

A publication of the Chinese Australian Historical Society

Website: <https://chineseaustralianhistory.org>

Email: contact.cahs@gmail.com

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President's Message

It is with great sorrow that I pen this Message, acknowledging that since our last newsletter, we have lost a great supporter and worker in the field of Chinese Australian heritage conservation in Far North Queensland. I refer to the passing of Mary Low, a stalwart and driving force behind the Cairns and District Chinese Association Incorporated (CADCAI). This organisation is the custodian of the remaining artifacts from the Lit Sung Goong temple, once located in Cairns' former Chinatown (Sach Street).

Mary worked tirelessly for the Cairns community and actively promoted our Chinese culture. She was a great supporter of the Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Incorporated (CHINA Inc). She will be sadly missed.

Vale Mary Low – thank you for your many contributions that have made our society a better one. (An obituary for Mary appears in this newsletter.)

Darryl Low Choy

Chinese Australian Research Interest Group Meeting

'When and why did your Chinese ancestors come to Queensland?'

Guest speaker: Jan Richardson

Group Lead: Hilda Maclean

Saturday, 27 September 2025

3:00-5:00 pm AEST via Zoom

Cost: CAHS member \$5.00

Non-member \$20.00

[Registration link](#)

Please join Jan Richardson on 27 September 2025, to hear her presentation on 'When and why did your Chinese ancestors come to Queensland?' Jan's presentation will provide essential historical background, records and sources to assist you in determining when and why your Chinese ancestors came to Queensland. As background to her talk, see Jan's article in this newsletter.

The program will also include a presentation by Hilda Maclean on the use of occupational licences in researching Chinese Australian family history.

The Society will send the discount registration code to members via email. If you would like to become a CAHS member, please email contact.cahs@gmail.com to request a copy of the membership form.

Celebrating Family Histories

August is Family History Month, and the Members' Corner section below highlights two compelling stories.

Mavis Gock Yen's daughter, Siaoman Yen, and son-in-law, Richard Horsburgh, wrote a brief biography of Mavis in the foreword to her book *South Flows the Pearl*. However, they knew little about the three decades of her life in Hong Kong and China until the discovery of 250 letters in her sister's possession.

Irene Poon recounts her foray into her family history, describing how she got started by talking to relatives and the excitement of finding her grandmother's wedding outfit in Bendigo's Golden Dragon Museum.

Stories like these are invaluable in telling family histories. If you would like to share your story, please email contact.cahs@gmail.com

Members' Corner

Writing a biography of Mavis Gock Yen (1916-2008)

Siaoman Yen & Richard Horsburgh

Emails: siaoman.yen@bigpond.com & richard.horsburgh@bigpond.com

My wife, Siaoman Yen, and I have embarked on a project to write a biography of Siaoman's mother, Mavis Yen. Some CAHS members will already be familiar with Mavis as the researcher and author of the Chinese Australian oral history book, *South Flows the Pearl*, in which we included a short biographical piece about Mavis and gave talks about her life at the time of the book's publication in 2022.

The arc of Mavis's story spans nearly the entire twentieth century. She happened to experience some of the century's pivotal events personally – growing up under the White Australia Policy, being taken to her Chinese ancestral village as a child, living in Shanghai when it was occupied by the Japanese in 1937, the same in Hong Kong in 1941, witnessing the Peoples Liberation Army take over Shanghai in 1949, living under the rule of Mao Zedong during the chaotic 1950s, being sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and lots more. Not many Australians with Chinese heritage had that full range of life experiences. But turning it into a full-length biography is another matter.

Siaoman and I have some advantages. We already know Mavis's family history in Australia, so we are not starting with a blank canvas. The family is well-documented in the National Archives of Australia. We are familiar with the family's ancestral village in Zhongshan, as it is also the hometown of the founders of the Wing On company, on which much has been written. Siaoman can read and write Chinese, which helps with any Chinese language material we may encounter.

Our missing pieces are the three decades Mavis spent living in Hong Kong and China from 1939. Travel between Australia and China was more difficult during the Second World War. After the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, many families lost touch with relatives in China. Mavis returned to live in Australia in 1981, so we can easily pick up the story again until her passing. So, how to convey those missing years?



Mavis, aged 18, on a boat to Tientsin, and in Beijing, early 1950s.
Source: Siaoman Yen & Richard Horsburgh

Once again, we have been fortunate. When Mavis's sister in Sydney moved to a nursing home about 10 years ago, the family discovered a bundle of approximately 250 letters written by Mavis during those years overseas, hidden in the house—a wonderful mixture of family gossip and firsthand reporting from China during those crucial years. Mavis also left behind a written account of her life during the Cultural Revolution, as well as other autobiographical writings. When we approached family members, we uncovered a huge photographic record from Australia and China, which has been invaluable.

Now the challenge for us is to turn all this material into what we hope will be a unique and fascinating biography. Fingers-crossed, it won't be too long before you have the opportunity to read it.



Mavis in an Australian sheepskin jacket, in Beijing, 1950.
Source: Siaoman Yen & Richard Horsburgh

Researching family history

Irene Poon

Email: irenepoon1@gmail.com

Have you ever wondered about the lives of your ancestors and the environment in which they lived? In 2014, I caught the bug to research my family history. I charted the usual family tree of my family, starting with those who arrived in Australia. On my mother's side were my great-grandparents, and on my father's side were my grandparents. I also listed their siblings and spouses. Births, deaths, and marriage dates were confirmed, primarily through purchasing registration copies from Births, Deaths, and Marriages Victoria (BDMV), a significant spend.

Despite knowing almost nothing about my family history when I first began, I managed to create comprehensive family trees for both my maternal and paternal relatives. Along the way, I shared my findings with my siblings. From many conversations with my mother's only sister, Jean Lau Gooley, before she passed away in 2023, I gained a little background on my mother's childhood. My aunt also gave me some diaries covering 1929 to 1962 of their foster brother, Bill Wong Loy. My mother, Cecily and her sister Jean Young had been fostered when they were aged six and four years respectively, by the Wong Loy family when their mother died and their father was unable to care for them.

In 2023 more information came from numerous photos taken by the Wong Loy family that my cousin unearthed in my aunt's home. The images not only reassured me that the little girls were well cared for but also showed their lively social activities within the Melbourne Chinese Christian community, as they grew up and until their respective marriages. I was also able to find some class photos of my mother at Rathdowne Street School through the granddaughter-in-law of Dulcie Wong Yen (nee Kong), who was in the same class and lived next door to the Wong Loys.

All this has filled some of the knowledge gaps in my mother's history, painting a story of more value to me than an ancestry family tree. Newspaper articles via TROVE showed further glimpses into her life, including a photo of my mother's bridal party. Another valuable source of information has been the Presbyterian Church Victorian Archives, as my father, Rev. John Poon,

was an ordained Presbyterian minister and a missionary in the New Hebrides.



Wedding outfit of Go Shee Poon, Irene Poon's paternal grandmother.
 Source: Leigh McKinnon, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo, 1998.

This year I was reminded of the many gaps in other ancestors' history when a cousin told me my paternal grandmother's beautiful wedding outfit had been donated to the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo (see photograph). One of my aunts had donated Go Shee's outfit there in 1998! This I had to see in person and visited last month. Although my grandparents married in Melbourne in 1905, the discovery of a prior ceremony in China in 1904 presents another avenue for research, to uncover more about Go Shee's life.

As this is National Family History month, my 'share' is that sources of information for family history can come from BDM registrations, passenger lists and Certificate of Exemption from Dictation (CEDT) files in the National Archives, newspaper articles through TROVE, rates, wills and education information through the Public Records Offices of each state, parish or church archives, state and local libraries and local historical societies.

Reading books—not just autobiographies or reference books—attending exhibitions and conferences relating to Chinese Australians, eg Dragon Tails conferences, joining groups such as CAHS and Chinese Australian Family Historians of Victoria (CAFHOV) can connect you with like-minded people who may provide connections and offer information or photos.

And then there is serendipity and chance conversations with unrelated people. It is these that have led me to learn more about the lives of my relatives and those who surrounded them.

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‘Researching Australia’s Amoy history’

Michael Williams

Chinese Emigrants.
THE ELEANOR LANCASTER, now lying at Newcastle, has on board ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY CHINESE EMIGRANTS, willing to Engage themselves for a period of Five Years to any persons willing to pay their passage, viz., £12 12s., and the rate of wages as per agreement with F. W. Lodge, viz., 12s. per month, and Rations as per scale attached to the agreements. Application to F. W. LODGE, on board; or to MITCHELL & TULLY.
 13th March, 1852. 569

When most people think of Chinese Australian history, they typically recall 19th-century migrants from Guangdong, particularly those who arrived during the gold rush era. Far less known, however, is the story of approximately 3,000 men from Fujian province—commonly referred to as Amoy labourers—who arrived in the Colony of New South Wales (which then included both Victoria and Queensland) in the late 1840s and early 1850s, well before the gold rush began. Unlike the Cantonese, these Fujianese migrants did not maintain enduring connections with Australia, resulting in their near-erasure from both Australian and Fujianese diaspora histories. Despite important scholarship—particularly Maxine Darnell’s *The Chinese Labour Trade to New South Wales 1783–1853* (PhD thesis, UNE, 1997)—this chapter of history remains largely unknown and underexplored.

For many Australians today who are beginning to uncover their descent from these Amoy men, the lack of knowledge about their ancestral villages—or indeed anything beyond the vague reference to ‘Amoy’—can be deeply frustrating. [Amoy is the historical European name for the port city now known as Xiamen, 廈門, with ‘Amoy’ derived from its local Hokkien pronunciation.]



In an effort to uncover more about this overlooked history, a research trip to Xiamen was undertaken. Michael Williams, Mei-Su Chen, and Allison Leathart met with scholars of Fujian diaspora history at institutions such as Xiamen University and the Xiamen Overseas Chinese Museum. They were met with great interest, particularly because most of the scholars were unaware that any Fujianese migration to Australia had occurred at all. This gap in knowledge was surprising, especially given that the Museum’s exhibits on the coolie trade of the late 1840s and early 1850s were extensive and detailed—though they focused primarily on the Americas, overlooking the simultaneous trade to New South Wales carried out by the very same merchants.

One challenge, even for Chinese academics, is that much of the historical evidence about this migration is still derived from European sources. While a handful of Chinese documents survive, they tend to be broad official reports that lack the specificity found in the bureaucratic records of the British Foreign Office. Ironically, some original Chinese correspondence—now housed in British archives—has been lost within China itself. These materials offer glimpses into the harsh realities of the coolie trade and the treatment of migrants, but rarely provide names, family details, or village origins.

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Rare documents from the Chinese perspective are to be found in the British National Archives.

This is where Allison Leathart's family history became invaluable. Her ability to trace her ancestry to Thomas Danswan, who arrived in 1852 aboard the *Eleanor Lancaster*, along with her family photographs, sparked significant interest among those they met. The director of the Xiamen Overseas Chinese Museum even proposed the idea of a special exhibition based on this underexplored connection. In the absence of comprehensive historical records, personal family histories like Allison's may provide the next crucial pieces of the puzzle.

To further this research, Allison has also submitted her DNA to several international ancestry companies, and while in China, to a local one as well. The preliminary results are promising. They point toward a future in which, as DNA databases in Fujian grow, Australians of Amoy descent may begin to identify genetic 'cousins' in China. These Chinese relatives may still retain knowledge about their ancestral villages and family lines—insights that could finally bridge the historical gaps and reconnect descendants in Australia with their long-lost origins in Fujian.

For those of Amoy descent who are interested in pursuing the possibilities of DNA research in China, Allison Leathart is willing to assist.

Please contact her on:

mimimiri2025@gmail.com

For a brief summary of the history of the Amoy labourers in Australia you can listen to a podcast entitled: [Amoy Shepherds](#).

'Unfreedom and indenture at Moreton Bay 1824-1859: Forgotten minorities of Queensland's past'

Jan Richardson

PhD Candidate, Griffith University,
 Queensland

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My doctoral research focuses on individuals — including convicts and indentured labourers of African, South Asian and Chinese ethnicity — who arrived in Moreton Bay between 1824 and 1859, and who comprise the 'forgotten minorities of Queensland's past' referred to in my thesis title. The indentured labourers imported into Moreton Bay during this period were of Indian and Chinese ethnicity as squatters and pastoralists sought a less expensive form of labour than the British, Irish, and European immigrants arriving at Moreton Bay. It was crucial to their plan to introduce 'cheap' labour to Queensland, therefore, that the labourers be from poor economic circumstances and willing to accept low wages for the duration of their five-year indenture.

One of the main research questions I am addressing is that while historians have long been aware of the presence of African, Indian, and Sri Lankan convicts at the Moreton Bay penal station between 1824 and 1839, there has been no comprehensive survey of archival records to determine their total number or collect biographical data. A similar situation exists regarding the Indian indentured labourers imported into Moreton Bay in 1845 and 1848, as well as the Chinese labourers imported between 1848 and 1853. While research into the number of indentured Chinese, most of whom departed from the treaty port of Amoy (Xiamen) in Fujian province, is more advanced than for non-European convicts and Indian labourers, biographical research of the indentured Chinese is still limited.

Important works mentioning Chinese indentured labourers in Queensland have been contributed by [Maxine Darnell](#), [Sandi Robb](#) and Margaret Slocomb.¹ However, as with works mentioning African and South Asian convicts and unfree labourers by name, it is often only a small number of Chinese who are investigated in academic works and, for obvious reasons, these are

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generally the individuals who are the easiest to research, including businessmen and leaders, on the one hand, and criminals and 'lunatics' on the other. Therefore, another vital source of information is research undertaken over many years by the descendants of Chinese indentured labourers, as well as the Facebook group, '[Amoy Immigrants to Australia – A Descendants' Group](#)', run by Linda Coonan.²

Based on newspaper reports of shipping arrivals and departures, I estimate that approximately 730 indentured Chinese arrived at Moreton Bay between 1848 and 1853 — some via ships that sailed directly to Moreton Bay, others transferred north from ships landing in Sydney. Added to this, Slocomb estimates that another 158 Chinese were transferred from Sydney directly to Wide Bay, disembarking at the district's port in Maryborough. This brings the number of Chinese indentured labourers imported into Queensland to approximately 890.

I am writing substantive biographies for approximately 300 of the indentured Chinese in Queensland. However, due to the large number of early colonial records I have located naming Chinese individuals (currently about 3,000) — combined with the repetition of common Chinese names, constant misspelling, and the misunderstanding of Chinese naming conventions by colonial authorities — the compilation of Chinese biographies is proving far more challenging than for the much smaller number of convicts and indentured workers of African and South Asian ethnicity included in my thesis.

In addition, I am contributing biographies of forgotten minorities in early colonial Queensland for publication in the online and open access [Harry Gentle Resource Centre Dictionary of Biography](#), which was launched in November 2024. While I am holding back significant biographies due to the need to protect my thesis data and research, some brief entries have already been added to the dictionary, including those of over 50 Chinese indentured labourers.³

Since commencing my PhD, I have become involved in two collaborative projects. The first is with cultural historian and heritage consultant, Dr Janis Hanley (Griffith University). We share an interest in the history of Chinese migration to Queensland, including those who arrived during the Queensland goldrushes from the mid-1860s onwards. Janis and I run a Facebook group, '[Journeys into Queensland's Chinese Past](#)', and

we have travelled to Far North Queensland and the Gulf Country to research the Chinese temple site at Croydon, as well as Chinese miners and market gardeners who lived in the area.⁴ We have also presented a paper on Chinese market gardens and gardeners in the Stephens-Annerley area of Brisbane, which was published in 2024.⁵

I have also attended several conferences since starting my doctoral research, including the 2022 Dragon Tails conference in Launceston and two [CHINA Inc](#) conferences in Cairns (2022) and Darwin (2024).⁶ Apart from the conference programs, which have featured an incredible array of speakers and topics, I appreciated the opportunities to immerse myself in all aspects of Australia's Chinese history. Highlights include a behind-the-scenes tour of the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston to view Chinese artefacts not on display to the public, a day trip to northeast Tasmania to visit former Chinese tin-mining sites, and the Chinese Temple and Northern Territory Chinese Museum in Darwin.⁷ It has just been announced that the next [Dragon Tails conference](#) will be held in my hometown of Brisbane from 27-30 November 2025, which is exciting news.⁸

I hope to submit my thesis in mid-2026 and look forward to sharing the results of my research — including the biographical material I have collected on the nearly 900 Chinese indentured labourers who arrived in Queensland between 1848 and 1853 — with historians, researchers and descendants. If you would like to contribute your ancestor's story or information regarding Chinese indentured labourers in Queensland, I would love to hear from you. Please email me at: jan.richardson@griffithuni.edu.au

References:

1. Maxine Darnell, '[The Chinese Labour Trade to New South Wales, 1783-1853](#)' (PhD thesis, University of New England, 1997); Robb, Sandi, '[North Queensland's Chinese Family Landscape: 1860-1920](#)' (PhD thesis, James Cook University, Qld, 2019); Margaret Slocomb, *Among Australia's Pioneers: Chinese Indentured Pastoral Workers on the Northern Frontier 1848 to c.1880* (Bloomington, Indiana, US: Balboa Press, 2014).
2. Linda Coonan (moderator), '[Amoy Immigrants to Australia – A Descendants' Group](#)'.
3. [Harry Gentle Resource Centre Dictionary of Biography, Griffith University](#). Note: To limit a search to Chinese indentured labourers, use the 'Add Filter' function to limit the place of birth to China and occupation to indentured labourer.
4. Janis Hanley and Jan Richardson, '[Journeys into Queensland's Chinese Past](#)'.
5. Janis Hanley and Jan Richardson, 'Chinese in Stephens', in *Memories of Stephens: A History of Annerley and the Surrounding Suburbs* (Brisbane: Annerley Stephens History Group, 2024).
6. [Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia \(CHINA Inc\)](#).
7. '[Guan Di Temple](#)', Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, and the [Chung Wah Society and Museum](#).
8. [Dragon Tails 2025](#).

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‘Restoring Sydney’s Chinatown Gates: A Cultural Renewal’

Julie Lee

CAHS Heritage Committee

Email: julalee888@gmail.com

In June 2025, the unveiling of the officially restored and iconic Chinatown gates on Dixon Street in Sydney’s Haymarket marked a significant milestone in preserving one of the city’s most visible symbols of Chinese Australian heritage.

The gates, first constructed in 1980 by the Dixon Street Chinese Committee, were heritage-listed in 2024. Their listing recognised not only their historical and aesthetic value but also their deep social and cultural importance to the Chinese Australian community. Designed by architect Henry Tsang OAM, the gates have long served as welcoming markers at the north and south entrances of Dixon Street, the heart of Sydney’s Chinatown. Decades of weathering and material fatigue led to visible deterioration in the gates’ timber, tiles, and stonework.

Restoration Highlights

The restoration included meticulous repairs to structural elements and decorative details. Glazed ceramic roof tiles and timber rafters were restored or replaced, and eight dragon and eight phoenix panels renewed. Most notably, the original concrete lion statues were replaced with finely carved granite lions in the Southern Chinese style, better reflecting the regional heritage of Sydney’s early Chinese migrants. These new lions stand as powerful guardians and cultural touchstones.

Significance of the Inscriptions

At the centre of each gate is a gold-leaf inscription, one reading: ‘*Continue the past into the future*’. Text on the archways has been updated from ‘*among the four seas, we are brothers*’ to ‘*among the four seas, we are family*’. These words capture the spirit of the gates—not just as decorative structures, but as living symbols of resilience, identity, and continuity for the Chinese community in Australia.

A Lasting Symbol

The restored Chinatown gates remain a powerful cultural landmark, linking generations and preserving the stories of those who helped shape Sydney’s multicultural identity. Their renewal reflects a broader effort to honour history while ensuring the vibrancy of Chinatown continues.

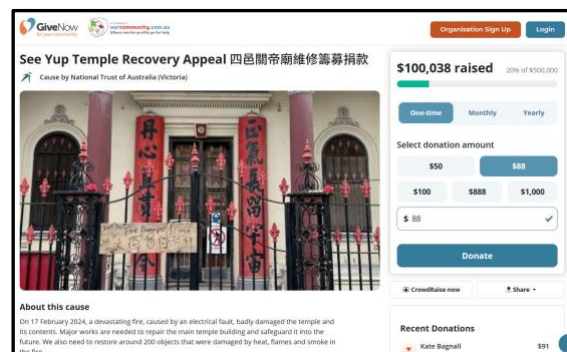


Sydney’s Chinatown Gates
 Source: Kevin Cheng

To view a video of the ‘Unveiling of the Archway to Sydney’s Chinatown’, taken on 14 June 2025, please follow this [link](#) (Credit: Mimi Chau, Australia Asia Film Group).

See Yup Temple Recovery Appeal

In February 2024, a devastating fire badly damaged the [See Yup temple in Melbourne](#). The good news is that the See Yup Temple Recovery Appeal has met its 20% target. However, the See Yup Society requires further donations to meet the temple’s restoration target. All donations are tax-deductible. To donate, please follow this [link](#).



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Vale
Mary Low
Cairns & District Chinese
Association Inc.
 Passed away 23 July 2025

(Note: Museums & Galleries Queensland permitted the reproduction of this extract from the obituary, 'Vale: Three Remarkable Marys', Source: news, information and resources, Winter, 2025, pp. 40-41)

Mary Low was a driving force behind the [Cairns Chinese New Year Festival](#) since its inception in 2004. Her visionary leadership created a vibrant cultural celebration that brought the streets of Cairns alive with Chinese music, dance, food, tradition, unity, and joy. As the Festival's coordinator and spokesperson, Mary developed strong relationships with business sponsors, local government, media, and community groups — partnerships that endure today, sustaining the Festival's annual success. Devoted to preserving and sharing the cultural and historical legacy of Cairns' early Chinese community, Mary was central to the [Cairns & District Chinese Association Inc \(CADCAI\) Heritage Team](#). She championed the preservation of the nationally significant Lit Sung Goong collection, and worked closely with Queensland Museum's Museum Development Officers, professional conservators, photographers and designers to drive exhibitions and oral history projects.

Mary actively led fundraising, volunteer coordination, marketing, and administration, culminating in the organisation receiving funding this year for a purpose-built Chinese Cultural Centre in Cairns. When complete, it will provide a permanent home for this important heritage collection, making it publicly accessible for the first time. It is a monumental achievement and reflects years of cataloguing, conservation and research by Mary and the [CADCAI](#) volunteers.

M&G QLD was privileged to work with Mary for over 20 years, both as a participant and presenter at our various programs. This included participation in our Standards Review Program, being the recipient of a Volunteer Internship in 2014 and generously showing delegates through the Lit Sung Goong collection during our 2019 Conference, [Opening Doors](#), held in Cairns. We all benefited from her warmth, humour, incredible knowledge and generous spirit.

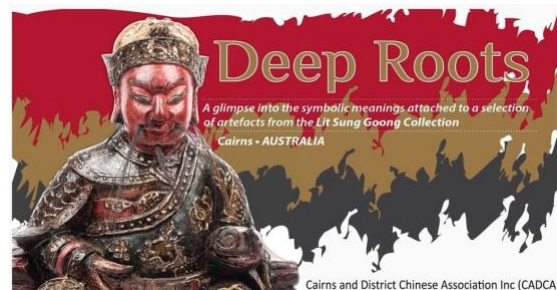
In 2024, the [John Oxley Library Community History Award](#) was bestowed upon the Cairns & management, volunteer coordination, research

and community engagement brought the region's rich industrial stories to life. District Chinese Association Inc Heritage Team, a testament to Mary's enduring leadership and legacy in cultural heritage. Her passing on 23 July 2025 is a poignant loss to all those who knew her and the Far North Queensland community. She will be greatly missed.



Mary Low with a statue of the Chinese god of war, Kuan Ti. Source: Photograph published with permission of the Cairns Post in 'Vale: Three Remarkable Marys', Source: news, information and resources, Winter, 2025, p. 40.

Deep Roots... a selection from the Lit Sung Goon Collection



The book, *Deep Roots: A Glimpse into the Symbolic Meaning Attached to a Selection from the Lit Sung Goon Collection* by Jan Ryan, was recently published by the Cairns & District Chinese Association (CADCAI). The book sells for \$20 and can be purchased by emailing info@cadcai.org.au

Lit Sung Goong was a Chinese temple built in Cairns in 1886 and adorned with objects and fittings imported from Guangzhou, China. Following the demolition of the temple in 1966, the Cairns Chinese community salvaged and stored the contents. The Lit Sung Goong collection holds national significance due to its provenance, its association with Chinese settlement in Australia, and its integrity. It is considered one of the most complete collections of Imperial Chinese temple fittings in Australia and internationally.

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Talks by Siaoman Yen and Richard Horsburgh

‘South Flows the Pearl - Chinese Australian Voices’

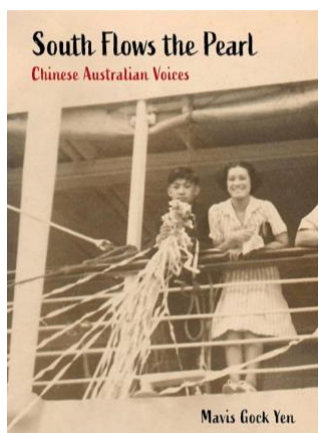
Date/Time: Saturday, 30 August 2025,
 2:30 to 3:30 pm AEST

Venue: Chatswood Library at The Concourse,
 Victoria Ave, Chatwood

Cost: Free

Registration: on [Eventbrite](#)

Hear a special book talk on *South Flows the Pearl*, published by Sydney University Press in 2022, which is a collection of migration and settlement stories from Chinese Australian families, selected from oral history interviews carried out in the 1980s-1990s by the late Mavis Gock Yen, and assembled for the book by her daughter, Siaoman Yen and son-in-law, Richard Horsburgh. Most of the Chinese Australian pioneers came from the Pearl River Delta in southern China. They settled across Australia, their experiences shaped by the attitudes of European Australians and events, from the gold rushes to wars.



‘The Magical World of Cecil Parkee and his Family’

Date/Time: Saturday, 11 October 2025,
 1.00 - 3.00 pm AEDT

Organiser: Chinese Women’s Association

Venue: Sydney Mechanics’ School of Arts,
 280 Pitt St, Sydney.

Registration: email to meilinyum@gmail.com

‘The Magical World of Cecil Parkee and his Family’ is about the Parkee family who lived in Sydney’s Chinatown leading up to World War II. Their son, Cecil Parkee, was a popular entertainer from the 1950s, at a time when audiences rarely saw artists of Asian heritage on stage or screen.



Cecil Parkee, with his ventriloquist doll, centre.

Source: ‘Immigration - Migrants in the arts and entertainment in Australia’, NAA: A12111, 1/1959/6/10, National Archives of Australia.

‘Quong Tart’s Neighbours: Cycling around the boundaries of exclusion and racism’

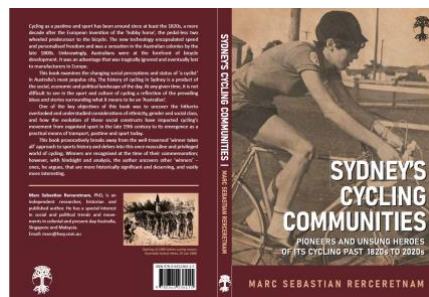
Chapter 6 in Marc Sebastian Rerceretnam, *Sydney’s Cycling Communities*, 2025,

The book is available through [Booktopia](#) for \$20.90.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Sydney’s minority Chinese communities found themselves facing anti-Chinese political campaigns and calls to restrict their immigration and residency. In response, Mei Quong Tart (1850-1903), known as Quong Tart, attempted to counter these negative sentiments.

Quong Tart utilised sports to advance social and political causes with which he was directly or indirectly associated, and to influence anti-Chinese public opinion in the late 19th century. He intended to help circumvent growing anti-Chinese, anti-immigration and even anti-women’s rights and suffrage rhetoric and otherwise hostile ‘white’ Australian society that existed in the lead-up to Federation in 1901.

About the author: Marc Sebastian Rerceretnam is an independent researcher and social historian with a Ph.D. from Sydney University. He previously published on Mei Quong Tart in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 109, 2023, pp.141-164. Marc can be contacted via his mobile 0426 7897 247 or by email: marc@hwy.com.au



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'Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia' Podcasts 6, 7 & 8

The 'Two Centuries of Chinese Heritage in Western Australia' team has been busy and recorded further [podcasts](#) for you to enjoy.

Episode 6: See Sing & Co: A Pioneering Chinese Western Australian Business.

Episode 6 explores the remarkable story of See Sing & Co. This pioneering Chinese Western Australian business served the remote communities of Cossack, Broome, and Roebourne during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Episode 7: A Mysterious Death in Onslow: Lives and Struggles of Chinese Labourers.

This episode examines the mysterious death of Ah Hing, a Chinese laundryman in the late 19th-century town of Onslow, Western Australia. Drawing on witness testimonies and the official inquest, the hosts explore how this case sheds light on the lives and struggles of Chinese labourers in remote colonial outposts.



Episode 8: Chinese Cabinet Makers: Crafting Lives and Building Belonging in a Challenging Land.

Episode 8 explores the stories of Chinese cabinet makers in early 20th-century Western Australia, examining how these skilled craftspeople navigated restrictive legislation, economic hardship, and social marginalisation. The information not only provides further insights into the Chinese contributions to Western Australia but also invites comparisons with the work and experiences of Chinese cabinet makers in other Australian colonies and states.



Source: [SBS](#)

'Who Do You Think You Are?' Australia: Season 16 Episode 2, with Patrick Brammall.

Available through [SBS](#)

In this episode of 'Who Do You Think You Are?', internationally renowned actor Patrick Brammall goes on a quest to establish the long-held myth about his mother's ancestry. Interviewed by Kate Bagnall, Patrick discovered that his grandfather's mother was Florence Boosuit, whose father was Vong (John) Boo Suit, born in 1845 in Canton and naturalised in Tasmania in 1883. [Libraries Tasmania](#) hold a copy of Vong (John) Boo Suit's Certificate of Naturalisation.



Dragon Tails 2025

[Call for Papers](#)

Due 5 September 2025

Theme: Relationships

The theme of Dragon Tails 2025 highlights the role of relationships in shaping the lives of Chinese Australasians as well as the world around them. Papers might explore the relationships between Chinese people within the same family, clan, or district, as well as the ties with those outside the Chinese community, including agents who contracted with them, employers, officials, and governments, as well as with neighbours, First Nations people, customers, and other businesspeople. Please consult the requirements [here](#) and submit proposals to dragontailsconferences@gmail.com