.²

I followed another line of research as a detective pursues associates of their 'suspects'. I traced the couple who witnessed the Ah Chin marriage. From the first time I saw Sarah and Ah Chin's marriage certificate, I had wondered about Long Poy and Elizabeth Long Poy. If I could find out more about this mixed-race couple, perhaps I would uncover some of Sarah and Ah Chin's secrets.

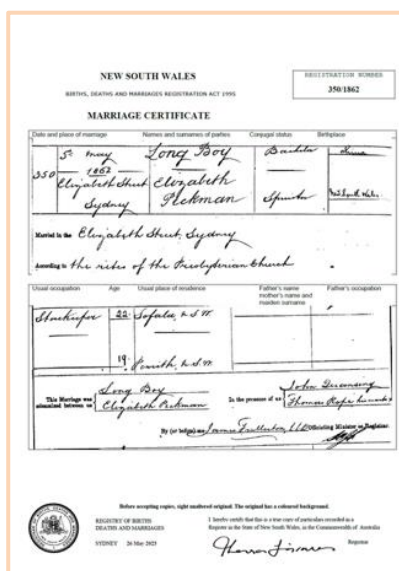
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Clues from other Chinese Australian researchers set me on the path to learning more about the Long Poy. I had hoped to find a clear connection between Ah Chin and Long Poy and, by association, learn more about Ah Chin. Although they may have travelled together and come from the same or similar area in China, I could not find a specific link between the two men.

Instead, I found a strong and ongoing connection between Sarah and Elizabeth. They were born about a year apart in Penrith, western Sydney,³ and may have known each other as children. Both married Chinese men in 1862.⁴ The Ah Chins moved to the south coast of New South Wales, while the Long Poy went to Victoria.



Long Boy [Poy] & Elizabeth Pickman, Marriage Certificate, 5 May 1862, Sofala, Births Deaths & Marriages New South Wales (BDM NSW), 350/1862.

Long Poy was involved in a scuffle, resulting in the fatal shooting of a countryman. He was sentenced to death by hanging in Castlemaine Gaol in March 1866, despite speculation of a wrongful conviction.⁵ By the end of that year, Elizabeth had returned to Sofala with her daughter and remarried.

In 1872, the two families reconnected in Ravenswood, west of Townsville, in north Queensland. They lived in the same part of town, and their children attended the local school. Swee Sang, Elizabeth's husband, worked in various occupations, including carrier, storekeeper, and publican. Ah Chin was a miner, cook and publican. Elizabeth was the midwife for the birth of Sarah's daughter (Sarah) in 1875.

Again, the families went their separate ways – the Swee Sangs moved to Charters Towers, and the Ah Chins went to the Palmer River goldfield. Sarah Ah Chin gave evidence in the Court of Petty Sessions at Maytown in July 1876.⁶

The families met in Charters Towers at the end of the decade after Sarah's husband, Ah Chin, disappeared. For a time, they all lived near Gard's Lane, known as the centre of Chinese activity in the town. Children from each family attended the Charters Towers Central State School in the late 1870s and early 1880s.⁷ Another illustration of the intersection between the two families was when two of Sarah's children were witnesses at the marriage of one of Elizabeth's daughters in 1890.⁸

By changing my focus and imagining my ancestors in the historical context and community in which they lived, I have uncovered new chapters in their stories.

The first draft of my book about Sarah and Ah Chin is nearing completion. I plan to publish it sometime in 2026.

References

- ¹ Juanita Kwok, 'The Lambing Flat riots and the Chinese quest for compensation', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, Vol. 20, October 2022, p. 100.
- ² Emily Ah Chin, born Sofala 1863, Births Deaths & Marriages New South Wales (NSW BDM), 13665/1863; Martha Ah Chin, born Nerrigundah 1865, NSW BDM, 7331/1865.
- ³ Sarah Gale was born on 27 November 1842 – BDM NSW, Baptism Certificate No. 1168/Vol. 26A. Elizabeth Peckman [Peckham] was born in about 1843 – she was 19 years old at the time of her marriage in May 1862.
- ⁴ Elizabeth married Long Poy in Sydney in May 1862 – BDM NSW, 1862/350; Sarah married Ah Chin in Sofala in September 1862 – BDM NSW, 1862/3016.
- ⁵ 'The Execution of Long Poy', *Herald* (Melbourne), 12 March 1866, p. 3.
- ⁶ Evidence of Sarah Ah Chin and Sarah Ah Bow, 12 July 1876, Court of Petty Sessions, Maytown, Minutes of Proceedings - Police Court, Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM5870.
- ⁷ Sandi Robb, 'North Queensland's Chinese Family Landscape: 1860-1920', Doctor of Philosophy thesis, James Cook University, 2019, pp. 278, 280-281, 286, 289.
- ⁸ Theresa Swee Sang and William James Palmer, Marriage Registration, 10 April 1890, Queensland Births Deaths and Marriages, 1890/C/1172.

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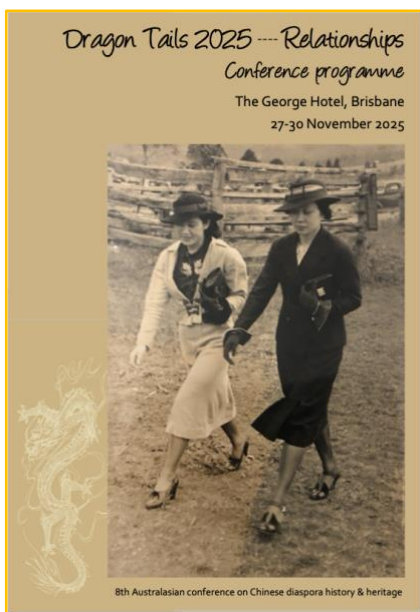
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Dragon Tails 2025- Relationships

The theme of the successful Dragon Tails 2025 conference, held in Brisbane in late November, was 'Relationships', with the focus on the relationships that shaped the lives of Chinese Australasians and the world around them. The conference convenors were Natalie Fong, Karen Schamberger, and Paul Macgregor.



Shoes & earrings, Mavis Moo collection, Queensland Museum. Photo: Kira Brown.



[Dragon Tails Conference Programme 2025](#); cover photograph of Maude and Grace Fong On, late 1930s, Fong On Collection, Queensland Museum.

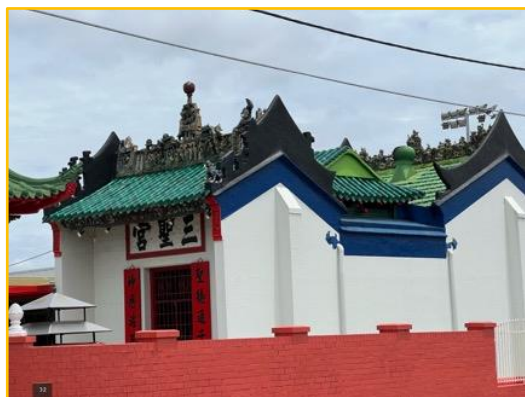
The back-of-house tour of the Queensland Museum, Kurilpa, highlighted the impressive [Chinese Australian collection](#).

Kevin Rains led the archaeological walking tour of Albert Street to find evidence of the once-thriving [Frogs' Hollow](#), Brisbane's earliest Chinese quarters.



Kevin Rains conducting the Chinatown archaeological walking tour. Photo: Kira Brown.

Several exciting tours preceded the conference. The temple tour of the [Holy Triad Temple](#), Sarm Sung Goon, at Albion, built from 1885 to 1886, drew great interest.



Holy Triad Temple, Albion, Brisbane.



Natalie Fong leading the Sunnybank Food Safari. Photo: Karen Schamberger.

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The impressive [programme](#) included over 30 presentations, too many to list here. Below is a selection of papers illustrating the wide range and scope of the presentations.

Aunty Violet Ann Dargan, 'The Trail Goes Cold at Camooweal', told of the relationship between her paternal grandfather, Sue Kee, and her grandmother, a Waanyi woman of north-west Queensland. **Rachel Xi-Ai Ngan Clark**, from the University of Otago, described **'Communal Living at the Lawrence Camp'**. **Juanita Kwok** investigated the relationship between the Chinese in the tobacco industry and White Australia legislation. **Terry Young** unearthed Chinese relationships in the Melbourne General Cemetery. **Anna Yen**, playwright, gave a dramatic reading from her play, **'Slow Boat'**, in which she portrayed the concerns and disillusionment of evacuated Chinese phosphate miners from Nauru during World War II, transported in secret to Broken Hill and Port Augusta, only to find their destination was the run-down Hatches Creek wolfram mines in the Northern Territory.

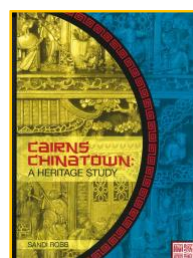
Sandi Robb, historian and Executive Officer of the Cairns Historical Society and Cairns Museum, delivered the **keynote presentation: 'Joining the Dots, Reflecting the Journey, and Leaving a Legacy: Reflections on how to stay true to yourself when life takes over'**. Sandi's heartfelt talk described the challenges of conducting historical research for her ['North Queensland's Chinese family landscape: 1860-1920'](#) thesis.



Sandi Robb and slides from her presentation.
Photos: Karen Schamberger.

In conducting her research, Sandi compiled an invaluable database of Chinese family relationships throughout North Queensland from the late 1900s through to the early Twentieth Century.

Sandi's heritage work included many collaborations with local communities, including the ['Cairns Chinatown: a Heritage Study'](#), the ['Willie Mar Heritage Site'](#) in Winton, and ['Re-discovering Buk-Ti: Chinese Settlers in the Herbert River'](#).



Sandi Robb, [Cairns Chinatown: a Heritage Study](#), 2012.

Sandi wrote the chapter 'Big Country: Dragons Dreaming: Queensland's Historical Aboriginal Chinese family relations' published in Zhou Xiaoping, [Our Country: Aboriginal Chinese people in Australia](#). Sandi is also a founding member of [Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc. \(CHINA Inc\)](#).



Sandi Robb, 'Big Country: Dragons Dreaming', in Zhou Xiaoping, [Our Country: Aboriginal Chinese people in Australia](#), 2025, pp. 19-40.

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Several CAHS members gave presentations, including those mentioned below.

Jan Richardson, 'Informants and Witnesses', described how indentured Chinese labourers from Amoy (Xiamen), who worked on properties in pastoral districts now part of Queensland between 1848 and 1853, formed wide-ranging networks, which, after the completion of their indentures, included acting as informants in courts and witnesses of each other's marriages.



Jan Richardson, 'Informants and Witnesses'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

Karen Schamberger, 'Beyond the riots: the Chinese of the Burrangong goldfield', demonstrated the considerable agency of Chinese miners at Lambing Flat in their petitions and claims for compensation for damages.



Karen Schamberger, 'Beyond the riots'. Photo: Juanita Kwok.

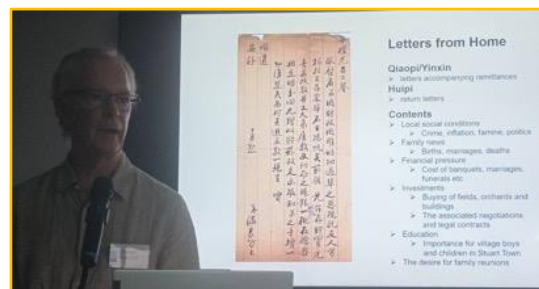
Jenny Wright, 'Friends', identified the significant friendship between two women, Sarah Gale, who married Ah Chin, and Elizabeth Peckman, the wife of Long Poy and later Ah Sang (also known as Sue Sang and Swee Sang). For more details, see Jenny's paper under 'Members' Corner'.

Hilda Maclean, 'Hancock's Secret Undertaking', examined the business relationship between undertaker William Hancock and George Shue, the Chinese proprietor of the Queensland Steam Furniture Manufacturing Company, using Chinese labour to make pauper coffins during the 1880s, a time of increased anti-Chinese sentiment in Brisbane.



Hilda Maclean, 'Hancock's Secret Undertaking'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

Richard Horsburgh and Siaoman Yen, 'Letters from Home', revealed the powerful and invaluable contents of family letters written over three decades, from the 1890s to the 1920s, by residents of a Chinese village to a family in Stuart Town, NSW. The letters are of considerable historical significance, and their translation revealed the importance of Chinese family customs, remittances and family news, despite separation and the social chaos that followed the 1911 Revolution.



Richard Horsburgh, 'Letters from Home'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

Marilyn Sue Dooley, 'Willie and Ray', highlighted the contributions of Willie Mar of Winton, who followed in his father's footsteps as a market gardener and shopkeeper, and Ray Young of Rockhampton, who worked in the family fruit and vegetable shop and later a carrying business, both men acknowledged by their respective communities for their significant contributions.



Marilyn Sue Dooley, 'Willie and Ray'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

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Marc Cheeseman, 'Beyond the Golden Pig', introduced a new perspective to the study of Chinese Australian history, offering a zooarchaeological view of how non-human animals shaped the 19th-century Chinese diaspora in Australia.



Marc Cheeseman, 'Beyond the Golden Pig'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

Leigh McKinnon, 'Travelling Dragons, Visiting Lion Teams', uncovered the relationships between Bendigo's Chinese community's processional traditions, which had existed from the late 1870s, and the civic celebrations and charity events held by Chinese Australian community groups, particularly at Easter, in many places from Sydney to Adelaide and towns in between.

Natalie Fong, 'Charity and Culture: Chinese Youth Clubs & Fundraising in Queensland, 1930s-1940s', found that the fundraising events of this period included plays and performances presenting Chinese history and culture aimed at the broader community, which were also patriotic and political, demonstrating ongoing connections to China and Chinese politics.

Brad Powe, 'Cheng and Gock', reconstructed the life story of Arthur Janne (Cheng) Chun Wah, who returned to Chungshan in 1931 and eventually settled in Kowloon, and his adoptive uncle Henry (Cheng) Fine Chong, who brought Arthur and his wife Gladys, into the orbit of the Gwok/Gock/Kwok clan of Wing On fame and the social circles of the Kwok and Ma clans.



Brad Powe, 'Cheng and Gock'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

Wing-Fai Wong, 'Book and magazine stores in Brisbane Chinatown', described the history of *shubao she*, which were news hubs and social meeting points for Brisbane's Chinese community from the 1970s through to the 1990s. The archway to the Chinatown Mall in Fortitude Valley still features the calligraphy of one of the three *shubao she* owners. However, the internet contributed to the decline of these once-vital hubs for Brisbane's Chinese communities.



Wing-Fai Wong, 'Book and magazine stores in Brisbane Chinatown'.
 Photo: Karen Schamberger.

Launch of 'Making Home under Southern Skies: Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia' WA Museum 29 October 2025



The official launch of 'Making Home under Southern Skies' exhibition, WA Museum Boola Bardip, 29 October 2025.
 Photo: [Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia](https://www.chineseaustralianhistory.org).

The official launch of 'Making Home under Southern Skies: Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia' was held at the WA Museum Boola Bardip on 29 October 2025 and was attended by more than 130 community supporters, researchers, and friends, including WA members of CAHS.

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The [exhibition](#), developed around the [‘Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia’](#) project, highlights the remarkable contributions of Chinese Western Australians to the State's cultural and social heritage from 1830 to the present day. The project's digital archive, built upon the original research of [Dr. Anne Atkinson](#), now comprises over 3,500 known migrants. Dr Atkinson was present at the launch and acknowledged for her pioneering work.



Professors Yu Tao and Benjamin Smith, and Lucy Hair at the 'Making Home under Southern Skies' exhibition launch.
 Photo: [Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia](#).

Professors Tim Colmer and Amanda Davies from the University of Western Australia commended the team of Professors Yu Tao and Benjamin Smith, and Lucy Hair for the success of the project and the exhibition. Melissa Goh, from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, reflected upon the support of the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations and the considerable achievement of the project to date.

The exhibition marks the beginning of a [series of exhibitions](#) that will tour various centres in Western Australia. The focus of the exhibitions is on ordinary people, as the ‘Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia’ portal aims to strike a balance between scholarly research and information for family historians and the broader community. Each exhibition will feature meaningful, bespoke panels relating to people in regional areas and their stories.

In the podcast, [Episode 10 on ‘Two Centuries on Display: Curating the Making Home under Southern Skies Exhibition’](#), Yu Tao, Lucy Hair and Benjamin Smith reflect on the inspirations behind the displays and the challenges of curating history into exhibition form.

‘Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia’ Podcasts 9, 11 & 12

The ‘Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia’ team has recorded further [podcasts](#).

Episode 9: ‘Paul and Peter: Bridging Cultures in Early 20th Century Western Australia’.

This episode features Professor Yu Tao reflecting on the lives and legacies of Paul Soong Quong and Peter Tom Yingman, two visionary leaders of the early Chinese community in Western Australia.



Paul Soong Quong, 1920, NAA: K1145, 1920/124, National Archives of Australia.

[Paul Soong Quong](#) moved to Perth in 1891 to serve as a catechist for the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He later led a Chinese mission under the Wesley Church, which provided spiritual guidance and a sense of community. Paul Soong Quong also advocated for the Chinese community's rights and interests. He welcomed the Chinese reformist Liang Qichao to Perth. He also petitioned the Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, against the discriminatory provisions of the *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901*.

[Peter Tom Yingman](#), born in China in 1878, became a successful partner in Ah Kwong & Co., a well-regarded merchant and importer, and part-owner of the earliest Chinese cafés in Perth, the Shanghai Café.



Peter Tom Yingman, 1911, Tom Yingman [Yingman], NAA: K1145, 1911/150, National Archives of Australia.

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Yingman was involved in establishing the Chung Wah Association, serving as president. He also represented Western Australia at the second national convention of the Australasian Kuomintang in Sydney in 1927.

Paul Soong and Peter Tom Yingman both left lasting legacies for the Australian Chinese community in Western Australia.

Episode 11: 'Felix Wong and Café Canton: Family, Resilience, and Chinese Life in 1920s Western Australia'.



Felix Wong, 1913, NAA: K1145, 1913/193, National Archives of Australia.

In this podcast, Yu Tao and Lucy Hair discussed the remarkable story of [Felix Wong](#) and his family. Felix migrated to Western Australia in 1898. He moved to Broome around 1911, opened a store and an eating house, and brought his wife, [Lee See](#), and their China-born children, including [Peter Kam Yen Wong](#), to Australia on Certificates of Exemption. In 1924, Lee See returned to China with the couple's Australian-born sons, [Fred](#) and [Charlie](#). Felix moved to Perth and, in 1929, founded the successful Café Canton. However, Felix died unexpectedly in December 1935. His son, Peter, under a Certificate of Exemption, faced the threat of deportation but, with community support, received an extension to continue running the family restaurant while looking after his younger brothers. Peter later joined the RAAF and became a successful restaurateur in Sydney.

Episode 12: The Hidden Half: Chinese Women's Stories in Early Western Australia.

In the final episode of 2025, Professor Yu Tao and Lucy Hair uncovered some of the hidden histories of Chinese women in Western Australia. The discussion focused on the lives of [Rose Soong Quong](#) and [Grace Wang Ah Key](#), who played essential roles in their husbands' activities, the community, and in raising families.



Rose Soong Quong, 1920, NAA: K1145, 1920/125, National Archives of Australia.



Grace Wang Ah Key, 1902, NAA: K1145, 1902/21, National Archives of Australia.

Yu Tao and Lucy Hair also highlighted other stories of Chinese Australian women in Western Australia, such as that of [Lin Lee Wood](#), only revealed through the murder of her daughter [Ruby](#).



Lin (Lucy) Lee Wood, 1939, NAA: K1331, Chinese Lee Wood L. National Archives of Australia.

This podcast on Chinese women's stories invites listeners to rethink the gendered contours of migration within the broader history of Chinese Australian heritage in Western Australia.

CAHS Newsletter Suggestions

CAHS encourages members to share their stories, research interests, and events by submitting short articles to the *CAHS Newsletter*. Please send your ideas to the [Editor](#) via the CAHS email.